

"And Justice Will Bring Lasting Security"

by James McGinnis, Institute for Peace & Justice, January 2006

[1] Part I - Contrast in Vision Between Biblical Security and the US National Security Strategy

"Integrity will bring peace; justice will bring lasting security" (Isaiah 32:17). God's message through the prophets found an unlikely echo in the midst of the rebellion in Los Angeles following the exoneration of the LA police in the Rodney King case in 1993. "No justice? No peace!" Pope Paul VI put this in positive words - "If you want peace, work for justice."

The security crisis we face in the United States after 9/11 presents both a grave danger and a great opportunity, the two characters that make up the Chinese word for "crisis." The danger lies in the continued and expanding use of military force to crush terrorism and return to our pre-9/11 state of perceived invulnerability. The opportunity lies in pursuing the Biblical vision of Shalom and collective security among mutually vulnerable peoples and nations and then in speaking truth to power with love. After comparing these competing visions and policy approaches, I want to offer a number of ways that we as individuals and communities of faith can respond to this greatest challenge of our era.

A. The Bush Administration's perspective on security. The current US administration's vision of security is spelled out clearly in the two key policy documents that emerged after 9/11 - "The National Strategy for Homeland Security" (July 2002) and "The National Security Strategy of the United States of America" (September 2002). The primary goals behind these strategies are eliminating the threat of terrorism, preserving "economic prosperity" and "the American way of life" for our nation, and promoting freedom around the world, especially in the Middle East. The primary means to these ends are US military supremacy abroad and increased vigilance at home.

[2] In the words of the documents -

"The US national security strategy will be based on a distinctly American internationalism... While the United States will constantly strive to enlist the support of the international community, we will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting preemptively against such terrorists.."

"Our forces will be strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military build-up in hopes of surpassing, or equaling, the power of the United States...In the new world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path of [military] action..."

Iraq was the opportunity and 9/11 was the justification for the Bush administration to put these principles into effect and assert its vision and goals for a "New American Century: of unrivaled US military and economic dominance. But most of the nations of the world refused to cooperate. Underlying this resistance was the growing realization by much of the rest of the world that the ultimate goal of US policy is more preserving a privileged American way of life than spreading this prosperity and/or bringing democracy to the rest of the world. The only way one can preserve such privileged status is to impose it through force - military, political, and economic.

[3] But those who conceived the strategy are convinced of its necessity at this moment in history. "America learned a terrible lesson on September 11," they write. "American soil is not immune to evil or cold-blooded enemies capable of mass murder and terror" (National Security Strategy). Portraying the war on terror and Iraq as a struggle between good and evil, as a holy war or crusade, it becomes difficult to consider other options. Calling it a WAR on terrorism makes the struggle an uncompromising winner-take-all fight to the death. It is a mission for which President Bush says we must not fail. For God is counting on us. Perhaps the cross in this photo has been interpreted as a call to conquer, as it was for Constantine and the Holy Roman Empire and later for the Crusades. [4] As the President proclaimed in a speech to the American Enterprise Institute on the eve of the invasion of Iraq, our responsibility as the most powerful nation on earth is clear. "We meet here during a critical period in the history of our nation and of the civilized world. Part of that history was written by others; the rest will be written by us." (February 13, 2003).

The sad and terrible irony of this vision and strategy is that it has already begun to achieve the exact opposite of what it set out to accomplish. Yes, force is necessary to stop terrorism. Force is not the problem. It's who wields that force, how they wield it and for what ends. Security pursued through a combination of massive military force wielded primarily by the United States, with occupation and torture an unfortunate part of the strategy, imposed on Iraq, at least in part, to demonstrate US dominance and to maintain the economic and political privileges that come from being the world's only superpower is a sure path to lasting insecurity. Focused exclusively on the threat of terrorism and not on its causes, this strategy is creating more terrorists and greater resistance on the part of former allies and potential new allies.

As Israel is learning in its efforts to fight terrorism by killing terrorists (and as Steven Spielberg points out in his movie MUNICH), [5] the math of violence is often much different from the math we learned in school. The math of counter-terrorism or repressive violence is not 10 terrorists - 1 terrorist = 9 terrorists. 10 - 1 = at least 11, at least 2 new terrorists ready to pick up the weapons of a fallen comrade. The terrorism that Israel has faced for 50 years and that the US (and Europe) are facing now is rooted in large measure in poverty, the sense of helplessness and powerlessness that accompany poverty, and the humiliation that accompanies the occupation of one's land.

[6] The logic of violence seems to have escaped those who have shaped US policy in response to 9/11. But it's not just the Bush Administration. Dom Helder Camara, Brazilian Archbishop of Recife spoke in the 1960s of the "spiral of violence." [7] Violence #1 is institutional violence - injustice, the denial of basic human rights - the violence of racism, sexism, economic injustice, oppression, and every other "-ism" that discriminates, degrades or dominates others.

[8] Violence #2 is the response to such degradation, discrimination, and domination. Sometimes this counter-violence is in the form of nonviolent resistance - Gandhi, King, the United Farm Workers, the first intifada in the occupied territories. Sometimes this resistance is violent. In Los Angeles after the not-guilty verdict of the LA police in the Rodney King beating, the outbreak of violence was swift and the message was clear - "No justice? No peace! Whether it's this alienated violence of our urban centers or terrorist violence, neither will be solved until we address the grievances, the violence #1, that triggers such destructive responses.

[9] Unfortunately, too often the response to violence #2 is violence #3 - repression. Whether it's the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, military occupation in the West Bank and Gaza, or bigger police forces, larger prisons, and longer prison terms, the most obvious and the easiest response to violence #2 is overwhelming force to squash it before it gets out of hand. But violence #3 doesn't really work, at least in the long-term, because violence #2 is a reaction to violence #1.

[10] As Dr. King pointed out so many times -

"the ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies... Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." (1)

[11] With Dr. King and many others, I see the threat of global poverty as more dangerous than the threat of terrorism, but it isn't as dramatic and graphic. The image of the World Trade Center being hit by planes, engulfed in smoke, and collapsing into rubble is seared into our imagination forever. [12] The images of global poverty, in contrast, are more subtle - the eyes of a hungry child, the desperation of refugee camps, scavaging for food on mountains of trash in the Philippines. [13] While the destructiveness of poverty doesn't touch our imaginations like the images of 9/11, the deadliness of poverty - 40,000 persons a day dying of hunger or hunger-related illnesses - dwarfs the deadliness of 9/11. 40,000 persons a day - that's 14 World Trade Centers every day.

The sad and terrible truth is that after 9/11, we had an unprecedented opportunity to rally the nations of the world behind a truly collective strategy to deal with terrorism and its causes. But we squandered this unique moment by pursuing a war with Iraq and by rejecting other global initiatives like the Kyoto Treaty on the environment and the International Criminal Court. While this political cartoon of President Bush is a caricature of his face, its message may not be a distortion of his vision of the world and our nation's role in it. Unfortunately, this largely unilateral strategy is costing us more than just global allies. It is bankrupting our nation, impoverishing more Americans as well as the poor overseas, and increasing the vulnerability and insecurity of our nation and our military personnel as well. [14] And, as Dr. King often lamented, we are jeopardizing our very soul as a nation. "A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death" (2).

[15] **B. A global solidarity approach to national security.** The sad and terrible truth here is that there was, and still is, an alternative vision and strategy. Focused on the causes of terrorism as well as the threat of terrorism, the goals of this alternative strategy are first, eliminating economic exploitation and global poverty (part of the breeding ground for terrorists) and conserving the earth's resources; second, replacing the arrogant and sometimes degrading and humiliating imposition of unilateral military dominance - "superpower swagger" - with genuinely global cooperation and institutions; and third, promoting greater cultural and religious understanding rather than exporting our materialistic values. We have to find ways to break down the barriers between ourselves and the Arab and Muslim peoples of this world.

Instead of a "Project for a New American Century" to enhance American power and wealth, as the architects of the US policy have called their program, this global alternative speaks of "Millennium Development Goals" to cut global poverty in half by 2015. In contrast with President Bush's sense of future history needing to be written by America, the global solidarity approach finds its vision articulated more by Martin Luther King, Jr. [16] "This call for a worldwide fellowship that lifts neighborly concern beyond one's tribe, race, class, and nation is in reality a call for an all-embracing and unconditional love for all humankind" (from "When Silence Is Betrayal," April 4, 1967, at Riverside Church in New York). [17] Recalling the "Good Neighbor Policy" of President Franklin Roosevelt, the principles and policy recommendations for this global solidarity approach are being articulated in the "Global Good Neighbor Initiative" of the International Relations Center (ggn.irc-online.org).

The biblical basis for this alternative strategy. As implied in the words of Dr. King, this "Global Solidarity" strategy has its roots in the Jewish and Christian vision of Shalom. Shalom is social wholeness, the well-being of all, one community embracing all creation. Shalom comes only to the inclusive, embracing community that excludes no one, especially the orphans, widows, strangers (aliens or refugees). The blessings of Shalom are either shared by all or enjoyed by none. Security is either enjoyed by all or it will eventually be enjoyed by none.

[18] Again and again, God stressed through the Hebrew prophets that lasting security is based on justice and cannot be achieved by fortifications, horses and chariots, and military alliances (see Hosea 7:8-12; 10:13-14; Isaiah 30:1-18; 31:1-3). "You are powerful and prosperous," God says through Jeremiah, "but you refuse to help the poor get the justice they deserve" (Jeremiah 5:28). "I will keep you safe only if you change your ways...stop taking advantage of strangers, orphans, widows" (7:5). "We had hoped for peace... but all we got was terror" (8:15). God will be faithful and we can trust in that fidelity (Proverbs 29:25), but only if we uphold our part of that Covenant and do justice.

In stark contrast with the vivid descriptions of what will happen to God's people if they don't follow the way of justice and integrity, the Hebrew prophets use captivating images of genuine security and peace. [19] One image of God's Shalom is the "peaceable kingdom" of Isaiah 11:6-9. To expose the lie of security through domination, the prophet uses the image of the lion and lamb lying down together, with a little child to lead them.

Lasting security can never be achieved by dominating others, no matter what the sphere of life. Nations will never be secure as long as wealthy ones dominate impoverished ones. Peace in economic institutions requires owners and workers sharing more equitably in power and income. Peaceful secure relationships between men and women require gender justice - greater equality in decision-making and roles. Environmental security requires greater harmony between the human and all other species and a stewardship ethic that conserves the earth's resources for the sake of future generations. Harmony in race relations requires economic justice and political participation for all and mutual appreciation of cultural diversity.

[20] A second captivating image of God's vision of lasting security is Micah's, where everyone has their own vine and fig tree, living in peace and unafraid. "He shall judge between many peoples and

impose terms on strong and distant nations. They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. One nation shall not raise the sword against another; nor shall they train for war again. Every one shall sit under their own vine or under their own fig tree, and none shall make them afraid... " (Micah 4:3-4).

In his book *GOD'S POLITICS*, Jim Wallis provides an insightful commentary on this passage and the whole issue of security in a post-9/11 world. People will only be unafraid and nations beat their swords into plowshares when everyone has a piece of the global economy, their own vine and fig tree. As long as wealthy individuals and nations refuse to correct the increasing disparities between rich and poor, they will never "live in peace and unafraid." [21] Nor will the poor. Everyone must have a place at the table or none will eat in peace.

[22] Sometimes in dramatic deeds, God revealed to the Hebrew people, and now to us, that true security is based on trust and justice. We can hear God say "trust in me and thus in the power of Love. I led you out of your slavery in Egypt. While you wandered in the desert for forty years, I provided you with what you needed to eat, one omer of manna per person each morning. Never more than you needed and never less (Exodus 16:4-34). I gave you my great idea for a Sabbath year every seven years and a Jubilee year every fifty years, so that those who were impoverished would have their debts forgiven and land returned. And those who were forced into slavery would have their freedom restored (Leviticus 25). You see, unless everyone enjoys Shalom, no one really will."

When God's prophetic Word and saving deeds weren't enough to convince the Hebrew people of the truth of the Covenant - trust in God and in the power of Love and God will take care of you - God sent Jesus to show us the way to security and peace. The words and deeds of Jesus witness to this basic truth of God's way of Shalom. [23] Jesus wept over his city of Jerusalem and over his people, lamenting "if only today you knew the things that make for peace" (Luke 19: 41). The things that make for peace are loving one's enemies, living simply and sharing with others, forgiving everyone. Again and again, Jesus broke down barriers of race, class, gender, national origin and religion, and ate at the table of everyone. No one is excluded in the Kingdom or "Beloved Community" of God. Everyone is our neighbor (the good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37).

But we must be willing to give up our privileges and risk losing our lives in the service of this Gospel (Matthew 10:39) - challenging the forces of privilege and domination and standing with the victims of these forces. For "the first shall be last and the last first" (Matthew 19:30) and those who lose their lives will find them (true security). [24] As this cross dramatically suggests at the moment of 9/11, "in the face of escalating violence, escalate love." And many responded sacrificially, beginning with the rescue workers. [25] Written during the Jewish War (66-73 AD), Mark's Gospel sharpens this choice - faith in this self-giving Way of Jesus or fear. The two sea-crossing scenes (4:35-41 and 6:45-52) are especially vivid. The symbolism of the stormy sea reflects all the fears of wartime - chaos, lack of control, peril. This kind of faith and discipleship will be costly, especially in wartime. Family members will turn on you; you will be handed over to the authorities; but don't be afraid. You will be given the words to say by the Holy Spirit (Mark 13:5-13).

The early Church experienced God's security and Shalom, even in the midst of persecution and hardship. In Acts 2 and 4, the community shared everything in common. Those who had more sold what they had, and the proceeds were distributed according to need. Paul pleaded with the Corinthians to give their surplus to their needy sisters and brothers in Jerusalem. If the time ever came when they were in need, that need would be met by others with a surplus, with equality being the guiding principle (2 Corinthians 8:13-15). Trust in God and in the power of Love and you will always be secure.

Before going to Part II, you might consider these questions about Part I -

[26] Questions about fear and trust (3)

[27] Questions about President Bush's worldview and National Security Strategy (4)

[28] Questions about "the American way of life" (5)

[29] Questions about the Global Solidarity approach to national security (6)

[30] Part II - Putting this biblical vision into practice - in public policy, our faith communities, and our lives

[31] Do we dare to believe that God will have our back, as God says through Isaiah, "If you do away with the yoke, the clenched fist, the wicked word; if you give your bread to the hungry and shelter the homeless poor, ... Yahweh will always guide you, giving you relief in desert places..." (Isaiah 58:9-11)? Do we dare to apply this Word to our increasingly desperate desire and need for security? What can we do in terms of public policy, Church practice, and in our personal lifestyles to move more boldly and compassionately along this way to lasting security?

[32] **A. Public policy possibilities.** There are many public policy possibilities for global security.

1. Redirect tax dollars and personnel to achieve the Millennium Development Goals to cut global poverty in half by 2015. As U2's Bono challenged President Bush and the US Congress at a prayer breakfast on 1/30/06, "these goals - clean water for all, school for every child, medicine for the afflicted, an end to extreme and senseless poverty - are not just any goals. They are the Millennium Development goals, which this country supports. And they are more than that. They are the Beatitudes for a globalized world." The ONE Campaign that Bono, Bread for the World, and others are urging us to support is asking for an extra 1% of the US budget for foreign aid "to change the world, to transform millions of lives, but not just that - and I say this to the military men now - to transform the way that they see us. 1% is national security, enlightened economic self-interest, and a better, safer world rolled into one. Sounds to me that in this town of deals and compromises, 1% is the best bargain around." Even more immediately, in the President's 2007 budget just presented to Congress, only 30% of the foreign aid budget (which is only 0.1% of the total budget) is slotted for development assistance and much of that isn't earmarked for antipoverty programs. We can do better than this!

[33] 2. Somehow we have to find the humility and good sense to turn over the responsibility for helping Iraq with its security and reconstruction needs to the United Nations and strengthen UN and regional peacekeeping capabilities. We need political leaders who are willing to reverse

direction and promote active US involvement in international initiatives like the Kyoto Agreement, the International Criminal Court, and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

[34] 3. Public policy possibilities for domestic security include redirecting tax dollars and personnel to universal health care/insurance, full employment with a living wage, and quality education; instead of tax cuts for mostly wealthy people and minimum wage for many others, exorbitant billions for unnecessary wars and weapon systems, and prisons. [35] The \$251 billion spent on the war with Iraq by April 1, 2006, would have provided so much more real security for the poor here and overseas, as this graphic points out. (7)

[36] 4. Reading the analyses and responding to the action suggestions of groups like Faithful America (www.FaithfulAmerica.org), Sojourners (www.sojo.net), and/or the Network of Spiritual Progressives coordinated by Rabbi Michael Lerner and his Tikkun Community (www.tikkun.org) can help us magnify our voices for justice and lasting security. Faithful America, a project of the National Council of Churches, is an online community of people of faith who want to build a more just and compassionate nation. It provides one-click opportunities to impact current political issues and shift the terms of public debate.

[37] **B. Our prophetic task as a Church and as disciples.** The Church has a critical prophetic role to play in this crisis. This role is starkly proclaimed by the prophet Ezekiel. "When I bring the sword against a country, and the people of this country select one of their number to be their watchman, .. and if the watchman sees the sword coming and fails to blow the warning trumpet, so that the sword comes and takes anyone, I will hold the watchman responsible for that person's death" (Ezekiel 33:1-7).

I have felt the impact of this message several times in my ministry, but never as forcefully as now. It seems clearer than ever before that "a sword is coming" and we have the prophetic responsibility to "warn the people." [38] Interestingly, "The National Security Strategy" underlines the seriousness of this moment, but sees a very different "sword coming." "History will judge harshly those who saw this coming danger [terrorism] but failed to act."

Perhaps never before have we as a nation gone to such lengths, in the face of such international opposition, spent as much money, impoverished as many Americans, spread the American military as thin, and gambled as much on a national security strategy that is, in fact, only making us less secure; and then justify this strategy is a mission from God, as a holy war against the forces of evil. The Church as a whole and individual Christians must speak, both humbly and boldly.

[39] As Dr. King noted when he came out in opposition to the Vietnam War and the US economic system exactly a year before his assassination -

[40] "A time comes when silence is betrayal. Even when pressed by the demands of inner truth, men [and women] do not easily assume the task of opposing their government's policy, especially in time of war. Nor does the human spirit move without great difficulty against all the apathy of conformist thought within one's own bosom and in the surrounding world. Moreover, when the issues at hand seem as perplexing as they often do in the case of dreadful conflict, we are always on the verge of being mesmerized by uncertainty. But we must move on.

[41] "Some of us who have already begun to break the silence of the night have found that the calling to speak is often a vocation of agony, but we must speak. We must speak with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision, but we must speak. For we are deeply in need of a new way beyond the darkness that seems so close around us..." ("When Silence Is Betrayal")

[42] **The prophetic task here is at least three-fold.**

[43] 1. First, the prophetic voice of the Church must call both believers and political leaders to focus on the ultimate questions raised by these claims. *Does God call some or all to the fullness of life? Does God want us to work for the good of our own or for the good of all?* If God has created the world and its resources for the well-being of all, then is protecting "the American way of life" an end that justifies the means that are being taken? In our Jewish Christian tradition, "who is my neighbor?" Who are the "orphans, widows, and strangers" in our midst? Further, has the nation, "national interests," and "the American way of life" become an idol? Where is our ultimate allegiance? To God or the nation-state? What do we do when the two are in conflict?

[44] 2. Secondly, and this is difficult, the prophetic voice of the Church must help Americans see ourselves as we truly are, not just in our own eyes but as others see us as well. Yes, we are "America the beautiful," not only because of the incredible beauty God has given this land "from sea to shining sea," but also because of the good that we have done for the world, beginning with the ideals articulated in our founding documents, and our generosity, especially in times of disaster. But there is another side of America that others see all the time, but which many of us don't see or can't see. This is the "superpower America" that has tried to dominate the world for many generations - in the names of "Manifest Destiny," the "Monroe Doctrine," anti-Communism, and ultimately God. As the Church has repudiated the idea of a "Holy War" or "Crusade" in the past, we must resist today the characterization of the war against terrorism and Iraq as "Good vs. Evil." Evil is real, but it is in our hearts and policies as well as in the hearts and policies of other individuals, movements, and nations. What else would you cite for each column?

[45] In Isaiah 5:1-7, God gives us a helpful image for our situation today.

"Let me now sing of my friend, my friend's song concerning his vineyard. My friend had a vineyard on a fertile hillside; he spaded it, cleared it of stones, and planted the choicest vines. Within it he built a watchtower, and hewed out a winepress. Then he looked for the crop of grapes, but what it yielded was wild grapes. Now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard: what more was there to do for my vineyard that I had not done? Why, when I looked for the crop of grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes? Now I will let you know what I mean to do with my vineyard: take away its hedge, give it to grazing, break through its wall, let it be trampled! Yes, I will make it a ruin; it shall not be pruned or hoed but overgrown with thorns and briars; I will command the clouds not to send rain upon it..." (Isaiah 5:1-7)

[46] God has truly blessed our nation with some of the choicest of vines. Consider these questions. As a nation, what kind of fruit have we produced from the choicest vines God gave us? Isaiah says that "the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel." And we, too, think of our country as

specially blessed by God, chosen to be a beacon of light, liberty, love and peace for the rest of the world. What are some of the CHOICE GRAPES we have produced? Some of the WILD GRAPES? Among our "choice grapes" I would certainly include the United Nations, the Marshall Plan, our Social Security system, the Peace Corps, and millions of generous individuals and groups. Among our "wild grapes" we might include slavery, Native American reservations and racism, increasing poverty within the richest nation in history, the largest military budget in the world, leading the world in arms sales, invading countries or finding others to do it for us whenever we don't like their leaders - Guatemala, Iran, the Dominican Republic, the Congo, Chile, Cuba, Nicaragua, Grenada, Panama, and now Iraq.

[47] What does God promise us in the face of such environmentally, politically, economically and militarily "wild grapes"? What will happen to the "hedge" God planted for us? With 9/11, we learned that our hedge wasn't high or thick enough to keep the sword away. If the combined hedges of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans weren't big enough to keep the sword away, neither will increased border patrols and a 2000-mile fence along our border with Mexico. As long as poor Mexican farmers are left penniless because of NAFTA and Middle Easterners humiliated and enraged by US practices (from prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib to support for Israeli occupation of the West Bank and for oil-friendly autocrats in Arab nations), we are in danger. Only justice - and a willingness to listen to the pain of others, to learn from others, and to work together in spite of our differences - will provide lasting security.

So let us recommit ourselves to "liberty and justice for all," in our deeds as well as in the words of our national Pledge. Let us strive to be the best that we can be - as individuals and families, as a faith community, and as a nation. This kind of patriotism - loving one's country enough to work hard to make its practice match its principles, to sacrifice one's life in defense of these principles - holds the possibility of lasting security. Let us be the answer to Jesus' tearful plea as he prayed over Jerusalem, and now over America, "If only today you knew the things that make for peace" (Luke 19:42).

[48] Let us pray as Jesus prayed, as the Psalmist prayed, as Jeremiah prayed, taking no joy in issuing God's judgment, but pleading for God to turn us around. "Why have You broken down our walls...? Take care of this vine and protect what Your right hand has planted.... Restore us..." (Psalm 80: 9, 16). It's not too late; it's not inevitable. But God cannot mend our hedges, if we don't mend our ways.

[49] 3. The third prophetic task may be the most difficult of all. We must help people of privilege, which includes many of us, see just how privileged and unjust our American way of life is and then see the renunciation of privilege as gain rather than loss. The primary way of seeing our privilege is by experiencing people who are economically poor and realizing that we are a tiny minority, the exception rather than the norm. This is hard when everyone around you is living relatively privileged lives as well. I remember vividly the shades on the back windows in the cars of the wealthy in India, so that they wouldn't have to see the poor as they were being chauffeured through New Delhi. **[50]** Many of us don't want to see, not unlike those in the lifeboat. And even when our physical eyes do see, our spiritual eyes are blind to the meaning of what we see. Consider the questions raised by this visual (8).

[51] And what can we learn about security from the sinking of the Titanic by an iceberg? (9)

Experiences that help us to truly see and begin to understand the economically poor can range from frequenting places of poverty in our own community as well as traveling outside our nation. The key is getting to know people who have been impoverished. If we are fortunate enough to be able to worship together, go to school or work together, attend events together, and develop mutual relationships, then we are more able to see our privileges and begin to renounce them.

[52] The 2004 films of Gerard Thomas Straub on the faces and stories of the poor - from people with leprosy in Brazil to street people in Los Angeles - also help open our eyes and hearts and to see in the faces of the poor the face of Jesus.

Tapping into the suffering of others can be painful, but until we do, we will never be able to see.

[53] That's the plea of a Lebanese couple working in Libya whose house was bombed and their daughter killed by a US air strike in 1986 in retaliation for a terrorist bomb in Germany. In his excellent article in the CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR on "Why Do They Hate Us?" Peter Ford writes, "The Ghusseins have no sympathy for religious extremism and thoroughly condemn the Sept 11 bombings. Yet they both maintain that the devastating attack was a result of American 'arrogant' policies in the Middle East and elsewhere. 'We wish the American people could see what their governments are doing in the rest of the world,' Saniya says." (10) But, unfortunately after 9/11, our political leaders, and some religious leaders as well, never allowed that question - "why do they hate us?" - to surface and be explored.

A more novel experience, especially for Christians, that wouldn't require travel is suggested by the Jewish feast of sukkot and the practice of living for a week in a sukkah (tent). This symbol of the transitory and vulnerable character of life is used at harvest time to identify with the poor as well as to live closer to the earth. Especially during the harvest time of 2005, with thousands of people living in tents along the Gulf Coast of the US because of Hurricane Katrina and in the mountains of Pakistan because of the devastating earthquake, living in a tent in one's backyard or as part of a group on Church property could be a powerful reminder of our privileged way of life.

[54] Rabbi Art Waskow of the Shalom Center in Philadelphia sees a graphic and teachable connection between 9/11 and the sukkah. "For much of our lives, we try to achieve peace and safety by building with steel and concrete and toughness - pyramids, air raid shelters, Pentagons, World Trade Centers. Hardening what might be targets and, like Pharaoh, hardening our hearts against what is foreign to us. But the sukkah comes to remind us: we are in truth all vulnerable...

"Americans have felt invulnerable. The oceans, our wealth, our military power have made up what seemed an invulnerable shield... Yesterday [9/11], the ancient truth came home. We all live in a sukkah... There are only wispy walls and leaky roofs between us. The planet is in fact one interwoven web of life. I MUST love my neighbor as I do myself, because my neighbor and myself are interwoven. If I hate my neighbor, the hatred will recoil upon me.

[55] "The lesson is that only a world where we all recognize our vulnerability can become a world where all communities feel responsible to all other communities. And only such a world can prevent such acts of rage and murder. If I treat my neighbor's pain and grief as foreign, I will end up

suffering when my neighbor's pain and grief curdle into rage... America must open its heart and mind to the pain and grief of those in the Arab and Muslim worlds who feel excluded, denied, unheard, disempowered, defeated. This does not mean ignoring or forgiving whoever wrought such bloodiness. Their violence must be halted, their rage must be calmed, and the pain behind them must be heard and addressed. Instead of entering on a 'war of civilizations', we must pursue a planetary peace." (11)

[56] If you put these last three images together - the sukkah, the lifeboat, and the Titanic - what insights into security can we draw from their juxtaposition?

[57] In the last chapter of his final book, *WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?*, Martin Luther King provides another insightful image or metaphor to help us see the connection between security and justice, insecurity and poverty - the "world house." "We have inherited a large house, a great 'world house' in which we have to live together—black and white, Easterner and Westerner, Gentile and Jew, Catholic and Protestant, Moslem and Hindu—a family unduly separated in ideas, culture and interest, who, because we can never again live apart, must learn somehow to live with each other in peace... "

After this opening paragraph, Dr. King elaborates how racism, poverty, and war threaten the survival of the human family in its world house. He is especially concerned about the threat of global poverty. Commenting on the richness of this metaphor in Dr. King's final chapter, Carol Bragg of the World House Project (www.theworldhouse.org) makes this threat of global poverty more vivid:

[58] "The whole house must be maintained, not simply the rooms where the wealthier, industrialized peoples live. The integrity of the house is compromised when resources are concentrated in a few rooms and the rest of the house is allowed to deteriorate. Long-term, it doesn't work for the 4.6% of the world's population living in America's room to control 32% of the world's wealth. Understandably, others in the family will clamor to move into this room or resent and be hostile about the economic disparities in the house."

[59] Put yourself in the "World House" and consider these questions (12).

[60] The mindset needed for the world house to survive is clear. In Dr. King's words, "The large house in which we live demands that we transform this world-wide neighborhood into a world-wide brotherhood. Together we must learn to live as brothers [and sisters] or together we will be forced to perish as fools." Thus the choice within the world house that Dr. King offers is clear - "community or chaos." But we don't see these connections, immersed as we are in our comfortable world of things - "the lullaby of privilege," as a colleague puts it - and trusting in American military power to stave off the chaos and protect the privileged life in America's room.

C. Some Lifestyle possibilities. One place to begin to see this privileged life is in the shopping malls of America. Unfortunately, most of us visit malls to see all the stuff, looking for sales and people-watching. But it's what we don't see that is most troublesome. We don't see our souls being shaped by all the stuff, our eyes glazed by all the glitter, and our spirits diminished. It takes seeing the malls through the eyes of others for many of us to really see. I'll never forget

the tears of a Russian engineer staying with our family as part of an exchange program in 1990. After staring at nothing but full shelves as we walked down aisle after aisle in the tool and appliance section of a Sears store, he stopped and tearfully proclaimed that back home in Moscow he couldn't even find a basic tool for some home repairs. A few years later, a Nicaraguan mother visiting St. Louis as part of a fund-raising tour for her women's cooperative saw in a few days what most of us couldn't see. "Your children have so much that they have lost their souls. They have lost their connection with the earth and its seasons."

[61] Unfortunately, our shopping malls seem to be replacing churches and synagogues as the primary houses of worship for many in this country. We have a huge choice here, one that will determine the course of our nation, the world, and our own souls. And the choice is this - "manna" or "mammon"? Sufficiency or privilege? No one can serve two masters (Matthew 6:24); so which is it? If our choice is mammon, then we will need all the military power we can amass to protect it and will ultimately fail in the process, though not necessarily in our own lifetime. But if our choice is manna, that is, sufficiency, then the security of our nation as well as the security of our soul can be achieved.

This national lifestyle choice is really dependent on individuals and communities. That's where it starts, with us. **[62]** The renunciation of privilege is only possible in community. A relatively few individuals can amass fortunes and provide economic security for themselves and their heirs. But for the rest of us, we need one another, just as the early Christian community showed. We can trust in God and in the power of Love. When we share with others on the basis of need, we will find ourselves provided for in our time of need. Many extended families have learned this. Religious communities have modeled it. Small Christian communities and cooperatives have begun to flourish in industrialized as well as developing countries. Some local churches have organized skill banks as well as libraries and clothing centers for exchanging services and goods. Some small investors have found greater economic as well as spiritual security in making their limited funds available for micro loans and housing for the poor. Which of these and the others listed on the slide are doable next steps for you?

The more that people all over the world live these alternatives, the more likely they will become local and eventually national policy. Whether we see such policy changes in our own lifetime isn't the point. In fact, that's part of the insecurity of all of it. God asks us to trust God's way, that is, trust in the power of Love **[63]** As a final image and tiny test of this divine security, bring an orange to a group of people, preferably at a time when you are hungry. Ask them whether your need for food security will be better served by your eating the whole orange or by your taking one section and passing it around the group. The striking image of the orange is that it a symbol of the whole whose core or nature is ready-made for sharing. And thus it is with God's Shalom. Again, Shalom is social wholeness, the well-being of all, one community embracing all creation. And either everyone shares in Shalom or no one does.

[64] For as Gandhi put it, "there is enough in this world for everyone's need, but not for everyone's greed." **[65]**. In Dr. King's words, it's either "community or chaos." Lasting security lies in creating communities that share until the Spirit working in partnership with us brings God's Beloved Community to its fullness. And then it is that "justice and peace shall kiss" (Psalm 85:11).

Footnotes and Questions

1 *Where Do We Go from Here?*, p. 594, in *Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King*, edited by James Washington; HarperCollins, 1991.

2 "When Silence Is Betrayal" (also entitled "A Time to Break Silence"), 241.

3 Questions about fear and trust - Columnist Leonard Pitts says "fear makes us sheep."

- What frightens you most in the present situation?
- What kind of protection or security do you long for?
- What is the effect of fear on you personally, on political discussions, and on US policy-making?
- We claim as our national motto "In God We Trust." What would it mean, both personally and in terms of public policy, to replace fear with "trust in God"?

4 Questions about President Bush's worldview & National Security Strategy

- What does this caricature of President Bush say about his worldview and his understanding of the security needs of the US?
- How accurate is this caricature and why?

5 Questions about "the American way of life" -

- How would you describe "the American of life"?
- How might people of color and people in poverty in this country describe it?
- How might people from other countries describe it?
- Is preserving "the American way of life" a goal that is morally justifiable? Why or why not?
- Is it a goal that is economically and politically feasible in the long run? Why or why not?

6 Questions about the Global Solidarity approach to national security -

- As a people of faith, what is our responsibility to the rest of the world, especially those who are poor?
- What would a foreign policy based on the "Good Samaritan" and Dr. King's "unconditional love for all humankind" look like?
- Can we dare to place our genuine security needs and concerns in policies that promote a more just redistribution of resources and greater cooperation, especially if it means giving up some of our national military might, wealth, and sovereignty?

7 This budget data is constantly updated on the website of the National Priorities Project (www.nationalprioritiesproject.org).

8 Questions about the lifeboat image -

- What insights into security do you find in this caricature?
- What could you do to act on these insights?
- What are the lifeboats and safety nets in the US and worldwide and where can they be found?

9 Questions about "what we can learn from the Titanic?"

- What insights into global security can we find in the image of the Titanic sunk by an iceberg?

- What does the Titanic represent? The icebergs?
- Who are the people on board? Who got into the lifeboats?

10 Peter Ford, "Why Do They Hate Us?" in the CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

11 Rabbi Arthur Waskow, "The Sukkah and the World Trade Center," September 12, 2001; from the Shalom Center (www.shalomctr.org).

12 Questions on living in the "World House" -

- How would you describe the various rooms and the grounds around the "world house"?
- How would the "America room" be furnished? Give all the specifics you can imagine.
- As a resident of the "America room," what are your various feelings and thoughts about your situation?
- What do you think are some of the feelings and thoughts of those living in some small space in the "world house" or those who have to sleep outside?
- Living in the "America room," what would you do to make your situation as secure as possible?