



from Garth...

## Lockdown days



In these dark winter days of lockdown Gill and I regularly head over to a favourite place, Birling Gap - a beautiful spot close to where we live between the Seven Sisters and Beachy Head. One day last week we went over there in fairly bad

weather - it's a place that's interesting in all weathers and they have good coffee in the cafe so I bought some and went back to the car for a little meditation listening to Bruce Springsteen's latest album! And watching the surfers.

Gill put this picture on Facebook and **a friend said, "There must be a song in it," which made me chuckle, because I have just written a song with Birling Gap in it - it'll be on the next album!**

The great guitarist Dave Price, from Mobile Alabama, also suggested a song title, "Birling Gap Cold Coffee Blues" - Dave, get started on that one!

In Gill's Facebook she also mentions sparrows - Gill seems to have quite a relationship with the sparrows at Birling Gap. Every time she appears, within about a minute there's a whole gang of them around her. (I swear I hear a rustle as they arrive and the words, "She's here!") Gill takes a photo, the sparrows bob twice and leave!

Here's a verse about Birling Gap from a song called *An Easter Prayer*

There's a holy touch of wonder

### **Right over Birling Gap**

**The beauty of the sunset  
Love to catch a glimpse of that  
And somehow in those dark days  
The walking became a prayer  
Easter by the seaside  
So glad that I was there**

And the second verse of this song says this

### **Went home to see Bocelli**

**Sing Amazing Grace  
A prayer outside a Cathedral  
Among those empty streets  
From the Cathedral in Milano  
Rang a song of Easter hope  
I believe in this time of Easter  
Bocelli's message spoke**

Andrea Bocelli had sung a couple of songs in the empty Cathedral and then came out to sing Amazing Grace to the silent streets, and he said of his performance, "It's not a concert, it's a prayer." Many people found this had a huge impact on them especially as we mostly can't go to church at the moment. I think we remember with affection some of the parts of going to church that we are missing.

### **Friend and poet and one time Amos Trustee, Martin Wroe, wrote a poem about going back into a church which had been closed for a time:**

All quiet, I unlocked your doors,  
discreetly broke in.  
Not to disturb you, interfere with that  
frequency, I so rarely tune to.  
I sat down by the font,  
Held a second in my palm, dialled the  
silence,  
Awaited communication, some kind of  
guidance,  
The font was tight-lipped,  
The rood screen blanked me,  
I tried not to take it personally.  
The organ, holding her breath, was not coming up for air.  
I looked for my words to speak to the unspoken,  
Locked down in quiet time, this great crowd of witness



*Friend and one time Amos Trustee, Martin Wroe*

What are you thinking? I whispered, on the chancel,  
Where the candles played dead, keeping their distance.  
Mary winked from the window, with a stained glass eye  
Splintering the sun from ninety-two million miles  
Do you miss us? I asked, Do you want us back? An angel  
Arched an eyebrow, advised I stop talking, listen again,  
Said silence holds more than quiet and the absence of  
All souls, doesn't mean they're not here.  
I lay down in the nave, gazed up through the dust motes,  
At the pillars, the arches, the old wooden roof,  
Heard a chorus of voices, singing someone's death  
Witnessed a happy couple, plighting their troth  
Saw heads being bowed, knees being bent, forgiveness  
And mercy and centuries of weeping. And someone,  
From the future, came to offer me the peace.  
She said, this house is open, even when it's closed  
Prayers pray themselves, that's how everything goes.

*Martin Wroe, used by kind permission*

*The poem is in "Seeds of Hope - More Thoughts and Reflections from Amos Trust."*

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## **This Place**



*click on the image to hear the song on YouTube*

Martin's poem ties in so well to a song I recorded on the [My Name Is Palestine](#) album. The song is called [This Place](#) and it's written by Nashville poet and songwriter Tom Kimmel. **We may not be able to go to church at the moment but a song like this reminds us to cherish both the church community and also the place itself, where we have so many memories.**

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## Glory to God in the lowest

I had a greeting from a longtime friend of mine in the States, Don Wagner, the other day. He signed it off with "Glory to God in the lowest, as liberation and justice rise."

I love that sentence, and I told him that I would use it in a talk I will be doing soon on Liberation Theology. I asked him whether it was his own quote, and he responded, *"I don't think the quote is original with me, I have no idea where it came from--- it kind of evolved out of my love of liberation theology and the call to the poor and victims of injustice. Thank the Holy Spirit, Jesus' ministry and Phil 2 1-11, the Beatitudes, the Magnificat, and so much more."*

So I looked it up, because the first bit was ringing a bell, and found that "Glory to God in the lowest" is in a poem by G K Chesterton about the birth of Jesus.

Chesterton is really reflecting what I call in my book [Occupied Territories](#) "Bethlehem Theology". Chesterton is thinking of the birth of Jesus, God becoming human in the context of poverty, while **Don reflects his love and commitment to Liberation Theology**, and so I shall be using this quote and will refer to it as the "Chesterton-Wagner" quote. It is a lovely blessing!

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## The largest Israeli human rights group



[Click this image to read B'Tselem's report](#)

I have often spoken about the largest Israeli Human Rights organisation

**B'Tselem** because of the clear stand they take on the suffering and injustice that's happening to the Palestinians. Also because their name, B'Tselem means "in the image", which is a reference to the passage at the beginning of the Bible where it speaks of all being made in the image of God. Hagai el-Ad is the Executive Director of B'Tselem; he speaks very powerfully about what is happening in Israel and Palestine. He says "There is a regime of Jewish supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea: this is apartheid." And also, "The systematic promotion of the supremacy of one group of people over another is deeply immoral and must end... The future must be radically different... **We are the largest Israeli human rights group - and we are calling this apartheid.**"

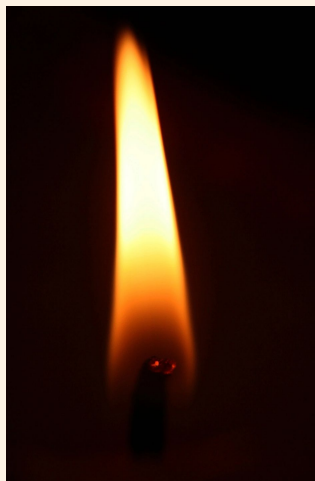
The clarity of this and the information they put with the report is a reminder for all of us that this has to cease. **The world said no to apartheid before, we must say no to it today** and work together with others to raise voices for justice and equality for all in Israel and Palestine - and no more pretending this isn't happening.

Blogger on Israel/Palestine and Amos Trustee Robert Cohen commented on the recent Guardian Editorial on B'Tselem's report:

*"B'Tselem's new position statement on Apartheid and Israel is getting serious traction in the Guardian today. It makes the promotion of IHRA in the UK look increasingly foolish and detached from a growing (Jewish) consensus."*

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## **Prayer - Let the healing fountains start**



**God of the just heart**

**In the challenging words of the Sermon on the Mount -**

**"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice**

**They shall be satisfied" -**

**You remind us that satisfaction does not lie where we might expect it -**

**In the security of wealth and privilege -**

**But in the joy of doing what is right,**

**And in working to assert the value and dignity of other people.  
So may liberation and justice rise  
Because this is the calling of your community  
This builds relationships and just societies -  
May equality rise  
May apartheid fall  
This will bring deep satisfaction as all are made welcome  
And as all are treated as made in the image...  
So keep us hungering and thirsting  
And campaigning  
For the values that make us all whole  
And then we know the healing fountains will start.**

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## **Kevin Mayhew**

I was very sorry to hear the news that Kevin Mayhew has died. Kevin formed his publishing company Kevin Mayhew 45 years ago with a "dream and passion for music". He had been battling with illness for a few years. I had met him a few years back and did two projects with his company.

Thank God for his life and his vision, and the impact of his creativity.

As a tribute to him and a prayer for him, I have put a track from one of those albums on YouTube, Hail Glorious Morn, the first track from **Liberty is Near!** the album of the Chartist Hymnbook. - you can [listen to it here](#).

**May he rest in peace and rise in glory.**

**With much love and prayers to Barbara and the family.**

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## **Thank you**

Many of you reading this may well have been at the Farewell to Amos concert and conversation on the 17th of December. Gill and I were very touched by the messages and comments, but also we have just received the beautifully designed book where the online messages and photographs continue. We are very moved by this - thank you all for the lovely messages.

The first comment in the book is, "As Simon Mayo said in his short film he made to acknowledge your retirement from Amos Trust, 'There are three people who never really retire: musicians, priests and activists.' While this book marks your retirement from Amos, the organisation which you founded in 1985, it is in no way an ending and we look forward to what will come next!"

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You can read more about the Garth Hewitt Foundation and what it does [here](#), and if you would like to support Garth's continuing ministry you can donate by using the '[Support the GHF](#)' button there or on any page of his website, or contact us on [info@garthhewitt.org](mailto:info@garthhewitt.org)

If you missed Garth's farewell Christmas concert given by Amos Trust on Thursday 17th December, you can watch it [on Vimeo here](#)

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## Prayer



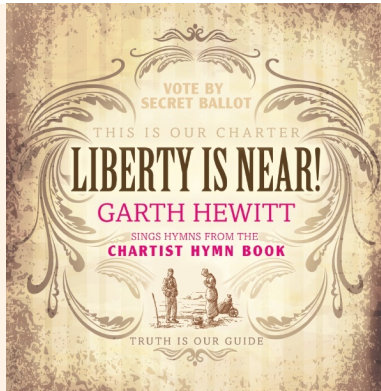
To a troubled world  
**Peace from Christ**  
To a searching world  
**Love from Christ**  
To a waiting world  
**Hope from Christ**

*from Book of Common Worship*

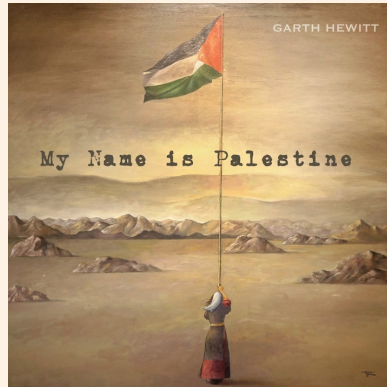
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*Garth Hewitt*

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*click here to buy Garth's album of songs from the Chartist Hymnbook*



*Click here to buy Garth's album My Name Is Palestine*



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