A black and white photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there are rolling hills with sparse vegetation. In the middle ground, a small village is visible, featuring a prominent church with a steeple and several smaller buildings. The background consists of large, rounded hills under a cloudy sky. The overall scene is peaceful and rural.

Decolonising Land and Soul: A Quaker Testimony

Alastair McIntosh

2015

Sunderland P. Gardner Lecture

ALASTAIR MCINTOSH has been called an eco-warrior due to his ecological activism. He grew up in a close-knit community in Lewis, a remote island in the Outer Hebrides. In this pamphlet he begins with a brief history of land evictions, starting with the Highland Clearances in the 18th and 19th centuries, and the Irish famine in the mid-1880s. Land, originally a divine gift, a source of community, and the very source of life, was commodified. This colonisation process continued when those evicted by the British in the British Isles became, in turn, oppressors of native peoples in overseas lands who were driven onto reservations and, in the case of some tribes, exterminated.

Alastair describes the successful campaign in the 1990s to save a beautiful Hebridean mountain from developers who want to turn it into a giant superquarry. He also presents a case study of the quarry campaign at Digby Neck, Nova Scotia, where the community is still fighting against corporate interests.

He closes by suggesting that the experiential, or mystical, nature of our Quaker tradition may have a contribution to make to the spiritual activism of the future.

Decolonising Land and Soul: A Quaker Testimony

by Alastair McIntosh

2015 Sunderland P. Gardner Lecture

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INTRODUCTION

“His sermons were always delivered extemporarily, as Gardner would not speak unless he felt that his words reflected the teachings of the Gospel. At times this practice was misunderstood, and impatience would be expressed; however ...” – *Biographical sketch of Sunderland P. Gardner by his descendant, Michael S. Smith*¹

Ah, Friends. The pregnant “however”! That expectant waiting on how the Spirit might move that is our Quaker hallmark. Let me leave hanging whatever it was that Sunderland P. Gardner went on to say. It will suffice to pick up on three preceding points from that quotation about our long-deceased Friend, after whom tonight’s lecture is named.

First, unfashionable though this might be today amongst liberal Friends, Gardner conducted a vigorous teaching ministry. Born in Albany, New York, in 1802, and until his death in Farmington, Ontario, in 1893, he preached on average once a week. You, dear Friends, are to suffer much worse at my hands during the course of this week! I said to those dedicated people on your Program Committee that if I was going to fly from Scotland in the face of climate change and accept your kind invitation, then you needed to make full use of my so doing. That is why, during the course of this week, I will also be delivering afternoon lecture/workshops on: 1) *Spiritual Activism and its Basis in Mystical Experience*²; 2) *Quaker Peace Testimony in Working with the Military*³; 3) *Land Reform and Applied Liberation Theology Today*⁴; and 4) *Reclaiming the Cross from Violent Theories of Redemption*⁵.

Second, and perhaps even more unfashionably, Sunderland P. Gardner would only speak when grounded in the Gospel of Christ. In recent decades we Friends have received many refugees who have suffered from spiritual abuse or lesser forms of dissatisfaction from within their existing denominations. This often brings with it an understandable allergy to talk of God or Christ. However, I intend to take you at your word. You have asked me to deliver a Sunderland P. Gardner lecture, not a Richard Dawkins lecture. If Sunderland's ghost is listening, I hope that I'll not leave him restless.

Third, he would always speak extemporarily. I love that. Only if I have to be highly specific do I speak to a script. How else can we speak in a manner that lets the Spirit move, and move in accordance with the sense of the place, people and time? Remember, from a Quaker point of view it is not so much Alastair McIntosh whose voice is invited tonight, but the Spirit moving in that vessel. I'll therefore try and be as open as I can, though I confess to having cheated a little, in that my subject matter is highly visual. I therefore have slides with which to illustrate and some of these will be used in the published version of this lecture.

This, the published version, will be based on my memory of what I said on the night. In places I will enrich it from my other sessions during the week. As such, this write-up should be thought of as being based on my lecture, and not the direct words whispered into the ether at the time. My theme is *Decolonising Land and Soul*. This intends to express a sense that it's not just the land that's been colonised, and on both sides of the Atlantic; the soul of the coloniser has also been colonised by the spirit of colonisation. This spirit runs through most of us, mostly unconsciously, therefore decolonisation is a multi-layered process.

I define colonisation as the presumption to take that which has not been given. Is that any different from a straight definition of theft? Only inasmuch as we are talking about structures of domination that are collective and politically constellated, rather than one-on-one. In approaching this, I will structure my lecture according to the following four themes.

- 1) **Land and the Colonisation of the Soul:** Here I'll summarise from the history of Scotland and Ireland, pointing to the knock-on effects on Canada.
- 2) **Decolonising Land and the Soul Today:** Using case studies of land reform on the Isle of Eigg and the superquarry campaign on the Isle of Harris, I'll explore spiritual activism and the contribution of liberation theology.

- 3) **Digby Neck – Resisting Corporate Colonisation:** A case study of the quarry campaign at Digby Neck in Nova Scotia, and how this small community now stands on the front line of the corporate assault on democratic governance.
- 4) **A Decolonising Quaker Theology for the Third Millennium:** A closing reflection on Quaker theology and the contribution it can offer to a spiritual activism for the future, as well as to a fit-for-purpose Christianity of the third millennium.

PART ONE

Land and the Colonisation of the Soul

Being Walkers Between the Worlds

I was raised by an English mother and a Scots father on the Hebridean island of Lewis, where Dad was the village doctor serving the parish of North Lochs. My background was establishment middle class on the medical front, but my other foot was in our “crofting” or small scale farming and fishing communities. In such a community you grow up with friends for life who are more than just Facebook friends to be liked or unliked at the click of a mouse. We grew up endowed with a very profound sense of community where we were each other’s keepers. As youths we’d be allowed to take the small boats out to sea. On returning, we’d share out the catch in the village. That was the way of it. We lived with one another and for one another. Some say those days are gone now. Others say it won’t stop so long as we keep it going. It was a predominantly Presbyterian community, and the very notion of community remains our theology of insistence.

At university in Aberdeen from 1973 to 1977 my mind opened to other influences. I discovered that while our communities had been poor, this was not in the way that urban folks – trapped without recourse to nature’s bounty – experienced poverty. I also woke up to world poverty. On graduating, with a degree in earth sciences with a sub-major in both psychology and moral philosophy – the kind of generalist mix you could do in an old Scots university – I joined Voluntary Service Overseas and was sent to Papua New Guinea.



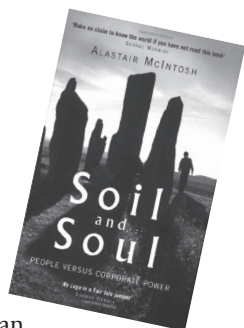
Above: Childhood on the Isle of Lewis. Alastair with his sister Isobel and friend Alex George Morrison.

Alastair (on right) with Alex George at a loch where they fished as boys.



For one coming from such a highly Presbyterian part of the world as the Isle of Lewis I was sent, of all postings, to teach maths and science on a Roman Catholic mission school in the remote Gulf Province. But it was great. These people were getting to grips with the 1960s Vatican II reforms of their church, and I was exposed to ideas such as liberation theology and integral human development. I had a penchant for matters electrical, and ended up wiring a couple of village hydro-electric schemes in the mountains. A few years later, I came back to Papua New Guinea after having done a financial MBA at Edinburgh – that, to make myself more useful. This time I was the financial advisor to the South Pacific Appropriate Technology Foundation. It was “small is beautiful,” the *Whole Earth Catalogue*, and all that.

Gradually I learned that *ecology*, like the words *economy* and *ecumenical*, is rooted in the Greek *oikos* or *ecos*. It means “the home.” The *parish* is the *para-oikos* (as with “parochial”) – that which is parallel to, or alongside, the home. In other words, it is our context of neighbourliness or community. I became exposed to the question of land ownership. Later, after writing *Soil and Soul*, my friend Satish Kumar of Schumacher College and I would articulate the fullness of such community, or human ecology, as the triune relationship of soil, soul and society.



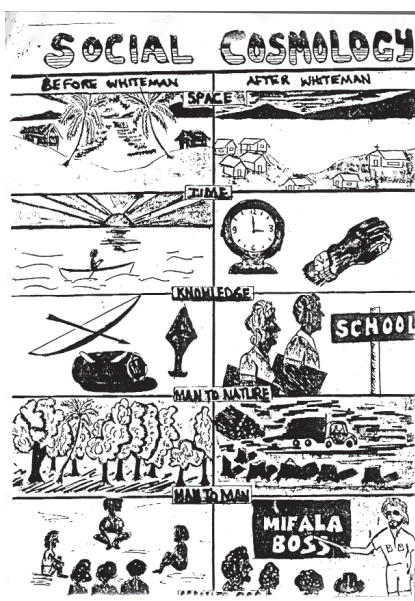
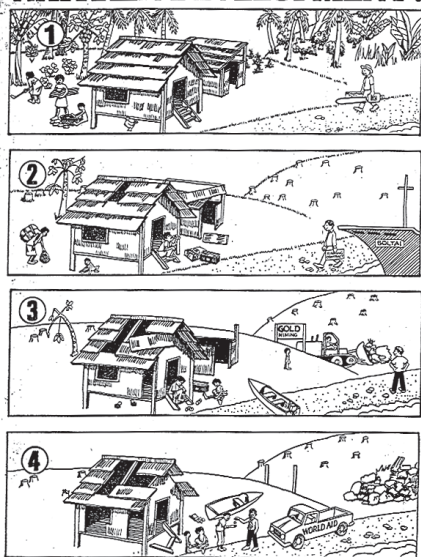


Alternator being carried down to small scale hydro plant, Bema, Papua New Guinea, 1979.

My teachers in learning about these things had been an interweaving of my Hebridean home, development thinkers in Melanesia (that is, Papua New Guinea and some of its neighbouring island nations), counterculture prophets Ivan Illich, Paulo Freire, Hermann Hesse, Carl Jung, Gustavo Gutiérrez (of liberation theology fame) as well as poets such as Walt Whitman, Alice Walker and Adrienne Rich.

Melanesian colleagues Miriam Layton, Margaret Ogomeni and Andrew Kauleni of Papua New Guinea and Fr John Roughan and Abraham Beanisia of the Solomon Isles taught me the importance of the land question. Gradually I woke up to the fact that being dominated by big feudal landlords back in Scotland, where half the land was held by some 500 big owners, was not a natural state of affairs. Furthermore, over large parts of the Highlands and Islands our forebears had been brutally forced out of their homelands to make way for sheep ranching and sporting estates. I asked Cicero, our old school classics teacher, why we had not been taught these things. He said: "It was not on the curriculum, and in any case, we were ashamed of it."

WATKAEN DEVELOPMENT?



Social Cosmology. Solomon Islands development training material.

We'd been raised to be proud of the British Empire. But this was history handed from the top down, a victor's history. That's why Gustavo Gutiérrez came to speak so powerfully to me. He advocates "doing" theology, and doing so "from the underside of history," from the perspective of the poor.

Scots, Canadians and Colonisation

What I discovered will be no surprise to most of you Canadians. When I come here, I find myself saying: "We were hardly taught about the Highland Clearances. We hardly knew." Here in the Maritime provinces many of you reply: "Well, we knew all about them. That's why we're over here!"

I don't think I need to labour the history too much to this audience. Briefly, until the latter decades of the sixteenth century, Highland Scotland was a clan- or extended family-based society, just like many other tribal indigenous peoples of the world. Change in a wider Europe had started with medieval feudalism. From around the sixteenth century, early modernity set in and, with it, the religious upheaval of the Reformation that gave expression to the Protestant faith.



The creation of a world of Yours and Ours.

At one level, the Reformation was about religious freedom from domination by the Roman Catholic church and a feudal landed aristocracy. At another level, it was tied in with a rising mercantile bourgeoisie and the development of capitalism. In Scotland in 1560, in the course of just one week, the parliament (which was not a democracy) redefined the nation as Protestant. While reformers such as John Knox had hoped that revenues from erstwhile church lands would fund a Protestant church and a school in every parish, the nobility seized the opportunity to carve up the land for their own enrichment. A world of Yours and Ours was created and that, underpinned by a Calvinist (or Presbyterian) religious framework.

The various Jacobite risings of the eighteenth century were really religious wars, except we don't often say that because it cuts too close to the bone of sectarianism. In 1746, the last of the risings – the '45 – was crushed at Culloden near Inverness. It was the last battle ever held on mainland British soil and, afterwards, clansmen were hunted down and slaughtered by the Redcoat troops of the British state. Women were raped and whole villages burned in reprisals. In recognition that the sword could pierce but not win hearts, a Royal Bounty fund was established by

the king to pay for missionaries to be sent to the Highlands bearing Bibles and to evangelise in “the true Protestant faith.” So began the era of “loyalty, royalty and Balmorality.” In the name of king and country, clansmen would – with help from the press gangs – be sent out across the world in Highland regiments to fight for “God and Empire.” The honours medals of the British state still bear that motto to this day.

As some clan land was confiscated and the rest became more and more commoditised, large numbers of the people – perhaps half a million, but there is no reliable historical count – were forced out in the Highland Clearances of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. My father’s maternal grandmother’s people were Maclennans (M’Lennan) from Strathconon in Ross-shire and my four-times-great-grandparents were cleared by the Balfours to create a sporting estate. Their eviction was typical of much that was happening at that time. In 1929 the historian, Tom Johnston who rose to become the Secretary of State for Scotland, wrote:⁶

The evictions of the Clan M’Lennan from Strathconan by the Balfour trustees were carried out in a most barbarous manner, and to this day the spot is shewn where the dispossessed men and women crouched together, praying rather for a merciful death than that they should be driven farther from the strath of their birth. When the father of the late leader [Arthur Balfour, British Prime Minister from 1902 to 1905] of the Conservative party fell heir to the estates “the gallows had succeeded the fever,” for he directed prompt eviction of another twenty-seven families, and today a parish, which in 1831 had a population of 2,023, carries only 445 people, mostly ghillies and their dependants on a London brewer’s hundred square-mile deer forest.

So often in history, the oppressed become the oppressors. You either beat them or have to join them. Many a Highlander in the New World got co-opted into narratives of racial supremacy. This sat comfortably with a type of Protestantism that taught that God had divided the world into the Elect and the Damned.⁷ Divide and rule was divinely ordained. In the case of Gaels from the Highlands and Islands, here were a people with the cultural characteristics and mores of indigeniety, yet with white skins and the newly implanted English tongue. Little wonder they became such effective adjutants of the Empire. Ask the First Nations elders. Ask the descendants of black slaves who had Scottish masters in the Barbados and the deep South. Not for nothing was the symbol of the Ku Klux Klan

the fiery cross, originally a symbol of the gathering of the clans in times of trouble, but now perverted by the violent theologies of violent men of violent times. With all of this came the imperial ideology of manifest destiny. This held that Anglo-American settlers had a divine mandate to rule the world for “God and Empire” and, linked to that, was the Doctrine of Discovery. Set in this context, we see the full significance of it being the United Church in Canada, with its Presbyterian roots, that is playing a leading role in calling for the Doctrine’s repudiation as part of its beautiful Truth and Reconciliation process.⁸

Neither should we fall into the lazy presumption that our Quaker hands were always clean. In the conference bookshop yesterday I bought a pamphlet of the 2006 James Backhouse Lecture of Australian Friends. Its title is *One Heart and a Wrong Spirit: The Religious Society of Friends and Colonial Racism*, and it was written by Polly O. (Daksi) Walker. Of Cherokee-Anglo descent, she tells that in Kansas, Oklahoma and Nebraska, the reservation schools policy was known as “the Quaker policy.” At the time it was thought to be an enlightened approach to “the Indian problem,” aiming as it did “to take the Indian out of the man” and thereby effect racial assimilation. Assimilation, that is, under the white man’s rulebook!

For all our reputation for “good works,” we Friends, too, have been a part of history and its problems. Neither should we overlook the fact that two presidents of the United States – Hoover and Nixon – were of Quaker backgrounds. A colonising mentality can only be perpetuated when the soul of the coloniser has become a carrier for the spirit of violence. That infection, as I have shown with this brief case study of Scottish history, is infectious. It is why, as we start to shape a Quakerism of the third millennium, our Peace Testimony is such a precious gift.

Towards a Cultural Psychotherapy

Just as in classical psychotherapy individuals might seek to recover their lost psychohistory to make sense of their suffering, so too, at a cultural level, we must do the same. We need to make sense of the layers and layers of violence and privation that were often heaped upon our forebears, and became internalised, normalised and perpetuated by them. This is why Gutiérrez places such emphasis on the poor learning their own social and cultural history. It is why Paulo Freire of Brazil similarly emphasises “conscientisation” – the coming together of consciousness and conscience – in his “pedagogy” (or education) of the oppressed.⁹

Such thought has strongly influenced my work on land reform, indigenous self-determination and environmental protection. It's not rocket science. It is simply a process, as the American theologian Walter Wink called it, of:

- 1) **Naming the Powers** (that Be), in order to state who oppresses and in what ways. Often this can be as prosaic a function as "follow the money";
- 2) **Unmasking the Powers**, to reveal exactly how they oppress, and why this violates (i.e. does violence to) life on Earth;
- 3) and both of those, in order to **Engage the Powers**; not to destroy and merely perpetuate the spiral of violence, but to wrestle the Powers that Be back to their higher, God-given vocation.¹⁰

Wink understood the spiritual world to be the *interiority* of the outer world that we move in. A human being can be defined as little more than an ego on legs of meat, but what makes us fully human is our spiritual interiority, the soul. Wink also argued that just as people have a spiritual interiority, so too do entities such as villages, towns, nations and even buildings. Nature itself is ensouled. These spiritual forces are, in the widest sense of the term, Powers that Be. In engaging with power we are therefore not only engaging with outward structures such as institutions, laws and armies; we are also engaging with the interior psychodynamics that give these things cohesion. As such, said Wink, we can derive a triune formula.

- 1) The Powers are good – because all power is essentially God-given;
- 2) The Powers are fallen – because in this world, there is always the tendency for power to corrupt;
- 3) Therefore the Powers must be redeemed.

Equally, the nations are good, are fallen, and must be redeemed, thus setting out the spiritual task of nation building for our times.

To engage the Powers is therefore a redemptive process. The name of the game is not to destroy, as with the path of violence, but to wrestle the Powers that Be back to their higher, God-given vocations. Set in this framework, our activism for social, environmental and perhaps religious change becomes *spiritual activism*. Such cultural psychotherapy is what the shamans, bards and prophets have always done.

It is guided in part by the head, but the greater part is of the heart, thus often given voice through poetry, protest song and the other arts.

Let me give a couple of examples. Here is the former Irish Taoiseach (prime minister), Jack Lynch, talking about the psychological knock-on effects of the Great Famine of the 1840s, a famine induced by English-cum-British colonisation that left a million dead, forced another million to emigrate, and caused the population of that small country to fall by nearly a quarter:

There is more in us than we know about, the Famine which happened 150 years ago, it's three lifetimes at most. Things that happened then were handed on from father to son, from mother to daughter, down to this day. They're within us now and we don't deal with them... But music – it's in the music, it seems to me. The culture can actually carry those things in all kinds of invisible ways, in gesture, in movement, in language, in humour and in music.

Then, as an example of expression in the music, here is part of a voiceover to a track called *Famine* by the Irish singer, Sinead O'Connor:

Okay, I want to talk about Ireland,
Specifically I want to talk about the Famine...
You see we're like a child that's been battered,
Has to drive it out of its head because it's frightened,
still feels all the painful feelings
But they lose contact with the memory and this leads
To massive self-destruction, alcoholism, drug addiction,
All desperate attempts at running
And in its worst form becomes actual killing.
And if there ever is goin' to be healing,
There has to be remembering,
So that there then can be forgiving,
There has to be knowledge and understanding.

If cultural psychotherapy driven by the conscientising effects of liberation theology is the theory, then what can it look like in practice? I'm going to summarise two examples from my own activism in the Scottish Hebrides. One is the campaign that brought the Isle of Eigg into community ownership. The other was a parallel campaign that helped to save the mountain, *Roineabhal*, on the Isle of Harris, from

being turned into the biggest roadstone quarry in the world. I was only one of many players in these campaigns and a wide matrix of approaches helped them to succeed. I do not want to overstate the part of spiritual activism. At the same time, to neglect the less visible, the interiority of engaging the Powers that Be, might be to miss a key component and thereby fail to learn lessons that could be helpful elsewhere.

PART TWO

Decolonising Land and the Soul Today

Land Reform on the Isle of Eigg

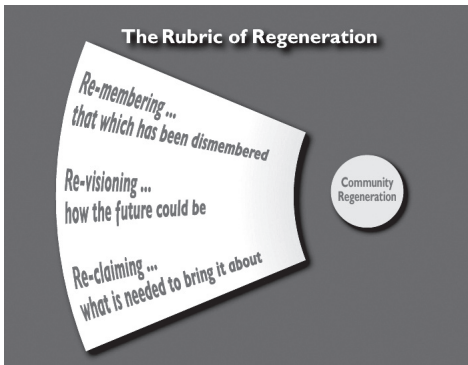
After returning from my second period in Papua New Guinea, I worked for five years as business advisor to the Iona Community. This is an ecumenical movement that grew from rebuilding the ancient abbey on the Isle of Iona. It aims “to find new ways to touch the hearts of all” in rebuilding Christian religion today, informed in part from roots in the early Celtic church. In 1990 I lay down that role and took up a new position at the University of Edinburgh, where I helped to develop a master’s programme in human ecology. One day, the Rev. John Harvey, a Church of Scotland minister who was the leader of the Community, telephoned. He said he was sending Tom Forsyth to see me, a crofter (or small scale farmer) from Scoraig in the Highlands. Tom was setting up an Isle of Eigg Trust to try and bring the 3,000-hectare Hebridean island into community ownership. He said that I should give him a hearing.

So began a crazy process! We engaged with a beleaguered island community, helped to raise historical awareness and to legitimise challenges to power, established the legal shell of a land trust (albeit penniless), stimulated help from the outside, and helped to spark tactics by which the islanders effected market spoiling. To cut short a long story that I’ve told in *Soil and Soul*, after six years the Isle of Eigg came into community ownership. In what was often a difficult process, its residents learned – mainly through informal self-teaching – to *name* outrageous landlordism. To *unmask* how landed power oppressed the life of their community. And to *engage* the landlord, eventually buying the island with a worldwide public appeal – getting it for a knock-down price because “the natives were restless”!

Often at the hardest times we used the Quaker injunction, to be “patterns and examples.” Eigg has now become a pattern and example for the world. A thriving and self-governing community has been restored. Affordable housing has been built. Jobs have been created by the islander’s freed-up entrepreneurial endeavours. The place is a hotbed of cultural, political and artistic creativity. The young have been coming back and having babies. Ancient woodlands are regenerating. The island generates nearly all its own electricity from a combination of hydro, solar and wind that they manage by themselves. Google the words *YouTube*, *Eigg* and *Al Jazeera* (yes!), and some brilliant news documentary footage will come up showing what’s been achieved. Our wildest dreams from the early days have been far surpassed.

There are many sub-stories that could be told as to how this came about, but I want to confine my comments here to one narrow but crucial point. A “prayerful” approach was central to the parts that Tom and I played. While it was invisible to most people, and ridiculous to some, it was important with certain key gatekeepers and tradition bearers within this traditionally Roman Catholic community. Not only that, but as modern land reform has expanded across Scotland, I have shown (in a research paper with a former student) that such an approach has also had impact in other communities and with key leaders.¹¹

The heart of what gives motive force here is the power of *legitimacy*. Cultural gatekeepers don’t come from nowhere. Those who are powered up from somewhere that is deeper than their egos draw their sense of role, purpose and calling partly from an inner assurance that, I think, is spiritual. Where did it show itself? One place was in extemporaneous prayer by an albeit tiny cluster of residents, mainly women, in the ecumenical services held in the island’s little Catholic Church. Also, over quiet cups of tea with hushed voices. Another memory I have is of an island tradition bearer, looking down at the ground when half drunk outside the island’s tea room, and making the observation: “God is in the little flowers.” I find it hard to put these moments with key islanders into words. They were felt exchanges as much as anything outwards or formal. I discuss such moments of deepening in *Soil and Soul*, with more of the space needed to create a clearer impression. What I would say is that I derived, partly from these moments, an approach that I call the Rubric of Regeneration.



The Rubric of Regeneration
(from Alastair McIntosh, *Rekindling
Community*, Green Books, 2008)

I came to this after reflecting on my experiences in Melanesia, and from studying Walter Wink and Gustavo Gutiérrez. Gutiérrez states the formula: "To liberate is to give life." That is the spiritual compass we must go by if we are to see and be able to work with these things. Does it give life? He goes on to unpack three levels of liberation.¹² Namely, liberation at:

- 1) **The Social Level:** as "liberation from social situations of oppression and marginalization."
- 2) **The Psychological Level:** as "a personal transformation by which we live with profound inner freedom in the face of every kind of servitude."
- 3) **The Spiritual Level:** as "liberation from sin, which attacks the deepest root of all servitude; for sin is the breaking of friendship with God and with other human beings."

Notice how, when viewing human relationships through such a schema, one cannot proceed by hating the oppressor. One has to treat one's opponent as a *worthy opponent*. By all means push with one hand, but always place the other hand behind so as to catch and hold. As Paulo Freire points out: at the end of the day, oppression can only be resolved if the oppressor is liberated too. It means, as Ram Dass describes it, doing what you have to do with people, but *trying to keep your heart open to them*.

Such is never easy work. It is work that often gets misunderstood; especially, and sometimes wilfully, by those whose energy for action comes from the projection of their own unresolved psychodynamics. These are considerations that render the best of Quaker skills vital to the work of well-grounded spiritual activism in our world today.¹³

The Harris Superquarry Campaign

At the same time as Eigg was kicking off in 1991, another land-related concern arose. An English multinational company, Redland, launched a proposal for a quarry on the highest mountain in the south of the Hebridean island where I was raised. It would have been the biggest quarry in the world, shipping the stone out to build roads in places that no longer find quarrying acceptable, but which avidly consume quarry products.

The islands of Lewis and Harris are a single landmass, separated not by water but by a mountain range. Here is where they give you two islands for the price of one. I was raised on Lewis in the north, but Harris was also always special to me. Redland put in planning permission for their "superquarry" just after I'd returned from an evaluation of development projects in the South Pacific. This had included visiting Bougainville Island, a part of Papua New Guinea that had been ripped apart by a civil war instigated by a giant copper mine.

Again, the details of the superquarry campaign that followed, and which ran for thirteen years, are documented in *Soil and Soul*. To summarise, my approach was to place spiritual testimony before the government public inquiry for considering planning permission. My hope was that this would chime chords at deeper levels.



Roineabhal, the mountain on the Isle of Harris that was threatened by a superquarry.

As I have said, the islands in the northern Outer Hebrides are highly Presbyterian. Their Calvinism, of the Westminster Confession of Faith, had not previously been well known for its environmentalism. However, I wanted to show that it was there, and not just in such Bible passages as Psalm 104, and the full-on “speak to the Earth, and it shall teach thee” nature mysticism of Job chapters 12 and 36 to 39; or, for that matter, in Jesus’ frequent respites from the multitudes to the mountain, lake or wilderness. In addition to these authoritative sources, Calvin speaks in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* of the Creation as a “beautiful theatre,” and the Westminster Shorter Catechism, which we had all learned during religious “instruction” at school, observes that, “God executeth His decrees in the works of creation and providence.”

These were slender, but culturally suitable starting points. One thing led to another, and what turned on the power of this form of witness and consciousness-raising was when I managed to recruit two witnesses to my case at the public inquiry.¹⁴ One was the Rev. Prof. Donald Macleod of the Free Church College in Edinburgh (now the Edinburgh Theological Seminary), a man who is held, by many, to be Scotland’s greatest living Calvinist thinker. The nub of his testimony is captured in these paragraphs from the submission that he read to the inquiry reporter:

To an extent that has no parallel elsewhere in the world, the ideology and culture of Harris are underpinned by Presbyterian theology.... The people of Harris live conscious of the glory of God.... Theologically, the primary function of the Creation is to serve as a revelation of God.... To spoil the Creation is to disable it from performing this function...

Torn between their love of the land and their need for jobs, they face a cruel dilemma. Capitalism offers to help them in characteristic fashion: it will relieve unemployment provided the people surrender guardianship of the land, thus violating their own deepest instincts.

What I’m asking is to reflect on whether this project is to the glory of God. Do we have God’s mandate to inflict on Creation a scar of this magnitude...? In my view no hole in the ground could bear that testimony as Roineabhal presently does.

My other witness was Sulian Stone Eagle Herney, at that time War Chief to the Mi'Kmaq First Nation. In Nova Scotia, he had led a campaign that prevented a similar superquarrying of the Mi'Kmaq's sacred mountain, Kluscap (sometimes stranglified as "Glooscap").¹⁵ I was challenged by Canada's CBC TV as to how, as a Quaker, I could invoke the assistance of a war chief, when I was a pacifist. I answered, that if I confined my activist engagements only to those who shared my views on nonviolence, then I'd have a mighty small pool on which to draw! In any case, I was inviting him primarily in his capacity as a sacred pipe carrier. The chief testified:

Our philosophy and spirituality has always been one where man was not dominant over the creation or other life forms, which we shared this territory with. It was always our belief, and still is our belief, that the Creator had placed the Mi'Kmaq people as caretakers of Mother Earth. Somewhere in the past hundreds of years the majority of the indigenous people, perhaps because of the influence of the non-natives to our territory, became parasites of Mother Earth, thus destroying her natural bounty. It is the resurrection of our traditional values and codes of conduct that our elders reintroduced to this generation that reawakened the true Mi'Kmaq Spirit and spiritual connection to Mother Earth and the Creator...

It is my firm belief that we, of this generation, have no hope in solving the environmental deterioration that is ongoing as we speak. However, I also have firm convictions that we, of this generation, may be able to slow down the destruction of our Mother Earth enough so that the next generation that will be replacing our leaders will find the solutions and the cure for Mother Earth.

If we fail to do so Mother Earth will cleanse herself of the offending organism that is killing her. This is our teaching.

In the end, the public inquiry report devoted hardly a paragraph to these testimonies. It noted that they had been heard, but passed no comment. However, as I'd hoped, the intervention helped to galvanise public debate on the island. The testimonies provided a framework that helped to legitimise and embolden the voice of certain key local gatekeepers of opinion and of blessing, or its withholding. These vented feelings had previously run so deep, as to have been difficult to articulate, because the language and conceptual handles had been lacking in everyday discourse. For a multitude of reasons, of which the theological and spiritual intercessions were only one, the local community changed its view and

withdrew its support for the quarry. As the prospects of profit dimmed, Redland's share price crashed. A predatory takeover followed. Capitalism did its darndest, and Redland got swallowed up by the Paris-based Lafarge, the biggest cement and aggregates company in the world.

We were now no longer saying "no" to the superquarry. Henceforth, it was to be: "*non, non et trois fois, non!*"

When the first edition of *Soil and Soul* came out in 2001, that's where the story had to leave off. However, the book got picked up by a French tourist, Thierry Groussin, who was on holiday in Scotland. Horrified that a company of Lafarge's reputation should even consider landing such a project on Scotland, he asked if I could take him to the island. Together with Adrian, his teenage son, we climbed to the top of the mountain. On arrival, and to my astonishment, Thierry took out his mobile phone, and called business contacts in France. Within a few weeks, I was meeting with three of Lafarge's vice-presidents in Paris. They, in turn, asked me to arrange for them to visit the island so that they could confer with all parties. The outcome, over the course of two years, was that we negotiated a *dignified exit strategy*. They had decided that in the trade-off between profit and reputational management, this was not the best place to locate a quarry. Today, the mountain rests intact.

There is a sequel. During these negotiations, such a frank and mutually respectful relationship built up between us, that Lafarge came back to me.

"Well, Alastair," they said, "We agreed with you that going ahead with a quarry in this location would not have been sufficiently in alignment with our corporate social and environmental values. But we all use quarry products. You too! Will you join our Sustainability Stakeholders' Panel, and help us to understand how we might conduct our business better?"

I said, "What? Your *corporate greenwash* panel!" However, I sought advice from my campaigning colleagues. All agreed that if we use corporate products, we had an obligation to do what Lafarge was asking. Our campaigning must be "pull" as well as "push."

I served on the Panel, unpaid as a matter of principle and to avoid crossed wires, for ten years until 2013. It was a very rich experience. During that time, Lafarge took measures that cut its carbon dioxide emissions per ton of cement produced

by about a quarter. It shifted the structure of its business away from being purely an extractive industry, and reoriented its positioning towards “sustainable building solutions.” The new focus was on energy efficient materials, dematerialisation (less raw materials for the same effect), site biodiversity restoration, emissions curtailment, and measures to tackle corruption and human rights abuses in countries where this is a systemic problem. A parting achievement just before I came off the Panel, one that particularly pleased me, was that they became the first major extractive corporation to recognise the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.¹⁶

From time to time, when engaged in robust debates at meetings chaired by the chief executive, Bruno Lafont, I would remind the company’s executives that Lafarge was started by French priests. These had been passionate about rural unemployment and the need for community-supportive industries. The French executives would raise their eyebrows, and tell me, but with a smile: “We can’t bring up these spiritual questions about our business, but you can, because you’re Scottish!” It was helped by the fact that I had also initiated a little ritual that ran late into the night before our meetings. It was called *The Whisky Club*.

There was often subtle encouragement in their remarks, urging me and other Panel members to egg them on to raise the level of the playing field on which the industry as a whole operated. The company was not perfect, but every time that I, or another Panel member, raised an issue, they would jump to attention. On one occasion, a vice-president and a regional executive were sent on a plane to Glasgow to meet me in person about concerns I’d been contacted about over one of their operations in India. Such was how seriously they took our points, and our role as “critical friends.”

Bruno Lafont once came out with a lovely one-liner. He said: “Our values are our value.” I would like to imagine not just the priests, but some of those old stalwarts of Quaker business ethics, nodding in agreement at such moments, as we discussed principles like how to develop a “shared value” ethos with local communities and employees. We are all complicit in that we consume from corporations. To contribute to change processes, we need to start by acknowledging that complicity, and engaging the Powers that Be with push or pull strategies, according to how the Spirit might move. In so doing, little by little, we start to perceive, and redress, the colonisation of both land and soul.

PART THREE

Digby Neck – Resisting Corporate Colonisation

The Return of the Summit Rock

In pointing out that corporations are, in part, the product of us – the consumers who buy their products – and that our push and pull can influence their ethics, I do not want to mask the fact that some are much less responsive than I observed Lafarge to be. In this part of my lecture, I want to demonstrate this sorry reality with a case study that is of ongoing emergent importance at Digby Neck, here in the Maritime provinces of Canada. First, however, some further background on the Harris superquarry to set it into context.

On the night that our public inquiry testimony in Harris ended, I saw a light shining in the house of John MacAulay, a Presbyterian church elder, builder of fishing boats and Gaelic tradition bearer. He had been elected by his community to discern and represent their interests in the debate with Redland and, thereafter, Lafarge.

Gingerly, I tapped on his door, wondering what he had made of the day's testimonies. I had no idea where he stood. As we spoke, he was non-committal; but as I turned to leave, he passed me a small but heavy package. He said: "Give this to Stone Eagle. Tell him it is the summit rock of Roineabhal that I have broken off in his honour."

The next day, Sulian, his then partner, Ishbel Munro, and I visited the 5,000-year-old Callanish standing stone circle. It was just before we left the island, and I presented the chief with John's gift. It shocked him. Perplexed, he demanded: "What have your people come to, that they should decapitate their own mountain?"

I replied: "The elder said: *tell Chief Stone Eagle that it's better than having a superquarry.*"



Chief Stone Eagle before Roineabhal.

To cut another long story short, the chief said he could not accept such a gift. However, just as our people who had been cleared from their Scottish homelands had been taken into sanctuary by their people under the terms of the Mi'Kmaq's 1752 treaty with the British, so they would now take our mountain top into sanctuary, and return it if and when the quarry was stopped.

Stone Eagle's visit to Scotland had been sanctioned by the late Mi'Kmaq Grand Chief Donald Marshall, of Pictou Landing. However, he (Sulian) later had to stand down from his public position, as his life had become too embroiled from the knock-on effects of having been a reservation boarding school survivor, ripped from his home at a tender age. Through his agency, however, with help of the elders of Pictou Landing, our rock had been placed for safekeeping in the Hector Heritage Quay. This commemorates the ship that brought so many migrants from Scotland to Turtle Island, the "New World."



The summit rock symbolically restored.

In 2005, with Lafarge safely withdrawn from Harris and me now serving on their Sustainability Panel, I travelled to Nova Scotia for a summit to retrieve the summit. A ceremony of exchanging stones was held in Pictou town hall, with town officials and Mi'Kmaq representatives. It culminated, that evening, with a Mi'Kmaq sweat lodge at which our rock was formally handed back to me. Later that year, my wife and I, with a couple of village friends from my schooldays, and John MacAulay, made an ascent of Mount Roineabhal. John ceremonially stuck the summit rock back on – and that, with the help of a small bag – of Lafarge cement.¹⁷

God versus Bilcon at Digby Neck

While in Nova Scotia, I was also invited to give a talk at Digby Neck, a fishing community in the Bay of Fundy. Their place was also threatened by a superquarry. Just as the Harris quarry would have shipped rock down to the south of England, so Bilcon hoped to do the same at Whites Point, to meet transnational market demand in New Jersey and New York. The Digby Neck community was predictably divided on a jobs versus environment axis. Those who opposed this naked colonisation, as they saw it, had been closely watching what had happened on Harris, thus my speaking invitation.

The first thing that struck me, on arriving on this peninsula that runs out into the Bay of Fundy, were the signboards along the roadside proclaiming: *God Help Digby Neck*, and a cross marking the ancestral family names. The local Baptist minister's wife was a campaign leader. She had been subjected to a SLAP order – *a strategic*



Crosses on the beach at Whites Cove, Digby Neck.

lawsuit against participation – by the corporation, to try and silence her voice. She told me that the more they tried to turn her down, the more she turned it up! A church connection probably gives some protection in such a situation. Such is what church sanctuary is surely for! To have taken the minister's wife to court for the breach of some injunction would not have been good reputational management for Bilcon.

I was taken to the site and shown boulders painted with white crucifixes. These were to remind the company, and their own community, that the threatened land held the bones of their ancestors in scattered family burial sites. Here community identity was being harnessed to an environmental cause. First Nations people would well have understood such a stand, and had probably helped to inspire such awareness. Some of the crosses had been blotted out by quarry supporters with grey paint. Others had been painted back again over the grey paint. It was the War of the Crosses! Gleaming white crucifixes, as if to keep at bay the rival force of hodden grey.

Eventually, the environmentalists won. A federal government inquiry found, as reported on the website of the Government of Nova Scotia:¹⁸

On November 20, 2007, the Minister of Environment and Labour announced his decision following careful consideration of the Panel's report. The Panel concluded that the project poses unacceptable risk to the environment and the community, and the Minister accepted their conclusion. Therefore, in

accordance with the authority provided by Section 40 of the *Environment Act*, the Minister rejected the application to establish Whites Point Quarry and Marine Terminal.

I am told that the full Panel report included this quotation from a textbook: “Sacred landscapes, then, are places that are consecrated by sacrifice and special treatment and endowed by a community with the power of highly revered convictions, values and virtues.” The crosses at the Digby Neck ancestral sites had spoken their part. For those who treasured the natural environment, both the living and the dead would rest in peace.

Bilcon versus the Canadian Government on NAFTA

Only this morning, as I was putting the finishing touches to this lecture, was I made aware by one of you that matters arising from Digby Neck are as yet far from over. Whites Point remains safe, that is not contested, but in March of this year Bilcon won a case for compensation from the Canadian federal government that had been petitioned through a secret tribunal of NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement.

In retribution for having stood in the way of corporate power, for having had the audacity to implement its own democratically legislated policies of environmental protection, the federal government has been ordered to pay \$300 million in compensation. That equates to \$9 for every citizen of Canada. That, paid to a family-owned company that is registered in Delaware!

I have no expertise in Canadian law, but from what I’ve read on the web in reputable newspapers like the *Globe and Mail*, the wider fear is that this pulls the teeth from Canada’s environmental protection laws.¹⁹ It will make planners and politicians much more reluctant than previously to call corporate power to account.

If that is so, then all that I can say as a visitor to Canada is this: *It sounds to me like you could do with getting yourselves a government.* The first duty of a government, is to protect its people from tyranny.

PART FOUR

A Decolonising Quaker Theology for the Third Millennium

To be a Quaker

At which point, Friends, as you can probably tell from my voice, I *quake*. I quake at the scandal of this development; at this latest affront to democracy, that situates Digby Neck on the front line of the battle to curb plutocratic corporate power. I want to leave the specifics behind, now, and conclude by looking at some general points about the Quaker contribution to decolonisation in the widest sense. To engage with social and environmental justice in our times is an endless task. That's inevitable, because the world, within a human timeframe, is an endless process. Our task is not to pretend we're God with a God's-eye view and try to fix it all, but to hold, cherishingly, those parts to which we are entrusted. In so doing, however, the oil in the lamp of our lives can run very low. Running too much on empty makes us vulnerable to selling out or burning out. So easily we take on the likeness of that to which we were opposed, as we, like the oppressor, also become infected – colonised by the colonising spirit.

What might be our defence against this risk, especially if entering into a relationship of becoming “critical friends” with the very powers that we challenge? For me, this is where the very essence of our being Quaker is – thanks be for our nickname! – to quake. To quake, literally or metaphorically, for that's what happens when we drill down deep to find life's wellsprings from within.

If we don't work on that discipline, if we only sit within the ego's comfort zone, then we atrophy. Even our Quaker meetings then become nothing more than holy huddles, and maybe only huddles. As Jeremiah (2:13, NRSV) quoted God: “They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and dug out cisterns for themselves, cracked cisterns that can hold no water.”

My wife, Vèrène Nicolas, likes to emphasise that *stillness is prophetic*. The prophetic is the interface between inner contemplation and outer action. As Friends, we are called to enter into that silence in a way that opens to those living waters and, from them, nourishes the surrounding land. Vitality, and the power, perhaps, of constellating other forces can await us there.

Sometimes the significance of this truth is more readily seen by outsiders. I would like to quote a sequence of passages to illustrate, and I have asked our Friend, who is seated here beside me, Beverly from New York Meeting, to read the following extracts. They come from Lindsay Clarke's book, *The Chymical Wedding*.²⁰ Clarke is an English writer, the winner of the 1989 Whitbread Prize. The novel in question is about alchemy. That, in Carl Jung's psychological sense, where it is the leaden nature of base issues in our lives that transmute to spiritual gold.

In the dream that came a woman had seen how to unlock the world's terror of nuclear war. I didn't recognize her. There was nothing distinctive about her. She was just a woman and her idea was simple; the leaders of the nuclear powers must surrender the keys that would trigger nuclear war. They must surrender them to her.

They were all old men and they were very tired. Mistrustfully, one by one, they handed over the keys. When they were all surrendered, the woman placed the keys on a cushion and took them to the Pope. (And, yes, even in its dreaming state a part of my mind sat up and said, The Pope?) But for a long time the Pope looked down where, in his hands, on the cushion, the possible destruction of the planet innocently lay. Finally, in a voice of absolute authority, he said, 'The Quakers shall hold the keys'...

... So what about the Quakers? What did Quakers symbolize?
Porridge Oats.

I saw the fat grin on the Quaker Oats packet, scowled, shook my head. The flippant mind jamming the waves with static. Think again.

Why were they called Quakers?

Because they quaked.

Why did they quake?

Because, I remembered, they were moved to speak.

In the silent spellbound meditation of the meeting house, sooner or later someone would feel compelled to speak. And not simply because they had something to say but because something demanded to be said through them. As, it seemed, this dream insisted on speaking now through me....

...With that realization I saw how the whole dream was elegantly structured around the tension of opposing forces: male, female; capitalist, communist; secular, spiritual; Catholic, Protestant; hierarchy, equality. It was a dream about conflict and reconciliation. Of fission and fusion.

It was about holding together. If we were to find a key to the explosive condition of the world it could only be done by holding contraries together.

That was the key.

It was also obvious.

For a moment I recoiled from the banality. It was like saying, 'You really should love one another.' Of course we should, but we don't.

Then I saw what was not so obvious: that the holding together could only be done by *quakers*. And that meant not only the Society of Friends, however aptly named, but men and women everywhere who were prepared to quake. For quaking was what happened when you endured inside yourself the tension of divisive forces. It was what happened when you refused to shrug them off, neither disowning your own violence nor deploying it; not admitting only the good and throwing evil in the teeth of the opposition, but holding the conflict together inside yourself as yours – the dark and the light of it, the love and the lovelessness, the terror and the hope. And as you did this you changed. The situation changed.... Perhaps, in the end, what mattered was how many people were prepared to quake this way, for such quaking spirits were the keepers of the keys.

Our Spiritual Foundations

But here's the challenging bit. That deep holding – that capacity of holding the opposites together in tension, allowing them to generate voltage and thus, to quake – does not emerge from the level of willpower; or at least, it is not of will alone. Time and time again the testimonies of Friends have reminded us that it is the Spirit that moves through us. A "gathered" or "covered" meeting is not about the "me." It is not even about the "we." Rather, it is about the deeper mystery of the divine. That, as a level of reality both of our deepest being and, simultaneously, otherness. The Spirit is both immanent, in the here and now, and transcendent, outside of space and time. It is *diachronic* – it "cuts through time." If, in our tendency towards self-referential narcissism, we forget that, or dampen it in others; if we seek only narcissistic reflections of ourselves in the stillness of what we take to be the spiritual mirror, then our prophetic edge will lose its shine accordingly.

I touch here on uncomfortable issues raised in last year's Swarthmore lecture in London by the Quaker historian, sociologist and theologian, Ben Pink Dandelion.²¹

Also, in my own Yearly Meeting lecture to Friends in Ireland earlier this year.²² We must take heed not to rest on our laurels, not to indulge in the spiritual materialism of clinging to the kudos of a bygone reputation, while losing the mystical roots that ground our faith.

I don't have the Canadian figures, but in Britain Yearly Meeting today, 87% of Friends came to our Religious Society as adults. That shows a magnetic vitality, but it also begs the question of who holds fast the cultural moorings of our tradition. A great many of our newcomers, myself included, have in our time been refugees from other churches. Many of these people have been damaged by the religion of their upbringing. Some have been rejected, whether for their sexual or gender orientation, or on doctrinal issues, or for a host of other reasons. As Ben controversially pointed out:²³

The challenge is that for too long we have presented Quakerism, not in terms of "This is who we are, you are welcome to come along," but rather as "Hallo, who are you and what would you like Quakerism to be for you?" We have wanted to help those damaged by previous affiliations but have not helped them to reconcile themselves to their past experiences. Sometimes the damaged are damaging, as in the way that words like "God" or "sin" or "perfection" can be treated as toxic and marginalised within our common vocabulary. Those of us who still use the term "God" can find ourselves challenged by the "pushed buttons" of those coming from elsewhere, whether previous churches or no church at all.... We should make more effort to make peace with our former affiliations ... [to avoid] a spiritual "dumbing down."

Enquirers come to us, attenders stay on, perhaps becoming members, because sufficient of our meetings have succeeded in holding what the American Quaker, Parker Palmer, calls "a Hidden Wholeness between us that is hospitable to the soul."²⁴ However, sustained hospitality towards the soul can only emerge from contexts that are also hospitable to God. That is what differentiates a Meeting for Worship from a club for contemplation. It seems to me that our problem, today, is that some have experienced spiritual abuse, or developed an allergy to God or Christ, but their understanding of these things is perhaps at odds with our tradition's mystical understanding. They miss the point that the Cross can be beheld as the supreme transformative symbol of nonviolence – the power of love that absorbs all the violence of the world. Why does this happen? Usually, because they've had it misrepresented to them either by hostile forces of secularism, or the violent religious theologies of violent men of violent times.²⁵

Such is why Ben Dandelion calls for the resumption of a teaching ministry in Quakerism. If we want to reject aspects of our theology, at least let us first understand what it is we think we're throwing out. Failure to do so would leave us like the Gadarene demoniac. If you remember, he was the madman who, when Jesus came to offer healing, saw from afar and howled in anguish out of fear that he'd be tortured!

The demoniac's demons were called *Legion*. Jesus cast them into a herd of pigs.²⁶ We miss the point if we don't inquire into the symbolism here. We need to ask: *Who kept pigs in that society?* Not the kosher Jews! Pigs were mainly kept to feed the Roman legions. Ahh! What then emerges is an occupied people's coded story of resistance. A story that is actually about the exorcism of the demons of colonisation. Here we are shown "demons," or mindsets and social structures, that have penetrated the soul so deeply, that the very victim fears the source of healing. Why? One reason, is that we don't know what a Hidden Wholeness might set loose. We worry what it might really mean if we took up our beds, and walked.

To reinforce that point, Luke's gospel tells us that on seeing the demoniac restored to his right mind, "the whole multitude of the surrounding region of the Gadarenes asked [Jesus] to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear." We might take heed, lest at times the same fear penetrates our Quaker sensibilities. To decolonise, to stand up and stand out against those powers that sap the soul, always feels a little like transgression. Such is the spell, the glue that holds such powers in place. That is what salvation – spiritual salving or healing – calls on us to break.

Beyond Metaphysical Disease

All of which is all very well, but is there evidence for spiritual reality? As I finished writing up this lecture, I was travelling in the north of England with my co-author, Matt Carmichael, launching our book on spiritual activism. The speaking tour was arranged by David Midgley of Schumacher North, an offshoot of the work of Fritz Schumacher of *Small is Beautiful* renown. Schumacher's bottom line analysis of what he called, "the deepest problems of our age" – that which he saw as being "the task of our generation" – was, "we are suffering from a metaphysical disease, and the cure must therefore be metaphysical."²⁷ The metaphysical is the *behind* or *beyond* the physical. It is how philosophers talk, slightly at arm's length, about

the spiritual. It happened, that as part of our book launch tour, I was given the privilege of having breakfast with David's ninety-six-year-old mother, the spritely and famous English philosopher, Dr. Mary Midgley.

Mary is a critic of the atomisation of the modern age, and with it, the narrowness of the such "new atheist" thinkers as Richard Dawkins. She told me that she doesn't have an overt religious faith, but she does think that we are all endowed with "something inside." I asked her why modern philosophers have such difficulty in talking about that "something." Quick as a flash, she answered: "We don't have the vocabulary for that, because we've carefully destroyed it."

I want to close by suggesting that we do not have to wallow in such self-imposed darkness. Our friend, the Gadarene demoniac, lived amongst the cemetery tombstones. We don't have to! Furthermore, I'd like to point out that, part of the reason why an opening of the way lies before us on this front, can be traced to a pioneering American Quaker psychologist, and a Canadian psychiatrist. Let me explain.

Since the 1960s, and very much building on such 20th century figures as Carl Jung, Abraham Maslow and Roberto Assagioli, the discipline of transpersonal psychology has come into being. Transpersonal (or interconnected) psychology is spiritual psychology. Its coming of age, today, is marked by, for example, the publication of scholarly volumes like *The Wiley-Blackwell Handbook of Transpersonal Psychology* (2013), and *Varieties of Anomalous Experience: Examining the Scientific Evidence* (2000) from the American Psychological Association. The papers in these collections typically trace the roots of their discipline to *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, this book being the Gifford Lectures in natural religion, that William James, an American scholar, delivered at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland in 1901-1902.

What is less well known, is that James' main source of primary data came from material that had been gathered by a Quaker-born psychologist from Indiana, Edwin Diller Starbuck that, at the same time as James' Giffords, he published as *The Psychology of Religion* (1901). James' grasp of mysticism in literature (and especially, his brilliant chapter on mysticism) was greatly helped by the work of an Ontario psychiatrist, Richard Maurice Bucke who, also in that vintage year, 1901, published a seminal study: *Cosmic Consciousness: A Study in the Evolution of the Human Mind*.

What Starbuck, Bucke and James did, was to start to lay down a vocabulary by which we can, if we so wish, engage with the spiritual in an empirical (or experimental) manner. More recent transpersonal psychologists, such as Charles T. Tart in California, have greatly developed that language. Their work is out there, in the scholarly journals. If it's not very well known, that's because it rubs up against the mores of a secular age and conventional religiosity in equal measure.

I mention these approaches because they sit very comfortably with the Quaker attitude of experimental religion. "O taste and see that God is good," as the Psalmist had it (Psalm 34:8). It is one thing to be an atheist, or to claim that one is a non-theist Friend (if that term is not an oxymoron). It is quite another thing, to do so without having studied what is now a substantial body of scholarly literature on anomalous experiences, as well as mystical and other expressions of higher consciousness.

In the introduction to *Cosmic Consciousness*, Maurice Bucke tells how he had rejected the Christianity of his youth, partly on account of his rationalism, and partly because of the awfulness of the hellfire preaching of his time. One night, however, he had the following experience. Here Bucke speaks of himself in the third person as was considered polite in that era.²⁸

It was in the early spring, at the beginning of his thirty-sixth year. He and two friends had spent the evening reading Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Browning, and especially Whitman. They parted at midnight, and he had a long drive in a hansom [a pony trap]. All at once, without warning of any kind, he found himself wrapped around, as it were, by a flame-coloured cloud. For an instant he thought of fire – some sudden conflagration in the great city. The next instant he knew that the light was within himself. Directly afterwards there came upon him a sense of exultation, of immense joyousness, accompanied or immediately followed by an intellectual illumination quite impossible to describe. Into his brain streamed one momentary lightning-flash of the Brahmic Splendour which ever since lightened his life. Upon his heart fell one drop of the Brahmic Bliss, leaving thenceforward for always an after-taste of heaven.

Among other things he did not come to believe: he saw and knew that the Cosmos is not dead matter but a living presence; that the soul of man is immortal; that the Universe is so built and ordered that without any peradventure all things work together for the good of each and all; that the foundation principle of the world is what we call love; and that the happiness of everyone is in the long run absolutely certain. He claims that he learned more within the few seconds that the illumination lasted than in previous months or years of study, and that he learned much that no study could ever have taught.

The illumination itself continued not more than a few moments, but its effects proved inefaceable. It was impossible for him ever to forget what he at that time saw and knew; neither did he or could he ever doubt the truth of what was then presented to his mind. There was no return of the experience at any other time.

Friends, I have suggested in this lecture that colonisation of the land proceeds from colonisation of the soul by a spirit that perpetuates the colonising mentality. This Spirit of Violence is an atomising spirit, something that pulls us out of right relationship with the rest of the world. I think it runs in us all at times, me too. We then find ourselves locked into mindsets that deny spiritual reality. However, thanks (not least) to Quaker and Canadian contributions to transpersonal psychology, fresh openings of the way are emergent in our times. When Ben Dandelion calls for a renewed Quaker teaching ministry, I believe that our curriculum is well cut out. What I have touched on in this last part of my lecture, is only one of many exiting realms of spiritual exploration for the third millennium.

This week I have heard many of you express the fear that your meetings in Canada are small and scattered. I would just remind you that Jesus repeatedly counselled, "fear not." When two or three are gathered together, that may be sufficient. We are called to be the salt of the earth. You don't always want too much salt to flavour the meal, but you do want good salt. Folks in these Atlantic parts of Canada, know that!

Let us refine and purify. Remember! "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God."

Endnotes

1. Biographical sketch of Sunderland Pattison Gardner by Michael S. Smith, <http://www.oocities.org/heartland/Valley/2822/spgardner.html>.
2. Also addressed in my new book with Matt Carmichael, *Spiritual Activism: Leadership as Service*, Green Books, Cambridge, available in North America from 1st October 2015, distributed through the Independent Publishers Group.
3. A good sense of what I say when speaking at military staff colleges can be gleaned from my chapter in a book edited from the UK Defence Academy, "A Nonviolent Challenge to Conflict," being Chapter 3 in David Whetham (ed.) *Ethics, Law and Military Operations*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, pp. 44-64, available at <http://www.alastairmcintosh.com/articles/2010-McIntosh-Nonviolence-UK-Defence-Academy-web.pdf>; see also my "Power of Love" article at <http://www.alastairmcintosh.com/articles/2003-McIntosh-Power-of-Love.pdf>.
4. I address this topic most fully in *Soil and Soul: People Versus Corporate Power*, Aurum Press, London, 2001. I get reports that this can sometimes be hard to source in Canada, however, it can be easily ordered, if there's no better option, from *Amazon.co.uk* (who will send to Canada), and can be downloaded on e-book reading devices.
5. This topic is tackled in my lecture to Ireland Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 2015, at <http://quakers-in-ireland.ie/2015/05/22/public-lecture-by-alastair-mcintosh-iyf-2015>. Also, in my book, *Island Spirituality: Spiritual Values of Lewis and Harris*, Islands Book Trust, Kershader, 2013, now downloadable as a free PDF at <http://www.alastairmcintosh.com/islandspirituality.htm>.
6. Thomas Johnston, *The History of the Working Classes in Scotland*, Forward Publishing, Glasgow, 1929, p. 203.
7. See *Island Spirituality.pdf*.
8. "Truth and Reconciliation ... Living Out Our Commitments," United Church, Canada, 2015, <http://www.united-church.ca/files/aboriginal/relationships/commitments.pdf>.

9. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1972.
10. Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, Fortress Press, USA, 1992. Towards the end of his life Walter often attended Quaker meetings.
11. Rutger Henneman & Alastair McIntosh, "The Political Theology of Modern Scottish Land Reform," *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture*, 3.3, 2009, pp. 340-375, <http://www.alastairmcintosh.com/articles/2009-JSRNC-Land-Theology.pdf>.
12. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, SCM, London, 1988 edition, p. xxxviii.
13. See *Spiritual Activism: Leadership as Service*, <http://www.alastairmcintosh.com/spiritualactivism/index.htm>.
14. Theological references and the full speeches of Professor Macleod and Chief Stone Eagle can be found in *Soil and Soul*.
15. Sulian was a residential school survivor. Sadly, some of that legacy later caught up with his life, as discussed in *Soil and Soul*. "Stranglified" is a term invented by my school friend, Rusty, the blacksmith of Leurpost, to describe the strangulation of the meaning of Gaelic place names when Anglified.
16. My annual reports on my time on the Lafarge Sustainability Stakeholders Panel are online at <http://www.alastairmcintosh.com/general/quarry/lafarge-panel.htm>. Since 2016 Lafarge has merged with the Swiss Holcim to become LafargeHolcim. At this stage, former Panel members do not know what the future will hold, but Holcim also had a relatively good record for corporate responsibility. What's more, the Volkswagen debacle will be teaching them all a thing or two about why such panels can be so crucial.
17. A report with photo essay of the return of the summit rock is on my website at <http://www.alastairmcintosh.com/general/quarry/ending.htm>.
18. "Whites Point Quarry," Government of Nova Scotia, <https://www.novascotia.ca/nse/ea/whitespointquarry.asp> consulted September 2015.
19. "NAFTA ruling in Nova Scotia quarry case sparks fears for future settlements," *Globe and Mail*, Ottawa, 24 March 2015, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/nafta-ruling-against-canada-sparks-fears-over-future-dispute-settlements/article23603613>.

20. Lindsay Clarke, *The Chymical Wedding*, Picador, London, 1990, pp. 409, 414-5.
21. Ben Pink Dandelion, *Open to Transformation: Being Quaker*, The 2014 Swarthmore Lecture, Quaker Books, London.
22. Alastair McIntosh, *To Become 'the People of the Cross': Climate Change, Violence and Some Meanings of Creation in Our Times*, Ireland Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends Annual Lecture, Dromantine, 2015, <http://quakers-in-ireland.ie/2015/05/22/public-lecture-by-alastair-mcintosh-iyf-2015>.
23. Swarthmore 2014, pp. 57-58.
24. Parker Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness*, Jossey Bass, USA, p. 53.
25. See my *Island Spirituality*, *Islands Book Trust*, Kershader, 2013, now available as a PDF download from www.alastairmcintosh.com/islandspirituality.htm. Specifically, I am referring to penal substitutionary theories of atonement, such as Calvin's in which God is "armed for vengeance" at human sin.
26. Story of the Gadarene (or Gerasene) demoniac: Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39.
27. E.F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful*, Abacus, London, 1974, p. 99.
28. R.M. Bucke, *Cosmic Consciousness: A Study of the Evolution of the Human Mind*, University Books, (1901), pp. 6-8.

Decolonising Land and Soul: A Quaker Testimony was the Sunderland P. Gardner Lecture at Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, August 16, 2015, at the University of Prince Edward Island in Charlottetown.

The Sunderland P. Gardner Lecture is given annually at Canadian Yearly Meeting.

Sunderland P. Gardner, born in 1802, was an outstanding figure among Canadian Friends. He ministered with great plainness and vigour. Day or night, he was ready to travel in all weather to be with those who were sorrowing. In one year he estimated that he had travelled over nine thousand miles in the course of visits among Friends. He left behind a legacy of great tenderness.

– Adapted from Arthur Dorland’s *The Quakers in Canada: A History*

Editorial Board: Mary Conchelos (Clerk), Ruth Hillman, Kenny Hone, Anne Trudell.

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The Author

ALASTAIR MCINTOSH is a Scottish Friend, a writer, an activist for social, environmental and spiritual change and, in his academic work, a human ecologist concerned with the relationship between the social and the natural environments, including their spiritual underpinning. His books include *Soil and Soul: People versus Corporate Power* (Aurum, 2001), *Hell and High Water: Climate Change, Hope and the Human Condition* (Birlinn, 2008), and, edited jointly with colleagues in Native Studies at the University of Saskatchewan, *Radical Human Ecology* (Ashgate, 2012). October 2015 saw the North American publication of his latest work (with Matt Carmichael), *Spiritual Activism: Leadership as Service*, which draws on Quaker insights. In 2016 Birlinn Ltd. will publish *Poacher's Pilgrimage: an Island Journey*, this being his study of an ecology of the imagination – "God, war and the faeries" – during a twelve day trek across his home island of Lewis and Harris in the Outer Hebrides. He is the Quaker representative on the Iona Community (Advisory) Board and holds a visiting professorship at the University of Glasgow, a divinity fellowship at the University of Edinburgh, and has twice previously given public lectures at the University of Prince Edward Island on land reform, liberation theology and community empowerment.



