“There is No Justice There will be No Peace”

- Arthur Solomon

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*Allen Boesak’s poem from his address before the World Council of Churches, Vancouver, 1983 29

If there is no Justice
There will be no Peace,

Today, the world has motion, but no direction.
Passion, but no compassion.
Production, but no equitable distribution.
Religion, but no faith.
Laws, but no justice.
Goods, but no God.

Each new economic advance
Gives birth to a new moral pain,
Each new technological discovery to new fears from the seas
as much as from the skies.

(Allen Boesak, 1983)*

Our people were given many prophecies.
Before the Strangers came across the oceans
to this sacred land with their strange ways,
There were none of our people in prison,
There simply were no prisons
Because we had a better way.

We were called savages and pagans,
And, like all people everywhere,
We were less than perfect, but we had no prisons then,
And we have no need of them now.

We know how the history books were written to make us out
As less than humans, and we know that even today
in the prisons our people are called wagon burners
and every desplicable name that can be used.
It is hatred in its vilest form.

Our people were told long ago
that a strange people would come to this sacred land,
The first ones would have hair like fire (Norsemen),
but they wouldn’t stay long.
Then later would come other people with white faces and
white skins.
They would have two faces:
One would be the face of brotherhood
And one would be the face of anger.

If they came with the face of brotherhood everything would
be okay;
If they came with the face of anger,
It would be very hard for us.
It's very clear to us which face they were wearing when they came.
It was also told that these white skinned strangers
would have no eyes and no ears,

And it has become very clear what that meant for us
because of the desecration of the earth and the people.

Somewhere back in history those strangers had dispensed with
the fundamental laws of creation and made their own
laws,
out of which came the chaos of prisons and wars
and oppression of all life on this planet.

The fundamental laws of creation were established by the Creator God
So that all things would work in harmony and balance for all time.

Having dispensed with the natural laws of creation,
The God of Worship became the God of Materialism
And to the God of Creation, lip service only was given.

How long can we laugh in the face of God, while we
mindlessly
And deliberately destroy what God has created?

What differentiates Native people in North America
From the strangers who came to this sacred land is
a difference in philosophy.
One philosophy is based on a false principle and
that principle is materialism.
The principle that our people lived by was based on the
power
and the beauty and the sacredness and
the harmony of creation.

Our people always understood very clearly that we could not own
What belongs to the Creator of all things in the Universe.

Our purpose was to live in harmony with the rest of Creation
Not to possess what belongs to God.

For that we were called savages and pagans and
We are still seen that way
Today by the vast majority of people in this society.

In contrast to the principle on which our philosophy was based
There came a people with a philosophy based on ownership,
They could own anything regardless of how they got it,
Whether by violence or by deception.

Both methods were used to the fullest extent possible,
Along with those methods were two other principles, and they were
Self deception and rationalization so that it was possible
To rationalize the most evil deeds right out of existence,
Such as wiping out whole nations of people in the western hemisphere.
And all this was done by people who insisted that they were
Christian and civilized.

These people who came to this land, came in violence,
They have lived in violence, and they will go in violence
But it will be the violence of the one who will re-establish
The right order of creation again, as it once was.

After more than seventy-five years, I have finally come to
understand
What was meant by the Bible saying that
“The meek shall inherit the earth.”
We have never claimed to be the owners of this land
Because we can not own what belongs to God.

We claim to be the caretakers of this land because
Our bond is with
The Creator and the ones who lived here before us
And those who will come after us.

It is a sacred trust that we hold for all time.

We are totally dependent on creation for life and health
and well being,
But creation is not dependent on us.

We are responsible to leave this earth in a good way
For those who will come after us,
not to contaminate or make it uninhabitable.

We have lived on this sacred land for a hundred thousand
years,
Our teachings tell us that we were put here
by the One who gave us life.
We did not cross the Bering Strait as the anthropologists say.

We have lived here since long before there was written history
And we had no prisons, we had no police, we had no prison guards,
We had no lawyers and no judges, but
That does not mean that we had no laws to live by.
We had strict codes to live by and they still exist today.

The laws of the people were written in the hearts and minds
and the souls of the people.
When Justice had to be done it was tempered with mercy,
Something I have never seen in a court of law in Canada
or the U.S.A.
Where it seems that the law is more important than the people.
Especially if the people are Native or black or dispossessed,
For then the law comes down with full force.

Courts of law are fearsome places to go into
Where it is always the state against the individual
and if the individual has no money then God help him or her
Because the state has no mercy as it is represented by the courts.
We live in a society that blames the victim for being victimized
Where money and possessions are vastly more important than justice.

There was one case last summer where a young man was convicted of rape in a court in Sault Ste. Marie.
The judge gave him four or six months in prison, which he could serve on weekends, on the basis that, as the judge said, 
“He came from a good family (rich, white people) and they had suffered enough already”.

In contrast to that, two Native women at Kenora broke five hundred dollars worth of windows, according to a newspaper report, at a school at White Dog Reserve. One of the women was given nine years and the other seven to be served at the Prison for Women in Kingston, Ontario.

Only a massive intervention by Native organizations in Canada modified their sentences.

What is Justice?

In another case, a young Native man at Kingston penitentiary was shot dead at short range by a prison guard.
The prisoner had let go of his hostage and was asking for my help as a Native spiritual helper.

It is an eight hour drive from where I live on the French River. A float plane might have come to pick me up. The authorities chose to murder that young man instead. I could have prevented that murder with their help.

“Thou Shalt not kill”

Does the state not have to live by the same law of God as others?

He could have been wounded or quickly overpowered. He had no gun. He had let go of his hostage. Why murder him in cold blood?

Was he killed to put terror in the hearts of other prisoners?

There was an enquiry sometimes after that official murder at K.P. The guard was exonerated.
It was so incredibly absurd and so evil that one friend who was there at the time of the enquiry said,
“I have to go outside and puke. This is too much for me to stomach”.

One commits murder and in an official court it is covered up.
Is that Canadian justice?
Prisons are an abomination.
They are a blasphemy in the face of God.
The criminal Just Us System is obscene,
It has nothing to do with Justice.
It has only to do with vengeance and control.

The poor people have to obey the laws
But the rich people who make the laws.

They said that piracy on the high seas was abolished a long time ago,
When all they really did was to bring it ashore and make it legal.
Mark Twain once said,
“I don’t know which is the bigger crime, whether to rob a bank or to start a bank”.

I can not come to believe that God ever intended For any of her children - his children to be locked up in iron cages behind stone walls.
And it is incredibly strange to me that only those Who call themselves Christian and civilized Are the ones who need prisons.

Perhaps it is because a violent people need a violent means of control
And that is what prisons are all about.

Prisons in Canada are simply a white racist institution with a track record of eighty per cent failure
If the healing professions had an eighty per cent failure rate they would soon be abandoned

So why do we persist in trying to heal social ills with a system that is an eighty per cent failure?
There are those of us who believe that there must be a divine Creator who made it all and keeps it all together. To believe otherwise is to believe that there is no God, and at no time in the history of the human family has the earth been so desecrated, nor is it going to be for very much longer.

We are aware of the deliberate genocidal policies practiced against us by all governments of North America over the last five hundred years against the aboriginal people of this land. And that the main line churches of North America very willingly participated in that genocide.

We remember the infested blankets that were given to our people to wipe them out. We do not seek revenge, instead we endure the continuing atrocities practiced against us. We are aware of the wanton killing of our people not only in the past but in the present by police and prison guards in the name of the law. We can not forget and we know that God has not forgotten either.

But we know also that the way it is now is not the way it is going to be for very much longer.

We have not forgotten our people who suffer in the prisons of K.K. KANADA: Donald Marshall Jr., Cameron Kerley, Flying Eagle, Leonard Peltier and countless others...

We know that most of our people in prisons have been ripped off from their families by the Children's Aid Societies who operate without control out of an unbelievable arrogance that can not be fathomed. They are totally involved with the genocidal policies of this nation.

Where can we turn for mercy or justice? We have been under attack for five hundred years, but we will endure. If this earth will survive, we will survive.

God did not put us on this earth to disappear from the greed and the wrath of those who could never comprehend the purpose and the meaning of life for all living things.

Like the prisons, the National Parole Board is out of control. It is my experience that the Parole Board is interested only in keeping the prisons full. There is no mercy there either, only another part of the evil empire.

There was an investigation of the Criminal Just Us Cystem in Nova Scotia about the false imprisonment of Donald Marshall Jr.

There is presently an inquiry in Manitoba and an inquiry in Toronto. There is also an enquiry into the many killings by the R.C.M.P. of the people of the Blood Nation in Alberta.

We believe that all this is only the tip of the iceberg: One day the whole truth will be revealed in its stark nakedness.

There has been an open season on Native people and Black people all the way through the years. We are hated simply because we are different but the law of God is “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”
There are alternatives to prisons, in fact there need be no prisons at all. But it means right living. It means sharing the gifts of God equally with all of God’s children.

That is what all faith traditions teach, but between the teaching and the living there appears to be no connecting link.

It seems pointless to propose the abolition of prisons to a society that does not want to look at working models that existed in the past and would still work today if they were not prevented by the rich and powerful and their captive state governments.

The whole criminal justice system serves as an excellent camouflage for the robber barons who impoverish the whole world stealing even the inheritance of their own children.

Long ago, Pope Gregory said, “Those who steal the inheritance of the poor are the murderers of those who die every day for the want of it.”

Stokely Carmichael once said, “The more money you got the less they gonna ask you how you got it.”

Yes, the rich get richer and the poor go to jail. For us, the Native people of this country with its genocidal policies recognize three faces of the beast: The Department of Indian Affairs; The Children’s Aid Societies; and, The Criminal Justice System.

It is of more than passing interest that racist South Africa sent representatives to Canada to learn how this country did it for “their Indians.” Then went back and did the same thing to the indigenous black people in their own homeland.

Two years ago, when Pieter Botha said, “There has to be law and order,” we who cared asked aloud, “Whose law and whose order?” It is no different here in Canada.

We have survived the onslaught of Christianity and civilization. When the earth is made clean again we will be here to take care of it, to make sure that it stays clean for the ones who come after we are gone.

This document does not speak to the sense of outrage against the Children’s Aid Societies of Canada who have worked so diligently and deliberately to destroy Native families in their superior and arrogant belief that they knew best. It does not speak to the reality that most of our people in the prisons started out by being ripped off from their families by Children’s Aid, becoming lost people without roots as a result.

It does not speak to the unutterable lack of humanity and sense of common decency that exists within the National Parole Board of Canada. Racism is alive and well in Canada and there is no justice for the Aboriginal people of Canada in the law courts of Canada.

The reality for the Aboriginal people of Australia is precisely the same except that the churches of Australia have picked up their responsibility and expressed their outrage against a system that is out of control.

CONCLUSION

I do not propose to talk about alternatives to prison because a question so serious must be dealt with at another place and another time where we can access the sincerity of those who propose alternatives.

We have always had alternatives but those whom we tried to talk to were such that they could not hear us.

Dr. Gilliam Baker was asked by the United Nations to write a document from her studies of previous empires from the Sumerian Empire eight thousand years before Christ to the present. She described in words and graphs how each empire rose to their highest point of arrogance and from there fell to their total dissolution.” She said of the United States that their highest point of arrogance was when they dropped those two bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. She said that the U.S. empire would come apart by 1982. Well, that has not happened but it is obvious that the disintegration is well along.

I said at the beginning that we were given many teachings or prophecies about what was going to be and one of those teachings was about “When the money will die.” When that happens there will be total chaos. According to some of the Native shamans, that will happen before the year 2000.

Another is that the Thunder People will take back their power, electricity and all those satellites in the sky on which so much now depends will be like the pebbles dropped by a little boy into the ocean.
The Mayan teachings said

We would live through nine descending hells,

Each would be worse than the last.

But that time would end at sunrise on August 17, 1987.

From there would begin a new time,

The time we are in now,

The time when the positive is transcending the negative.

At some point there will be

peace and tranquility on the earth again.

But it will not come until after the purification has happened

when peace and justice and good order

will be the way of things again.

This document is only a thumb nail sketch of what is
and what will be.