

# *If There is no Justice There will be no Peace*

*Art Solomon*

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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 despicable 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.

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*Paper first presented at the Criminal Justice Congress, Halifax, June, 1989.  
\*Allen Boesak's poem from his address before the World Council of Churches,  
Vancouver, 1983*

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 its 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?  
The truth is that prisons are a growth industry,  
a vestige of empire  
run on military lines  
Where people choose to become robots for the state,  
which is nothing other than criminal,  
captive state governments  
Who take orders from the robber barons,  
the invisible government,  
the real government in Canada.  
To claim that Canada is a democracy is simply  
another self delusion.  
In order to serve the god of materialism,  
that great negative power,  
It is essential for the individual to dispense  
with his or her humanity.  
Otherwise, it simply can not work.  
A rabbi was heard to say, long ago,  
"If these Christians lived by only one of their ten  
commandments, everything would be all right."  
That commandment was,

“Love thy neighbour as thyself.”  
What we have, instead, is a racist greed,  
an arrogance beyond comprehension  
with which the whole society is infected.  
There is nothing so much in need of correction  
as the Corrections System of Canada.  
It has been in chaos from the beginning  
and is now coming into its total dissolution.  
If it was truly based on justice  
It would have been very different than it is.  
We are coming into a time when what is evil will be removed  
from before the face of God.  
Mahatma Ghandi once said,  
“There's enough in this world for every one's need  
but not enough for everyone's greed.”  
When the rich stop stealing from the poor  
there will be very little need for prisons.  
As it is now, prisons serve to multiply the evil.  
Two wrongs never made a right in the past  
Nor will they in the present or in the future.  
At no time in the history of the human family  
Has the earth and the people  
of the earth been so desecrated,  
To believe that it can continue  
is to believe that God is going to let this creation  
Be destroyed by the hands of fools.  
It is guaranteed that this planet will not be destroyed  
by nuclear holocaust or by human devastation.  
To believe otherwise is to believe that there is no God,  
No divine Creator  
Who made it all and keeps it all together.  
There are those of us who believe that there must be  
Peace and tranquility on the earth  
And who are willing to work to make it happen.  
We are called terrorists and communists;  
We are a threat to the evil designs of the state.  
We are aware of the racism whipped up by the governments,  
By Hollywood, and by the big business dominated media  
Which provides a cover for the corporate plunder  
Of native lands and Native people.  
We are aware of the deliberate genocidal policies  
practiced 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 much 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.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 System  
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 Just Us 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 my 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.  
    And 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 tranquillity 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.