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# Educating for Justice

## A Conversation with the Church about its life and Gospel



TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND IN COMMEMORATION OF  
THE FOUNDATION OF  
THE BROTHERHOOD OF ST LAURENCE  
ON THIS SITE 8 DEC 1930  
CO-FOUNDER PAULMER G. K. TUCKER

## Denham Grierson

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# **Educating for Justice**

## **A Conversation with the Church about its life and Gospel**

The Third G.T. Sambell Memorial Oration  
delivered by

*The Revd Dr Denham Grierson*

on

4th December, 1983 at the  
53rd Foundation Festival of the  
Brotherhood of St Laurence

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## FOREWORD

*In honour of Geoffrey Tremayne Sambell*

Geoffrey Tremayne Sambell was born in Broadford, Victoria in 1914 and later attended Melbourne Boys High School. His leadership qualities were recognised when he was selected for the Lord Somers Camp, after which he played rugby with Powerhouse. This fostered his interest in young people and led him into a leadership role in the Church of England Boys Society.

During a short but promising business career he was involved with St Mark's Social Settlement during the 1930s. He was then called to the ministry and he entered Ridley College and was ordained in 1940. After serving a curacy at St John's East Malvern he served with great distinction as a Chaplain with the Australian Military Forces, both in the 57/60 and 2/11 battalions in New Guinea where he was mentioned in despatches. After the war he completed his B.A. at Melbourne University.

In 1947 he was appointed Director of the Melbourne Diocesan Centre, a co-ordinated multi-parish and chaplaincy venture based in the inner city. While in that position he was appointed as Archdeacon of Melbourne in 1961 when he became for a time the Director of Home Missions. In the midst of his Diocesan responsibilities, and his leadership of the Brotherhood of St Laurence he was also Warden of the Mission to Streets and Lanes, and involved in other welfare activities including the Victorian Council of Social Service. He was consecrated Bishop in St Paul's Cathedral Melbourne on 24th February 1962 and subsequently enthroned Archbishop of Perth in 1969. He died in December 1980 after an outstanding Episcopate in Western Australia and throughout the national church.

The G. T. Sambell Memorial Oration has been established by the Brotherhood of St Laurence to commemorate his work. His connection with the Brotherhood was longstanding and arose out of his deep social concern which had been the chief among the several forces which led him into full-time service of the church. He had great organising ability, recognised by Fr Tucker who invited him to join the Brotherhood in 1949. He was firstly involved as a member of the Board of Directors, then as Bursar, Director of Social Services and in 1956 Director and Deputy Chairman of the Board. Later in the 1960s he became Chairman of the Board, a post he retained until he moved to Perth.

Geoffrey Sambell was a big man, in body, mind and spirit. Long before he died (at the age of 66) his influence had been felt far and wide in the Anglican Communion and in the ecumenical movement beyond. He twice represented the Australian Church at the East Asia Christian Conference, and was the representative of South-East Asia on the Executive Officer's Advisory Committee of the Lambeth Consultative Body. In Australia he was the dynamic Chairman of the General Synod Social Responsibilities Commission, which under his leadership spoke out for the national church on social questions. He was respected and listened to by Government at both State and Federal levels, and in 1978 he was appointed Chairman of the Federal Government's Social Welfare Advisory Committee.

He was a forceful character who could, and sometimes did, ride roughshod over opposition, backing his judgment and knowing that he was right. But behind the bluff ex-

terior he had the heart of a pastor who never spared himself for anyone, clergyman or layman, who needed his help. He had vision, but it was a very 'down to earth' vision; he was a loyal Anglican but at the same time a wholehearted ecumenist; he was a missionary and a missionary, but spurned paternalism or ecclesiastical triumphalism; he was an ordained priest, but no one welcomed the rediscovered 'priesthood' of the laity more than he did or had more friends amongst them.

Leader, pastor, organiser, financier -- he was all these, but much more. a man of God.

**December, 1981**

# EDUCATING FOR JUSTICE

## A Conversation with the Church about its life and Gospel

Ideas about education and justice are commonplace. Agreement, however, on how these words are to be defined or on what these words imply is not easily reached.<sup>1</sup> That is why the phrase "educating for justice" is so forbidding. It assumes so many things. Firstly that there is a common understanding of the word justice. Secondly that there is a common agreement about the notion of educating and what is meant when the word educating is brought into conjunction with the word justice. It is also unclear who are to be educated and by whom for it cannot be the case that the process of educating for justice does not raise that critical question. But the biggest assumption is that if one has a goal of achieving justice it can be successfully attained by educating people into just living and just action. It is this last assumption that is the most problematic of all.

### The Issue of Power:

It was the great American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr who attacked the easy assumption of educators and social scientists alike that planned intentional and systematic programs of instruction would lead to a change in the circumstances of those suffering injustice. As he wrote —

"Since reason is always, to some degree, the servant of interest in a social situation, social injustice cannot be resolved by moral and rational suasion alone, as the educator and social scientist usually believes."<sup>2</sup>

Niebuhr, in these words, was attacking two widely held strategies for change. The first of these, which flows from the Enlightenment, is a rational-empirical strategy for social change. This strategy argues that people will follow what is in their rational self-interest because they recognise, on rational grounds, that in the end the interests of all will be best served in this way. The second basic strategy is a normative re-education strategy in which values and norms coming from the community can be shaped and changed by attention to values formation, social skills and human relationships. Education systems, whether of the State or the private sector, are largely committed to these two basic strategies in various forms, as are key professions in the fields of education, welfare, and business administration.

Against these two major strategies for educating for justice (for these strategies see a crucial role for education) Niebuhr raised the question of power. Society operates not according to reason, or in response to normative values, he argued, but largely in obedience to power configurations supported by organised groups, vested interests, established elites and corporate bodies. Any strategy for change that was serious, according to Niebuhr, had to be concerned with power.

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1. While no comprehensive attempt will be made to define either education or justice, it is helpful to have some general prescription in mind. As a guide the following signposts are offered.  
"Education is that intentional process that guides the learning and acting of persons."  
Justice can be interpreted by means of the comment of Pope John 23rd: "The obligation of everyman, the urgent obligation of the Christian is to reckon what is superfluous by the measure of the needs of others."
  2. Reinhold Niebuhr: *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1960, pp.xiv-xv.

In this Niebuhr was making a point that Epicurus had made long before him. There is no such thing as justice in the abstract. It always makes its appearance or seeks expression in juxtaposition with power and self-interest. Justice therefore is never absolutely, even unambiguously, present anywhere except in a confederacy of struggle wherein love, power and justice strive to maintain an uneasy but necessary equilibrium. The balance of these essential realities is constantly compromised by existing systems and processes that seek ascendancy and control, placing in jeopardy the unity and cogency of social experience at all levels. It follows that it is necessary to be clear about what is possible and what is not possible in the process referred to as "educating for justice". Too high a value on what education can achieve can itself be an unwilling cause of much injustice for it deceives people about the processes by which justice is gained.

### **The Issue of Conflict:**

If our understanding of justice is to be furthered educationally, then the form and substance of that educating process has itself to be just in method and intent.

While the empirical-rational, and normative-re-education approaches may be useful in educating individuals they are not appropriate for dealing with the societal context of justice. The reason is both simple and inescapable. They do not deal directly with the issue of power.

That is why seeking justice is a disturbing venture for all of us. It cannot, by the nature of the case, avoid conflict if it is to do its work. The issue of conflict is at the centre of the debate about justice. Charity can be exercised easily because it does not disturb the status quo. Indeed the giving of charity is itself an act of power as well as an expression of pity and mercy. But it is not justice. For justice requires the asking of those questions that unveil the social causes of poverty and oppression, and calls for a change in those structures which perpetuate injustice. To that extent to seek to be just is to be involved in conflict.

That is why the pursuit of justice is so threatening. It disturbs our taken-for-granted reality including our complacency about ourselves. Feelings of anger, bitterness, guilt, frustration and bewilderment arise which we do not know how to deal with creatively.

And it is this very issue, that of conflict, which is so immobilising for many of us who are not the victims in our society. We can so easily betray our own best instincts by resisting the call to justice because it involves conflict. It was Martin Luther King's disenchantment with white middle-class supporters that moved him to write in his letter from a Birmingham jail in April 1963 against those who preferred "a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice".<sup>3</sup> The temptation to cry peace, peace when there is no peace, (and cannot be for those who bear the name of Christ) is too readily given in to on the issue of acting justly. Yet there is in this instinctive response a recognition that the claims of a just God have depths both threatening and uncertain. A positive peace is never secured unless we reject the temptation to withdraw. It is the inevitability of conflict in the pursuit of justice that suggests four prerequisites for educating for justice.

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3. Martin Luther King: *Letter from Birmingham City Jail*, April 1973

### Four Prerequisites:

1. The first prerequisite of educating for justice is to *help people negotiate their feelings* about the task. Our sense of being inadequate in the face of an unjust world is more likely to turn us aside from persisting than any number of unnamed forces outside us. A commitment to seeking justice in its many forms must begin with the heroic endeavour to slay our own dragons. The only adequate way of dealing with this initial and continuing uncertainty is understanding that love casts out fear. To be about justice implies risk, but it is the risk of those who have entrusted their safe-keeping to One who sees the fall of a sparrow and numbers the hairs of our head.
2. A second characteristic of educating for justice is the *mutuality* it presupposes. We dare not, and cannot effectively, act alone. To belong to a community or group seeking justice is essential if the enterprise is to be sustained. We are envisaging here a co-intentional enterprise of learning, a process which is participatory, existential, and shared. The mutuality presupposed here assumes a community committed to acting justly rather than a trusting reliance on traditional authorities and principles of operation external to the situation in which justice struggles to be born. It means involvement.
3. A third characteristic is *dialogue*, a readiness to be open to others with whom we are involved so that we do not work *for* the neighbour but *with* the neighbour, seeking out of a common situation an understanding of what must occur. Educating for justice is a being-with before it can be a being-for.
4. A fourth characteristic is the *creative handling of conflict*. A genuine passion for justice involves conflict as fire involves heat. It brings into sharp focus and confrontation those forces which seek to maintain the status quo for the benefit of those who gain from its present patterns. The search for justice in society can only be prosecuted through conflict, although the nature of that conflict may vary considerably. It does not necessarily imply violence although that is an ever-present danger.

### Common Objections:

There is a natural resistance to the call to act justly in all of us. Many ways present themselves to turn aside from the biblical call to be a just people that range from the false virtue of a pious resignation to a spirited defence of a non-partisan stance as being the only genuine one for a Christian.

The objections to what has been claimed about the centrality of power in the struggle for justice, and the implications that flow from that starting point, need to be taken seriously. There are legitimate elements that need to be acknowledged in the following *five major objections*.

1. Christians should not be involved in politics.
2. Unity is a primary mark of the church. Therefore that which causes conflict or dissension in the body must be rooted out and cast aside.
3. We are all oppressed, poor and marginalised to some degree. A corollary is that the rich are in as much need of spiritual comfort as the poor.
4. People are where they are of their own choice and as a result of their own action.
5. What can one person do?



**1. Christians should not be involved in politics:**

The strength of this objection is that it is perilously easy for people to be captivated by an ideological identification. When politics is read to mean party politics or partisan political commitment of an exclusive kind then Christians legitimately need to be reminded that they profess a commitment that transcends the relative claims of particular groups, movements or corporate agencies. That much needs to be acknowledged.

The problem is that the objection overlooks the obvious point that to support what is, either actively or passively, is itself a political act. It is a tacit acceptance of present political and economic realities. This acceptance is usually due to the fact that those who defend the status quo are not themselves suffering directly the oppression experienced by others. If inequalities are not inevitable but the result of the way the social order functions, then Christians ought to feel a sense of responsibility to change unjust circumstances, or at least to advocate the cause of those suffering from present social realities. We do not evade acting politically by taking no action. And to act to bring relief or redress to others in solidarity, with their cause is not primarily an act determined by political or economic motives but because the Gospel we confess and live by compels the church to act for the neighbour in need.

**2. The unity of the church must not be broken by dissent:**

Clearly the church is not meant to be divided. We are meant to live together in love. But the unity which is achieved by ignoring inequity, privation and oppression is a spurious unity. The unity of which the Bible speaks is not one gained by the suppression of critical issues related to personal freedom and social dominance to ensure the absence of conflict. Jesus promised not peace but a sword for those who would identify with him. In that company, again by the nature of the case, conflict is inevitable. Wherever entrenched interests are encountered, wherever power seeks to express itself in sovereignty over justice and love, conflict is inevitable. Those who wield power do not readily give it up, whether in the church or beyond. The question for the church is not how to avoid conflict but rather how to negotiate it by a prayerful desire to seek what must be done before God. Conflict, properly viewed, is not a sign of spiritual decay when it is occasioned by the struggle for justice but one of life in the body, a source of possibility for new wholeness rather than a threat to established peace.

**3. We are all in need of God's Grace:**

This third objection is usually voiced by those who do not have direct contact with those suffering injustice. Such social distance breeds a natural complacency towards inequity. The claims of oppression and suffering whether in Australian society or beyond appear unreal as a consequence. As Brian Wren acknowledges, "Education for justice must take seriously both the suffering of the victims and the bewilderment of the beneficiaries, but it cannot ignore the great gulf between."<sup>4</sup> Hunger, sickness, cold, deprivation and suppression of personal liberty leave persons with no choice.

Those who are rich do have choices, the chance to change circumstances. The particular form of the bondage of those who are rich is that we do not have within

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4. Brian Wren: *Education for Justice*, S.C.M. Press Ltd., 1977, p.68.

ourselves the will to change. We all battle to keep what privileges we have, and justify our right to have them. So it is true that all stand in need of God's Grace. The Good News is for all. It also calls for the care of each by others. The bondage of the will of those who are rich can only be broken by loving the neighbour as much as oneself. The call to change, to repentance remains, and the particular form of that repentance, as with Zacchaeus, is to rediscover true community by being just. To that degree the demand for repentance is the same for all. We cannot avoid our need to respond justly by pleading our own special needs as prior. The two are not separable concerns but one, and must be met together.

**4. People deserve what they get:**

Again it is true that there is a measure of truth in this objection. But it remains a tragic and over simplified distortion of the full picture. In a time of high unemployment caused by structural change in the fabric of society it has less and less justification as grounds for turning aside from acting justly. People suffer and are victimised by the social systems we have constructed as much as by their own actions.

Indeed the very circumstances which sustain injustices are those which benefit those who do not suffer. We cannot wash our hands of our own complicity. Social inequality is built into the way society functions. Systems are always unjust to some degree, and particularly so for minority groups.

Even so, because people suffer from their own folly is no excuse for turning aside from their plight by those who themselves by chance or circumstance are not victims either of their own mischoices or social realities.

**5. What can one person do?**

There are few who have not felt powerless in the presence of the massive injustices of our time. It is difficult to know how to respond or to identify who is responsible, if *who* is the correct word. How can one person make a difference? The corollary that follows for many is "Why bother?". The fault lies elsewhere. It can also lead to the conclusion that I do not have to change because there is little point.

Yet to this last objection the prophetic word is spoken. "To love Yahweh is to do justly." It is not a matter of fault. It is a matter of love. And we must do what we can, even if it is no more than grasping the near edge of a large problem and hanging on. What is at issue here is not the size of the dilemma but the absence of will to do what can be done.

Educating for justice requires a careful handling of objections such as these that are aroused by the concerns of justice. These internal demons need to be exorcised before there can be an open engagement by the church in the task of educating for justice. We need to mobilise the will and conscience of people to act because justice is the form of love. And only love casts out that fear which makes cowards of us all.

It is at this point that the fundamental Marxist critique of the church has most weight. Marx charged that religion was based on theory, not on action or praxis in his terms. It was therefore a tool in the hands of powerful forces who used the church's ideological power as a means on the one hand of furthering oppression and on the other as a way of avoiding direct involvement with suffering humanity. The Christian faith is embraced therefore by many because it confirms the status quo, and gives

grounds for regarding the status quo as God intended. Marx little understood what Christian faith is but his critique of religion, including the life of the churches, is devastatingly accurate. If we withdraw a sense of justice from the Gospel then religion does become the opiate of the people, an agent in the creation of a false consciousness about social existence and its demands. It also falsifies Christian faith. The only sure defence against that corruption of Christian existence is a clear vision of the church and its mission. It is to the question of the nature and role of the church that we now turn.

### **The Church and Educating for Justice: Four Central Images:**

The task of educating for justice is not a matter of individual instruction alone. The church as a community needs to address the issue in its life and by the expression of its life. But the word church is not sufficiently specific to outline what is intended here. The church takes many forms, four of which are the following.

1. The *first* understanding of church is that of the parish gathered as a community for worship, prayer and mission.
2. The *second* understanding of church is of those who no longer identify with the institutional church but exist in informal networks, as para-church communities and groups, seeking to express a style of life that is committed to justice in the quality of its service.
3. The *third* concerns the church as dispersed in the community seeking there to be a force for transformation.
4. The *fourth* concerns the church and its mission at national and international levels.

In identifying these four ways in which the church expresses itself biblical images emerge which set the task for educating for justice in each case. These are the image of light, a city set on a hill, the image of the leaven, the image of the seed, and the image of salt.

#### **1. A city set on a hill — the question of the parish:**

If educating for justice is conceived, not as giving information about the occurrence of injustice in our world, but rather as the shaping and forming of a just community, itself a light on the hill, then the issues of justice are not an additional extra to parish life but the very essence of its life.

The biblical witness is unequivocal. The church is meant to be a community in which all are called to participate. This is confessed when the bread is broken and the wine shared. The act of God in Christ is not just for those who are good but for all humankind.

It follows therefore that the issues of justice related to local communities of faith concerns who it will admit to its fellowship. Does it embrace in one community all kinds and conditions of humanity or is it exclusive and restrictive?

Does it include the poor, the stranger, the handicapped, the socially inept, the weak and powerless, the divorced, the marginalised, as equal guests at the table of the Lord?

Where it does not there are the issues for justice to be joined. What social barriers, matters of custom and practice, rules and restrictions operate that prevent those who have need from full participation in the community of faith?

The issues of justice can easily be exported to Africa, Latin America or Asia. But the neighbour is one who claims me at home as well as abroad.

How then do we begin to tackle such issues within the local gatherings of Christians that they might be a city on a hill, a place of light, warmth and hospitality to travellers who seek comfort within its walls.

How does the local parish deal with the status of women, the rights of children, unemployed youth, exploited migrant workers, racial hostility, economic exploitation by companies whose directors sit in the pews on Sunday?

These are the tasks of justice education that have their source in the life of the local parish. A glance at the agendas of most local parishes suggests however that Christians are tranquilised by the trivial far too often. If the energy and drive has gone from the local gatherings of God's people it may be that we have chosen to avoid what is necessary for the sake of peace and quiet, "the negative peace of absence from tension, rather than the positive peace of justice". The light shines but dimly, a smouldering wick that waits to burst into its strength. Here are clear responsibilities for educating for justice within the local parish.

## 2. The seed:

The way of God's kingdom, said Jesus, is like a handful of seeds, even the smallest of seeds, which grow to be the greatest of trees, the shelter for birds.

We are witnessing in our time an increasing proliferation of groups who bear the name Christian, who have moved outside the institutional church in order to address social life more directly. Such para-church groups declare a bias for the kingdom rather than the church, a concern for discipleship rather than membership. One such group describes itself this way:

"an ecumenical network of people throughout Australia gathered into small groups working for personal change, and structural change, which brings about justice, liberation and human development, in their own lives, and in the lives of others."<sup>5</sup>

The strength of such movements is their uncompromising commitment to the transformation of society. They are equally concerned to see a transformation within the institutional church which in their view has lost its way in the mangrove swamps of local detail and institutional survival.

The planting of seeds here is not a neutral pastoral act but a determined revolutionary activity directed to significantly changing the quality of Australia's social response. It is educational in the sense we have been advocating — a systematic sustained presence in the very soil of injustice urging persons and institutions alike to change, to become more just, more participatory, less rapacious and greedy in the consumption of physical resources and people alike.

In these movements we are seeing the church struggling to a new form of itself precisely because it has chosen to judge itself not in terms of what must be protected but in terms of who needs a neighbour to stand with them. There is in the image of the seed a hope that these small beginnings will bring about a substantial and unanticipated change in the landscape.

Such groups recognise that they cannot be politically neutral or politically

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5. *Action for World Development*, Fitzroy, Melbourne. From a statement issued informally to a seminar in 1983 concerned with justice issues.

aligned. They are concerned to gather as many who will come into their movement. They are concerned that leadership is given by the Spirit to the community rather than to particular defined offices within the community. They are seeking to understand what Jesus meant when he said, "You will find your life only by losing it." They are in their own terms "mustard seed conspirators".

### 3. The leaven:

A third form of the church's response is captured in the image of the leaven, that presence in the very substance of social life which, working quietly and imperceptibly, brings about substantial change.

It has been commonly believed that this image refers to individual Christians in their various social roles and places of employment, acting with resolution and conviction. The cumulative effect of this individual action it is believed will bring about a change in social realities. There is much in this understanding of the role individual Christians can undertake in their daily involvement in the commerce of events. It should not be dismissed nor undervalued.

Such a view of the church as leaven however is neither theologically nor pragmatically adequate, largely because it pays little attention to the structural realities of institutional life, nor of the power configurations that support them.

A more persuasive view of this image of the church working is of the Brotherhood itself. There, with the support of the church, a social agency has been created which mobilises in the community people of skill and capacity, dedicated to advocacy of the most needy, and concerned to bring about a just Australia. It can readily be acknowledged that few such agencies have been more effective than the Brotherhood. It can equally be seen that such a strategy for the church is at once both necessary and dangerous.

The danger lies in the gradual leaching out of the Christian presence so that as the agenda of social needs become paramount, the peculiarly Christian dimension motivating the response becomes irrelevant and dispensable. As the saying goes, "He who supps with the evil needs a long spoon." The time comes when institutional ownership of such agencies by the church becomes problematic whether one looks at health, education or welfare. It is then that the image of leaven has its most cogent force. For all human agencies are subject to those temptations and weaknesses that afflict their creators. Ironically the very processes set up to respond to the need of the neighbour in one generation can become the stumbling-block to new initiatives in the next. In these circumstances of courageous re-examination, even prophetic criticism, the church can fulfil its responsibility to move always to the point of greatest need.

It is this impulse to seek a more faithful response to the confession of a just and loving God which moves the church in countless hidden ways to act as leaven, cultivating the growing awareness of Australians that we cannot, in all conscience, persist in destroying and exploiting those who are in God's dispensation our neighbour.

### 4. Salt in the Body:

The continuing activity of the churches in acting to redress injustice at the national and international level is one of the true signs of hope in our time. The work of bodies like World Christian Action, Bread for the World and many others, help focus our work and prick our conscience into faithful response. It is

by such programs of aid, development projects and the creation of social alternatives that the church in its most institutional form struggles to keep societies whole and responsible, healthy and intact.

The work undertaken is impressive. The knowledge of the work undertaken in local areas and parishes scant. Indeed one continuing responsibility of the churches is to bring hope to the local gatherings of faithful people by the telling of the stories of these activities of the wider church. In that way our horizons will be widened, our sense of God's Spirit abroad in the world enhanced. There is a clear responsibility upon us all to know and contribute to what the church is doing. And thereby to hope again.

These four general responses of the church that can be identified leave one urgent question. How can these forms of the church's response be seen as one action of the Spirit? How may we gain strength from the multiple images that Jesus gave to us — light, a city on a hill, leaven, seed, salt?

This must be affirmed as a central theological and educational thrust of the struggle for justice.

### **Where Has the Church Failed? A Positive Reflection:**

In seeking to ask why it is that much effort to understand the call to justice so intrinsically part of the Gospel has largely been unfruitful in the daily life of the church, it is of little use to resort to theological prescription — the hearts of human beings are turned in on themselves and therefore resistant to God's call to love the neighbour. That may be true. It leads nowhere when one is seeking a creative response.

We need rather to consider such factors as the following:

- We have not been ecumenical in our approach, wasting resources and reducing the potential power of creative projects by parochial thinking and sectarian planning.
- We have not been action-oriented, preferring moral exhortation and moral suasion as the preferred method of response.
- We have not been ready to lose our life in order to find it again in a new form. Our instincts have been to protect, preserve and to consolidate what we have. They have led us astray. We have buried in the ground what should have been risked, even recklessly in the market place. Accommodation and adaption have won the day.
- We have not been tough minded enough in analysis of the situation in which the church itself can well be cast as an oppressor by its uncritical acceptance of its own place and role in society — a problem becoming less as the church ceases to be a viable force for change in people's lives and circumstances.
- We have no fire in the bones, no conviction about the very essence of the faith as a call to sacrificial, just living. We have allowed ourselves to fall asleep in the very presence of acute suffering and despair. We have ceased to hear the Lord of the church who began his public ministry with the words, "I have come to preach deliverance".

### **A Way Forward:**

If we are resolved therefore that educating for justice cannot evade dealing with the nature of power then the task is two-fold.

*Firstly* the church must help those who are victims deal with their situation.

*Secondly* the church must seek to act in solidarity with the poor and deprived

recognising that most people in the church are not victims but the beneficiaries of the present system.

## **Five Major Components in Educating for Justice: An Overview**

The components of this response, that has as its intention a profound commitment of the church to the transformation of society—are the following:

### **1. Theological and Biblical Foundations:**

A rigorous study of the theological, and biblical foundations which compel the church to seek righteousness and to do justice. A central question in this component is theological understandings of power.

### **2. Operating Models:**

A careful analysis of what is happening in one's neighbourhood and region, identifying the needs not being met, and the models of action most useful for the prosecution of projects and activities. A direct encounter with agencies and those they work with is assumed in this component — an immersion in the vivid realities being explored.

### **3. Structural Analysis:**

A comprehensive understanding of how society works, both nationally and internationally, so that the hidden structures which shape and control our lives become visible. The goal of this step is a unitary overview so that a coherent picture emerges of our mutual dependency within and beyond Australia. Who is best served by the present structures? Who controls them? And to what end?

### **4. Strategies for Change:**

A review of strategies that might bring about change whether conceived on a small, medium or large scale. Such strategies would explore the issue of means and ends, the use of force and both violent and non-violent alternatives. It would concern itself with strategies for use with those, whether within or without the church, who share the same basic assumptions, and those who did not have the same starting point or central convictions.

### **5. Action Outcomes:**

An action component that sets three continuing tasks:

- the clarification of a personal lifestyle consistent with what has been learned,
- the identification with a community, group or network struggling to bring about change,
- the continuing commitment to a vision of a just social order.

## **Who Shall Educate? Who Shall Be Educated?**

One question remains to be addressed. Who shall educate? Who shall be educated? From a Christian perspective it is the Spirit in the church which leads to truth, and certainly people in the churches need to involve themselves in the call to righteousness. But it is also true that in the quest for a just society those who are teachers also are learners, and those who are learners assume the role of teachers as people struggle together to understand what must be done.

There are also different tasks to be undertaken with those who are powerless and those who are not.

**1. With those who suffer deprivation, need or oppression the task of educating for justice has several facets:**

- (a) *Helping people understand their situation and the forces controlling it.* This includes helping them overcome the negative attitudes and resistant structures which keep them dependent and powerless.
- (b) *Developing in people a greater self-reliance.* Again the dimensions of this task of education include personal concerns as well as economic and political forces.
- (c) *Designing action projects in an attempt to change those circumstances which are perpetuating injustices.*
- (d) *Facilitating community projects in which people participate in making decisions which will directly affect their lives and their future.*
- (e) *Linking people with those resources which can help them as well as identifying and freeing those resources already available within their own networks and experience.*

**2. With those who seek to identify with the struggle for a just society:**

The educative tasks for those who are not directly suffering deprivation have to do with developing creative partnership with the victims of society. In this a major concern is the linking of shared response with the idea of discipleship. To be with and for the neighbour is to express solidarity with them. This solidarity expresses itself:

- (a) *in meeting immediate needs through sharing of human and material resources;*
- (b) *by unveiling, through action and discussion, the false images and myths about the causes of social inequity which the non-poor support uncritically;*
- (c) *by systematic analyses of the way social systems work, including the way they promote or inhibit the achieving of justice;*
- (d) *by critical reflection on major cultural values and assumptions which govern social experience;*
- (e) *by standing with those who are victimised at local levels as they seek for freedom and human meaning.*

Yet in this continuing responsibility to educate our people for justice we are confessing our faith in a just God. A God who in his covenant with us showed us a saving justice, a loving justice, a restoring justice. Such justice is the form of love. It is not known abstractly but concretely in the ambiguous processes of human existence. We must seek it whatever the cost for it is in that way we are truly Christ's followers. The ancient words seem as urgent and as timely as ever:

"He (God) is no respecter of persons  
And is not to be bribed;  
he secures justice for widows and orphans,  
and loves the alien who lives among you,  
giving him food and clothing.  
You too must love the alien,  
for you once lived as aliens in Egypt."<sup>6</sup>

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6. Deuteronomy 10:17-20.



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