

in this series, *The School of Jesus: a Beginner's Guide to Living as a Christian*, by John Bowen.

21. For example, The Gospel According to Luke, chapter 14, verses 25 to 33.

22. For example, The Gospel According to Luke, chapter 9, verse 24.

23. The Gospel According to Luke, chapter 6, verses 41 and 42.



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The Spirituality of Jesus

And the Dangers of Religion

Spirituality, yes; religion, no. Many people today appear to be searching enthusiastically for an authentic spirituality—but with equal enthusiasm they are rejecting organized religion. Magazines as diverse as *Self*, *Mother Jones*, *Psychology Today* and *Time* have all given front-page coverage to spirituality in recent months and years. *Psychology Today* called this trend a 'massive flight from traditional religious institutions into spirituality,' and announced that 'we are witnessing a spiritual awakening unprecedented in modern times.'¹ *Self* magazine discovered that when asked, 'Would you describe yourself as spiritual?' 70% of its readers replied 'Yes', 27% answered 'Somewhat' and only 3% said an outright 'No'.²

The first time I noticed the term *spirituality* in casual conversation was not long ago: a student was involved in arranging the sound equipment for one of my lectures, and I happened to ask him whether he had any religious beliefs. 'Not really,' he replied, 'but I am trying to figure out my spirituality.' Then I recall checking in at the airport in Ottawa once, and the agent behind the counter noticed that I was reading a copy of *The Celestine Prophecy*.³ 'I love that book,' she commented. 'A lot of us feel caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. We're not especially religious, but we think there's something in it.' People are increasingly aware that they have a spiritual side to their nature, an aspect which neither science nor materialism has satisfied, but at the same time they are not looking to a church or religion to satisfy that need. The fact that *The Celestine Prophecy*, with its strong pro-spirituality, anti-organized religion message, has been on the best-seller lists since mid-1994 indicates the strength of this hunger for spirituality.

One of the first and strongest voices against religion but for spirituality in recent years was that of Sinead O'Connor. In October 1992, for instance, O'Connor was interviewed by *Rolling Stone* magazine. In answer to a question about religion, O'Connor replied, 'Organized religion is a lie. It's designed to take you away from God, particularly the Christian church.' For the interview, O'Connor wore a T-shirt proclaiming herself a 'Recovering Catholic'. Yet at the same time she was not embarrassed to say,

*I'm still angry, but I'm alive, and that's because of God. If I hadn't believed in God, I would be dead now, I would be drunk, I would be on drugs.*⁴

Clearly, her sense of spirituality is alive and well. She would agree with comedian Lenny Bruce when he said, 'More and more people are leaving the church and going back to God!'

Yet the anti-religion, pro-spirituality movement is nothing new. It was dramatically expressed in 19th century Russia by novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky in the story of the Grand Inquisitor, part of his novel *The Brothers Karamazov*.⁵ Like O'Connor, Dostoyevsky was by no means rejecting God or spirituality, or even (in his case) the Christian religion—in fact, he was a committed Christian—but he was attacking what religion has done to spirituality, and specifically to Christian faith.

The story is set in Seville, Spain, in the 16th century, at the height of the Spanish Inquisition, when thousands are being burned at the stake by the church for their unorthodox beliefs. Into this setting comes Jesus, unheralded but immediately recognized. Crowds gather. He heals a man who has been blind all his life. He sees a child's coffin being carried into the cathedral, and raises the little girl to life.

The Grand Inquisitor, head of the Inquisition, sees what is happening and orders his guards to arrest Jesus and throw him into prison. The people prostrate themselves in fear before the Grand Inquisitor. That night, he visits Jesus in his cell, and warns him that on the following day he will be sentenced to death and burned at the stake as the worst of heretics.

Why would the official representative of the Christian church treat Jesus, the founder of his church, that way? The Inquisitor knows that Jesus has come, as Dostoyevsky puts it, to 'interfere' with the way the church does things. Jesus, says the Inquisitor, preached love and freedom, but the church has imposed what people really need: mystery, miracle and authority. He calmly tells Jesus, 'We have corrected your work,' and removed from people 'the terrible gift of freedom.'

To this long speech, Jesus says nothing. At the end, however, without warning, he goes over to the Inquisitor and

'kisses him gently on his old, bloodless lips.' In response, the Inquisitor shudders, then releases Jesus into the night, warning him never to return.

Dostoyevsky—or rather, Ivan, the atheist brother, who tells this story—focuses the conflict: he argues that there is actually a difference between the spirituality Jesus taught and what the church teaches. Moreover, he says that the church has tried to tame the teaching of Jesus and make it easier for people to be 'religious' instead of truly spiritual or truly Christian.

Jesus and religion

When we go back to Jesus, we see that he had a clear definition of spirituality, and understood the tension between spirituality and religion. In fact, in his teaching, Jesus pinpoints some of the areas of conflict in a way that is intriguingly contemporary. Many of these surface in Jesus' confrontations with the religious leaders of his day—the Pharisees, Sadducees and scribes. For instance, in one of the earliest biographies of Jesus, by a medical doctor named Luke, Jesus raises the following issues with them.

Appearance vs reality

*'I know you Pharisees burnish the surface of your cups and plates so they sparkle in the sun, but I also know your insides are maggoty with greed and secret evil. Turn both your pockets and your hearts inside out and give generously to the poor; then your lives will be clean, not just your dishes and your hands.'*⁶

The religious leaders were concerned about looking good—spiritual and together. Jesus says, in effect, 'Don't you realize that God is more interested in what is inside your heart than

with how you look?' Scandals of televangelists and religious boarding schools would seem to fit this diagnosis: they may have looked good on the outside, but sometimes the reality was very different. Jesus is not impressed with such hypocrisy. For Jesus, true spirituality is primarily a matter of the heart, something that works on the inside and not only on the surface.

In the Genesis song, 'Jesus he knows me', Phil Collins puts words which summarize this problem into the mouth of an evangelist: 'Won't find me practicing what I'm preaching... Just do as I say, don't do as I do—get on your knees and start paying.'⁷ Collins is right: Jesus does know such people, and he is not fooled.

Things vs people

*'I've had it with you! You're hopeless, you Pharisees! Frauds! You keep meticulous account books, tithing⁸ on every nickel and dime you get, but manage to find loopholes for getting around basic matters of justice and God's love. Careful bookkeeping is commendable, but the basics are required.'*⁹

Jesus finds religious people arguing over trivial things, significant only in their esoteric system of religion, while the world is going to hell in a handbasket. Today, I imagine him criticizing churches which seem mainly interested in the colour of the new carpet for the sanctuary, or the price of a new roof, or arguing over which Prayer Book to use. This is the ghetto mentality in religious form. Jesus asks, 'Excuse me, people: what about love? what about justice? Aren't those more important than these details?' For Jesus, true spirituality is about the big stuff: knowing God, love of neighbour, compassion, justice, forgiveness, generosity, self-sacrifice.

Archbishop William Temple caught the thrust of Jesus' teaching when he said that the Christian church is the only

club in the world that exists for the benefit of its non-members. Jesus, I suspect, would have liked that. His followers, however, have not always remembered it.

Self-centred vs God-centred

Jesus told his next story to some who were complacently pleased with themselves over their moral performance and looked down their noses at the common people.

Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee, the other a tax man.¹⁰ The Pharisee posed and prayed like this: 'Oh, God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, crooks, adulterers, or, heaven forbid, like this tax man. I fast twice a week and tithe on all my income.' Meanwhile, the tax man, slumped in the shadows, his face in his hands, not daring to look up, said, 'God, give mercy. Forgive me, a sinner.' Jesus commented, 'This tax man, not the other, went home made right with God. If you walk round with your nose in the air, you're going to end up flat on your face, but if you're content to be simply yourself, you will become more than yourself.'¹¹

In some ways, religious people's arrogance is more distasteful than anyone else's. After all, you might expect that the claim to have encountered the Almighty would produce in them some sense of their fallibility and sinfulness. You might expect a certain humility to result from having glimpsed God's greatness and mystery. The greater the expectations, the deeper the disappointment.

For Jesus, true spirituality means having a right sense of who we are and of who God is—and a right sense of what it means to relate authentically to God. In fact, Jesus' story must have been deeply shocking to the religious people who heard it. He implies that the non-religious person may be more acceptable to God than they are: sometimes non-religious

people, like the tax man in the story, have a better grasp of who they are and who God is, and so their response is more appropriate.

To this extent, Sinead O'Connor is right: there is something in organized religion (the Christian religion, anyway) which easily squirms away from the teaching and spirituality of Jesus. For someone to claim to be a follower of Jesus yet do nothing about it is a lie; to put things before people is a lie; and to be self-centred is a lie. And lying is not a part of anyone's definition of spirituality.

How did things go wrong?

Jesus said that he came to announce the inauguration of the kingdom of God—the realm in which the Creator's norms for human life are honoured. His gift was to put people in touch with God and show what it meant to live as God's community, in God's world, in God's way. So he healed the sick, he fed the hungry, he raised the dead. And he drew people into a new community. For Jesus, parties were significant because they symbolized the acceptance, love and community that characterized God's rule.¹² Jesus' intention was clearly to set up a community which would signal a new stage for humanity.

This was a profoundly counter-cultural thing to do. If culture is, as someone has said, 'the way we do things around here,' a counter-culture says, 'there is a better way of doing things around here.' For Jesus, that was the way of God's kingdom.

Those who study the life cycle of organizations¹³ describe phase one in that cycle as characterized by energy, charisma, community, fluidity, no tradition and few rules. What we see

in the earliest accounts of the work of Jesus is a classic example of that stage. Phase two, say the experts, comes as the pioneers are dying out or moving on. The second generation says: Help us preserve the past. Write things down. Train us to do what you have done. Let's build in some structures to make sure nothing changes. That's an inevitable stage, not wrong in itself. This too is clear from the earliest accounts of the Christian movement.¹⁴ The question is what will happen next.

The third phase of an organization's life can be good or bad, can mean renewal or fossilization. Either the spirit of the original movement wins or the rules and the structure win. Either the life is renewed and flows through the structures, or the structures stifle the life.

Many would say that for the Christian church, the forces of fossilization won a decisive battle in 313 AD,¹⁵ when the Roman Emperor Constantine pronounced Christianity an official religion of his empire. He granted tax immunities to clergy and gave gifts to the church. The papacy became a position of political power, and the emperor took an active part in church affairs. One of the first effects was a great influx of people wishing to become priests simply in order to avoid taxation!¹⁶ Thus the community which had started out as counter-cultural officially entered the mainstream culture. A movement of the oppressed and outcast became respectable. A movement of the poor became an institution of the rich. You can see why there might be a problem! The contrast was highlighted more recently by an Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie, who compared his experience of Christian leadership with that of Paul, one of the first Christian missionaries, and complained: 'Wherever Paul went, there were riots and revival; wherever I go, they offer me tea.'

Consider this parable:

The servant who forgot his place

There was once a queen who was gracious, wise and generous. She lived in a castle, and she loved to welcome her subjects there at any time, to get to know them and to help them in any way they needed. The entrance to the castle was guarded by a small, gentle servant. His job was to greet the visitors and show them into the queen's presence.

One day, however, this servant misbehaved. He began to feel that he was more important than he really was. He imagined that his job was not only to show people into the queen's presence, but also to decide or not whether they were worthy to meet her. And as his ideas of his own importance grew, so he grew, taller and taller, broader and broader, more and more muscular, until nobody could even see the queen's castle.

When people came to visit the queen, he would tell them that they were not dressed properly to meet the queen, or that they were too evil to see the queen, or that their nose was too long, or their feet were too big. Some of them tried to change in order to please the servant, so that they could get in to see the queen, though few of them ever did. Others went away sad because they knew they could never be good enough to see the queen. Some decided that maybe there never was a queen at all, and they were the saddest of all.

But there were a few who guessed what was going on, and when the servant wasn't looking, they slipped round the back of the castle, over the wall, and into the queen's family room, where she always met her subjects. The queen, of course, hadn't had many visitors for some time, and when these determined people got in by the back door and explained to her what had been happening, she immediately went to the front door and demanded of the servant what on earth he was doing. As soon as he heard the voice of the queen, he shrank back to his

original size, like a balloon you blow up and then let go. Then everything went back to normal.

But from time to time, quite regularly, the servant would again forget his job, and become swollen and big-headed and indeed behave like a king. So after many arguments, the queen decided that the servant could not be trusted, and she moved her throne out to the front door of the palace where she could keep an eye on the servant, and where her subjects could always see her and approach her whenever they wished.

Ideally, organizations of any kind—political, business or religious—are structures to facilitate people’s working together for common goals. Yet human nature is such that organizations can easily become reactionary, bureaucratic, and self-preserving. They are, as the story suggests, good servants but bad masters. Cardinal Newman used a different image to make the same point: he said, ‘Every great movement begins with a prophet and ends with a policeman.’

Yet alongside the tendency towards fossilization in the church has also been a periodic impulse in the opposite direction—towards renewal of the spiritual values that Jesus taught and lived. To see this you have only to examine the lives of those who claim to be followers of Jesus.

Sometimes Christians plead, ‘Don’t judge Christianity by the church: just consider Jesus.’ The humility is commendable, but the strategy is misplaced. I think those who point away from the Christian religion to Christ do so not just because the church is often a cause of embarrassment, but also, more importantly, because Christ is the centre and heartbeat of Christianity at its most authentic. Therefore, if you are considering Christian faith, it is ultimately about Jesus you have to decide. To this extent, the instinct is right.

Yet, inescapably, part of looking at Jesus is considering what impact his life and teaching have had on ordinary people. After all, if no-one who claims the name of Christ ever makes any headway in putting his teaching into practice, if there is never any evidence of the reality of God among Christians, then it would seem to reflect very badly on Jesus. Jesus himself did not seem to hesitate about saying that his credibility, in part at least, depends on that of his followers.¹⁷

So does Christian spirituality ‘work’? You might start by considering the example of high profile Christian leaders such as Archbishop Tutu, spiritual leader of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa; Mother Teresa, who cared for the dying and destitute in India; Jean Vanier, creating residential communities for adults with special needs around the world; or Sister Helen Prejean, whose story is told in the movie *Dead Man Walking*. Such people are very clear that whatever they may have accomplished in their lives is because of Jesus. They are, if you like, a very public testimony to what Christian spirituality is really like when it is supported, not stifled, by religion.

While there may be few Christians in the public eye, however, there are millions faithfully living out Jesus’ style of spirituality around the world who will never hit the headlines. I think of sincere Christians I know who are conscientiously studying the teaching of Jesus and trying to follow it: some are organizing food banks, others are making Christmas dinners for the poor, some work in AIDS hostels or help refugees, many bring medical and relief aid to needy parts of the world.

I was struck recently by an edition of *Ideas* on CBC radio, because it is precisely such a story—ordinary Christians, out of the public eye, struggling to be faithful followers of Jesus. Sharon Gretz, the story-teller, was involved in keeping people

with special needs out of institutions and in their homes. She got to know Merilee, who had cerebral palsy and cancer. Then, she said:

I called the pastor [of Merilee's church]...and explained to him what was happening to Merilee again, and I said: you know what?... She's one of yours; she's a member of your congregation and I want to know what you people are going to do... After listening to me, he said: So what you're saying is that Merilee needs us to come to her, and maybe we can help support her to keep her at home...

He sent...[a] letter of invitation to the members of the church, and also announced it in the pulpit, that Merilee's friends would be meeting in the parlour. So we met, and he presented the situation to them again, and he said to them: we need to go to her. And he pulled out this list of days and times, and he said: I expect everybody in this room to put their names down about when they're going over to Merilee's place. Everybody can do something. Some people might want to go and talk; other people—you know Merilee enjoys movies, so bring some videos with you. She likes people to write letters for her; some of you can go and write letters. And some of you might want to cook... Everybody can give what it is that they give, what is good, what they know how to do. And that's kind of how it worked.

People started coming and they came at scheduled times, and then some people would come at unscheduled times. And they kept coming. I remember one time being over there and she was surrounded. They were doing a jigsaw puzzle... And there's Merilee sitting in front of this table, like a queen. Do you know what I mean? She's just presiding over a court; there was all this life in her apart - ment.

Part of this story is that Merilee died. But she died at home, and I believe she died knowing she was loved. And the proof of that was, I think, at her funeral, which almost

literally filled the church...What Pastor Ed said was: Merilee's life presented a gift to them. As painful and tragic as the cancer was, it was a gift to them to find out what they were about as a congregation.¹⁸

To find out what they were as a congregation. The church becoming what Jesus meant for his followers to be—a wildly diverse community united by a commitment to loving God and loving people. Church structures doing what structures are meant to do: empowering people to live out the spirituality of Jesus. It is ironical, of course, that this took place through the prodding of an outsider, who saw more clearly than the church itself what it ought to be!

Distinctives of Christian spirituality

How does all this help the person wanting to explore their spirituality? Which way do we turn to discover if there is any real spiritual help in Christianity or just more 'church' stuff? What if we are curious about Jesus, yet alienated by much of what passes for Christian faith?

First of all, Christian spirituality is fairly distinct. I have referred several times to 'Christian spirituality' or 'the spirituality of Jesus' but so far I have not defined it. It is important to know that it is significantly different from the spirituality of, say, *The Celestine Prophecy*. This should not surprise us. Spirituality is not just a generic thing, the same the world over. Different religions and traditions have very varied understandings of what it means to be spiritual. I would not presume to comment on all of them, but I can tell you what is distinctive about Christianity's approach to spirituality. And I can tell you why I work on my spirituality in a Christian context.

• Christian spirituality centres around a relationship with God

In some traditions, spirituality is something you work on inside yourself. It may be with the help of a teacher, but basically the search involves just you and your relationship to yourself, to the universe, and (perhaps) to 'the god within'. God, in the Judeo-Christian sense of the Creator, does not necessarily come into it.

In Christian understanding, everything begins with God, the dynamic, compassionate Artist who designed us. This God is the source of all life and all personhood. Indeed, in some sense, it is appropriate to think of God as *person*, separate from us. This God has mind, feelings, creativity. This God can be hurt, can be angry, can be nurturing. This God wants to know us and to be known by us. In Christian understanding, our longings for spiritual fulfilment are simply one of God's signals to get our attention. For that reason, our yearning can only really be satisfied by learning to relate to this God.

• Christian spirituality is not a do-it-yourself faith

Some people adopt a mix-and-match approach to spirituality, taking a little bit from different religions to create their own unique faith. Religion scholar, Huston Smith, however, points out the weakness in this approach:

[T]he cafeteria approach to spirituality...is not the way organisms are put together, nor great works of art. And a vital faith is more like an organism or work of art than it is like a cafeteria tray.¹⁹

Generally, we do not chop bits off either an organism or an artwork and stick them together in a shape more to our own

liking! Rather, we appreciate that there is integrity and life and artistry in the whole as it is. The analogy certainly holds true for Christian spirituality: it is an organic whole, a work of art.

The way the first followers of Jesus described themselves was as 'disciples'—that is, as students, students of Jesus and all he had to teach them. To be a follower of Jesus was to belong to his school and to learn his curriculum.²⁰ With a school, whether a driving school, a golf school or a business school, you join because you want to learn what the school has to offer, you open your mind to learning someone else's agenda. In the case of Jesus' school, what he offered was to teach us how to live as God's people, in God's world, in God's way. Following Jesus meant to share in the life of a new spiritual organism which he was bringing into being, to be involved in the creation of a new, interactive, living work of art.

• Christian spirituality is practical more than mystical

The mystical tradition certainly has been a continuous thread throughout the tapestry of the Christian movement, yet the mainstream has had more of a practical and ethical thrust. This too is distinctive: historically speaking, not all religions have necessarily connected the spiritual and the ethical. Archbishop Tutu, Mother Theresa, Jean Vanier and Helen Prejean are good examples of how Christian spirituality at its best has an ethical vigour and beauty about it. Not that ethics is the starting point of Christian spirituality—the heart is always the student's relationship with the Teacher—but one way the relationship, the schooling, is lived out is through ethics of compassion and justice.

• Christian spirituality is tough to achieve

Jesus himself said that in some ways being his student is like a self-imposed death sentence!²¹ Why? Because it means putting the priorities of God's kingdom ahead of my own little kingdom, the needs of others ahead of my own needs. Every time I say 'no' to myself, a bit of me dies. There is no getting around that. But Jesus also says that through those deaths comes a new and better kind of life.²²

• Christian spirituality has a strong community aspect

It is very clear from the earliest accounts that Jesus meant his followers to be a community. This is in part because, in Christian understanding, we need one another in order to develop our spirituality. We are not self-sufficient in spiritual resources. We need to help, encourage and teach one another. But it is also because in Christian tradition the goal of spirituality is not to become an odd collection of spiritually mature individuals who happen to share the same ideals. The goal of spirituality is to be a mature community. Paul, one of the earliest Christian teachers, likened the Christian community to a human body—in fact, he called it 'the Body of Christ'—people functioning in harmony together to do the work of Jesus in the world.

Why I (still) go to church

I was brought up to go to church. There I learned the stories of Jesus. I loved the music, the ceremony, the people, and being head choir boy. I don't know how much I really understood, however. I do remember sermons about the 'sin' of

wearing jeans and the 'sin' of chewing gum. (This was the 1950s in Britain, remember, and these things were not only new, but thought to be 'American' and therefore automatically degenerate!)

When I was sixteen, through a teacher in high school, I learned that what was missing in my grasp of Christianity was personal allegiance to Jesus, and I began to try to make that relationship central in my life. I learned to pray by simply talking to Jesus as though I could see him present in the room. I began to learn what it meant to take him seriously as my Teacher and Guide through life—on issues as diverse as my peers' adolescent interest in pornography and the question of what to study at university. I began to read the Bible and to meet with other students who were also trying to grow their spirituality in relationship with Jesus.

For some years around then, I became very dissatisfied with church. I developed a strong distaste for anything in religion that distracted from a simple commitment to being a student of Jesus, whether ceremony, tradition, ministers, or old church buildings. I fed my spirituality mainly in private with God and in community with like-minded peers.

These days, however, I am more positive in my attitude to church. I have reconciled the search for authentic Christian spirituality with membership in the institution called church. Why? Is it just creeping middle age that makes me tolerant of nonsense that should not be tolerated?

One thing is this, and I must be honest: I have come to recognize that deep down I am very like the religious people Jesus criticized—and I suspect that most of us are. If I had been there for the arguments he had with them, I would quite likely have taken their side, because I too have exactly the same instincts they had—though I am no longer proud of them: to value appearance over reality, the trivial over the

substantial, my interests over God's interests. The story is told of the Sunday school teacher who told her students the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector (see above), then said to her class, 'Now let us pray and thank God that we are not like this Pharisee.' I still find the story funny—but I ruefully recognize that I have often fallen into the same trap. Sure there are hypocrites in the church, but I am capable of hypocrisy with the best of them. The problem is, as Jesus warned, that it is so much easier to spot hypocrisy in someone else than in myself.²³

I also keep going to church because, although there are hypocrites there (as in any walk of life), there are also people who are serious about developing their spirituality along Jesus' lines. I should warn you: they may not be obvious at the main Sunday service. Sometimes I discover these people in a small group Bible study on a weeknight, or organizing the food bank that operates out of the church basement. Sometimes I discover like-minded people in an interdenominational reading group that meets in my city. Sometimes I spot a person from my church on the other side of the room at a lecture by a visiting speaker on spirituality, and we smile at one another, recognizing a kindred spirit.

Not that I dismiss people who do not strike me as serious about their faith. What right have I to judge them anyway? What do I know about what is in their hearts? What do I know of how they have lived their lives with God? They may be giants of Christian spirituality for all I know, and maybe if I saw them as God sees them, I would be tempted to fall at their feet and worship them. So I will honour them and encourage them all I can. But for my own survival I need to find people whose yearning for spirituality resonates with mine.

I have to tell you also that among church people, in and out of church buildings, amazing things have happened to

me. In church, I have heard things. God has spoken direct and powerful words to me through the words of others. Sometimes music in church has brought tears to my eyes, and I have known God in the music. I remember hearing someone pray, realising that they know God in a deeper way than I do yet, and being thankful for them. I think of songs whose words I cannot sing because my heart is full of memories of friends now dead who loved those songs. I remember children's chattering mingling with the priest's centuries-old liturgy. And I recall an articulate young woman, returning to church after many years, saying, 'I'm learning about my faith along with my children.'

I have also seen things. An autistic young man and a Member of Parliament kneeling within a few metres of each other. An elderly couple, their arms around each other, going forward for communion. A woman dying of cancer, surrounded by friends holding hands, loving her and praying for her. A child stroking her mother's hair as she is bent in prayer. Christmas pageants where generation after generation of children play the same parts and speak the old words, and we always laugh gently at the makeshift donkey.

At such times, I know I am glimpsing the Spirit of Jesus, the reality of Jesus, among the followers of Jesus, and it makes me say, 'That's what it's meant to be about.' When that happens, I find I don't want to be anywhere else but in the company of those who are honestly struggling to follow Jesus, and to embody his spirituality, because it is there that I find truth and warmth and reality...and God.

Notes

1. *Psychology Today*, November/December 1994, pp 66, 57.
2. *Self*, December 1997, p 134.
3. James Redfield, *The Celestine Prophecy*, (New York: Warner Books, 1993).
4. *Rolling Stone*, October 29, 1992.
5. Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1981), pp 297-316.
6. The Gospel According to Luke, chapter 11, verse 39. The wording of all quotations from Luke is from the translation called *The Message*, by Eugene Peterson, (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1993). If you would like to read The Gospel According to Luke for yourself, please write for a free copy to the Dare address on the back cover.
7. Genesis, *We Can't Dance*, (Anthony Banks Ltd/Philip Collins Ltd/Michael Rutherford Ltd, 1991).
8. 'Tithing' is the ancient practice of giving a tenth of one's income to God. The Pharisees were even tithing their nickels and dimes.
9. The Gospel According to Luke chapter 11, verse 42.
10. Tax men are not popular in any culture. In Jesus' culture, however, matters were made worse by the fact that the (Jewish) tax men were collecting taxes from their fellow Jews on behalf of the occupying power of Rome. They would be about as popular as Palestinians today being employed by Israel to collect taxes for Israel from other Palestinians!
11. The Gospel According to Luke, chapter 18, verses 9 to 14.
12. For an account of one such party, and the disapproval of the religious folk, see The Gospel According to Luke,

chapter 5, verses 27 to 32.

13. For example, David Moberg, *The Church as Social Institution*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, Third Edition, 1984), pp 118-124.
14. It can be seen in the The Acts of the Apostles, also (probably) by Luke, and in early letters like those to Timothy and Titus. All these are found in The New Testament.
15. 'Of course, Constantinianism had begun earlier than 313...but dates, like birth and death, remind us that the way things were and are is not set in stone.' Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), p 17.
16. Kenneth Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, (New York: Harper, 1953), pp 92-93: '[Constantine] granted to members of the Christian clergy...freedom from all contributions to the state... Wills in favour of the Church were permitted. The Christian Sunday was ordered placed in the same legal position as the pagan feasts... Litigants might bring suit in a bishop's court and the decision rendered was to be respected by the civil authorities... He built and enlarged churches.' Cf 'Constantine, having recognized Christianity...in effect decided to make it a buttress of his State.' Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976), p 76.
17. The Gospel According to John, chapter 17, verse 21.
18. 'Beyond Institutions', *Ideas*, CBC Radio, David Cayley, writer, March 16-18 and 23-25, 1994. Reprinted with permission.
19. Huston Smith, *Mother Jones: the Investigative Magazine*, December 1997, p 42.
20. This image is explored more fully in another Dare booklet