

Al Quds Day & Stop the War on Iran

Of course I'm no fan of the Iranian regime, but equally I've been dismayed, shocked and saddened by the attacks on Iran by the USA and Israel - and much of the reporting of these in our media, largely from a position of ignorance and bias.

I've never been to Iran, but I have learnt a lot about the country from various events I have photographed over the years as well as films I've watched, particularly those of Jafar Panahi, an Iranian who has been imprisoned and banned from making films in Iran but has still made them. Of course a film isn't the real country, but he reflects on it with a particular emphasis on the misogynist character of the state and society and the effects of censorship.



Iran is one of the world's oldest continuous major civilisations, now in its seventh millennium. I don't know much about the first five and a half thousand years, but one key event from 680 AD is celebrated annually on the streets of London. Arbaeen celebrates the end of 40 days of mourning for the massacre of the prophet Mohammed's grandson, Imam Hussain, together with 72 companions at Karbala. They faced an army of 14,000 and fought to their death in what Shia Muslims regard as "the greatest sacrifice made by mankind, for humanity" and the "ultimate standoff between good and evil" saying "Death in honour is preferable to life in humiliation". Ali Khamenei, highly regarded by Shia around the world, took a similar stand, refusing to take shelter when he knew his life was in danger.

Another significant date came on May 26, 1908 with the first commercial oil discovery in the Middle East - and the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, later known as BP - was formed to exploit it. I've lost count of the

number of times I've photographed protests against BP and other oil companies, but a memorable one was in July 2015 when I went with Ahwazi Arabs and Peter Tatchell into NIOC (National Iranian Oil Company) House to gatecrash a meeting. As I wrote, "Iran's campaign of violent persecution, forced displacement and the suppression of Ahwazi Arabs began around 1925, largely driven by the discovery of huge oil reserves on the Arab lands. Continued after the Iranian revolution, it has resulted in their homeland, thought to have been the inspiration of the Biblical 'Garden of Eden', becoming a desolate wasteland, the poorest area of the Middle East." I've also covered protests by other Iranian minority groups including Kurds and Balochs.

The next key date is 1953 when Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh was overthrown in a coup d'état instigated by MI6 in Operation Boot with the CIA who named it Operation Ajax. Mossaddegh had become Prime Minister in the last democratic elections in Iran in 1950 and had tried to find if the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company was paying the correct royalties to Iran. When AOIC refused to cooperate the Iranian parliament voted to nationalise the oil industry. MI6 and the CIA stepped in to protect oil company interests and the coup made Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the Shah of Iran, as an absolute monarch.

Iran under Pahlavi became highly corrupt and repressive and over-reliant on the USA and the UK, with a massive number of Iranians leaving the country. Civil resistance against the Pahlavi regime began in 1977 and a 1979 referendum produced a massive majority in favour of an Islamic Republic, partly because of a boycott by many opponents. A broad-based uprising eventually led to the formation of the Islamic Republic under Khomeini. The 'regime change' that the USA and particularly Israel are proposing aims to bring back the Pahlavi regime.

The new constitution was theocratic, and brought the country under the control of clerics rather than elected politicians, so there have been no truly democratic elections in Iran since.

The Iran-Iraq war of 1980-88 was begun by Iraq, as Saddam Hussein feared that the Shia majority in Iraq



Pictures from End the Illegal Bombing of Iran march to US Embassy on 7th March 2026.



might follow the example of their neighbours and end his Sunni Ba'athist government. Iraq was supported by the USA and UK and also by the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran, an armed dissident group. Forced to move to Iraq, after the 2003 invasion of Iraq they were disarmed and after being abandoned by the USA moved to Albania. They regularly hold protests in London against the Iranian regime. Other Iranian groups also protest regularly in London, including both left-wing parties and supporters of the Pahlavi regime.

The Al Quds Day march and rally has also been an annual event for many years. Although these protests for Jerusalem and Palestine were inaugurated by Khomeini, this is a pro-Palestine rather than a pro-Iranian rally. It has long been opposed by Zionists who have called for it to be banned, and there have been organised and other counter-protests. But the march and rally has always been a peaceful one, attended by families from mosques around the country and others.

The annual Al Quds day event is organised by the Inminds Human Rights Group which also organises many smaller protests in London particularly in support of Palestinian prisoners and against



companies supporting the apartheid regime in Israel. They are thought to receive funding from Iran.

To describe the Al Quds day march as a pro-Iran march is false - as was the description of the march against the attacks on Iran being in support of the Iranian regime - made by the government, BBC and even Reuters. There were some supporters of the regime on it, and also some of its fiercest Iranian critics. But for the great majority of those on the march it was a march against war and calling for its end. The real losers will not be the Iranian regime but the people of Iran.

Peter Marshall



SIGNS OF HOPE

We've recently had a fence built at the back of our new house, to give an enclosed area where we can eventually sit out, once the patio has been created (and when the Mull weather allows!) The area where some trees/shrubs have been cleared looks like just a bit of rough ground of dirt and rocks BUT in January we had snowdrops appearing!

Snowdrops are wonderful. These tiny, delicate-looking plants push their way up through the soil in the depths of winter, despite the cold, frost and snow. Indeed the French name for snowdrop is *perce neige* – “snow piercer”.

Walter de la Mere celebrated the snowdrop's beauty in his poem “Snowdrop”:

*“The snowdrop, Winter's timid child,
Awakes to life, bedew'd with tears.”*

Snowdrops are a sign of spring and a message of hope that brighter days are to come. In these dark days (both literally and figuratively) it's important to recognise glimmers of hope.

Another sign of hope was the recent exhibition in a New York art gallery of drawings by children in Gaza ranging in age from 5 to 16. Entitled “**Colours that Survived**” the exhibition was curated by Rachel Anne Accurso, better known on YouTube as **Ms Rachel**, and 20 prints of each drawing sold out online in just over 24 hours, with the proceeds of \$67,000 going to support the children of Gaza.

While some pieces, understandably, show the devastating realities of life in Gaza, others express hope for the future. For example, Rama has drawn a young girl happily walking to a school where the Palestinian flag waves proudly. One young artist, Rafah said:

"It feels like a part of me escaped. My body stayed in fear, but my drawings found safety. I carried these memories alone: the hunger, the bombing and the loss. Sharing my art feels like letting people hold a piece of what we lived. I wish people in New York City knew we're just children. We loved cartoons, school and silly dreams. We grew up too fast because we had to. And even after everything, we still want to live and create."

Ahmed, aged 12, who drew "House on his back" said "When I was displaced the first time, my mother told me to pack a small bag with only the most necessary things. I left my new blue soccer shoes under my bed. I hid them well because my bag was too small to take them. I didn't know I would never see them again. Now they're under the rubble of our home, and I miss them — just like I miss my room and everything we left behind. I used to ask, 'Why do we live like this? Why doesn't the world see us and stop this? Why don't they tell our stories?' My sister told me that maybe people can't hear us or see us, but I should tell my story anyway. So I began to draw."

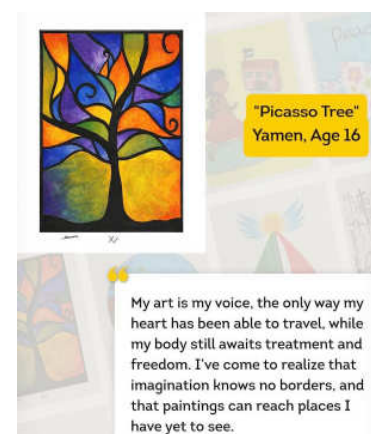
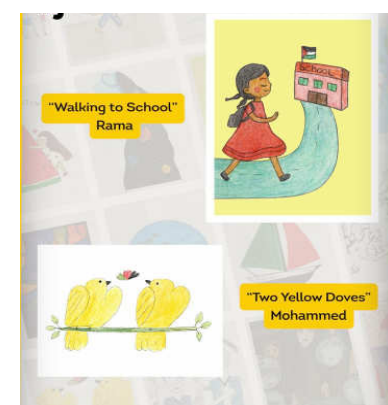
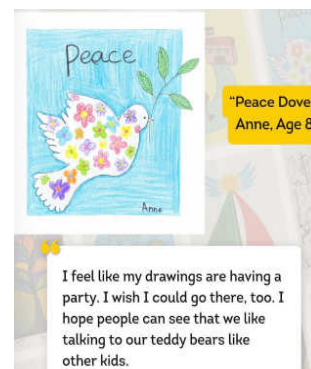
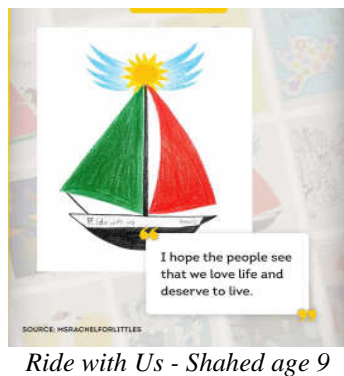


Similar exhibitions have taken place in cities around Europe and the UK. Speaking about the "heART Gaza Exhibition" which toured Ireland last year, Féile Butler, who started the exhibition in Ireland, said "There's everything from themes of trauma naturally, to themes of displacement, but there's also themes of hope and friendship, of resilience and defiance."

So, even amongst the starvation, death and destruction these children have lived with and are still experiencing, they still have hope.

In these dark and turbulent times we all need to look for signs of hope and also to look for ways in which we can be instrumental in bringing hope to others.

Lorraine Jones



Violence is everywhere

It's lambing time again! When the lamb is born, mum makes a soft grunting sound & in response the little one bleats back. So they learn to recognise one another's voice.

Every morning we take the sheep to the field behind the house where there's lots of grass. The other morning on arrival at the field, one of the ewes straight away lay down panting, tired, then got up, turned around, tossed about, rolled over as some ewes do immediately before dropping their lambs. But then she started pawing the ground as she would paw her newborn & grunting in that special way, as if calling to her lamb yet-to-be-born.

Everyone maybe has experience of lambs gambling in the spring. We have had a flock of sheep for over 20 years but every year lambing is like the first time again. When as happens the ewes lose sight of their little one they anxiously scamper about calling until they have found it, but if a lamb that isn't theirs comes to them they roughly butt it away. The male lambs will start to fight one another from quite early on, butting violently until the base of their newly-formed horns starts to bleed. Once we had some of our neighbour's goats with our sheep. One goat was old & feeble, unsteady on her legs. Our ram would seek her out, knock her down & continue to butt her against the fence & so we had to separate them.

In Lyon recently there was a street brawl between right wing youths & members of a movement the Young Guard (la jeune garde) affiliated to the radical left wing political party LFI (la France Insoumise). One right winger Quentin Derangue was knocked down then kicked by the Young Guard & died. The leader of LFI, Jean-Luc Mélenchon declined to condemn the act.

We have grown used to seeing on TV towns being pounded into rubble & hearing how many people have died that day & so it is time that we ask again 'Why do the nations so furiously rage together & why do the people imagine

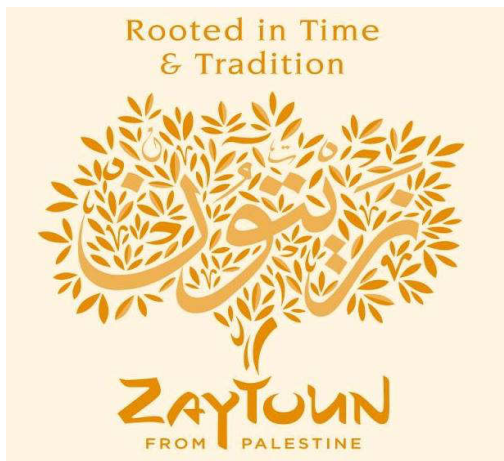
a vain thing. And to try to bring healing. For example again in Lyon we read recently there are groups actively proposing non violent action as the best way of calming the situation & coming to a position of dialogue involving the left & right wing groups.

Also in the municipal elections last month among other ethnic minority representatives elected was the mayor of Saint-Denis (Paris suburb) Bally Bagayovo. He is black and has been caricatured as a monkey in the right wing media CNews owned by the oligarch Victor Bollere. Mr Bagayovo appeared in a TV debate the other night with a group of sociologists, historians & campaigners of different ethnicities. The consensus was that we work together in our different capacities to bring about a new diverse but harmonious society. It was so encouraging and I think it is all in the Asmami personal discipleship commitment.

In our own little patch we are violent. We slaughter 2 sheep a year to make curried mutton. At lunchtime we might go down to the vege patch & slice off a lettuce with a sharp knife. That is a violent act. If we were lettuces we wouldn't be so happy with the arrangement. We know that plants are sensitive to their environment & react to it. They also communicate with one another.

Creation is such that we have to eat. That is the way we are made. Out there in the vege patch predators abound including us. What isn't being eaten is busy eating. So maybe we should take what we need & no more & give thanks as in the prayer published recently in Act Together.

So we should love our enemies & all creation, do good to them that hurtfully use us and apologise to the lettuce.



Marking 50 Years of Land Day in a time of regional war

March 31, 2026

50 years ago, on 30 March 1976, six Palestinians were shot dead by Israeli forces as they protested the seizure of thousands of dunums of land in the Galilee. They had gone out to defend something Palestinians have always understood in their bones: that land is not just territory. It is identity, livelihood, memory, and the future.

Palestinians mark it every year. But this year, Land Day arrives with a particular weight. A month ago, the region shifted again with the launch of airstrikes on Iran.

Eid al-Fitr, the celebration at the end of Ramadan, is normally marked by visits to family, to the graves of loved ones, by gatherings, food, and celebration. This year, for many, it became a time of mourning.

As Israel intercepts incoming Iranian missiles, debris rains down on Palestinian communities below. Palestinian towns have no sirens, no shelters, no Iron Dome. By late March, nearly 200 incidents of falling missile debris had been recorded across the West Bank, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. People have been injured in their homes, in their cars, in their fields. Just outside Hebron, three women were killed in a single such incident on the evening before Eid al-Fitr.

Those who stayed home described a strange suspension of ordinary life: plans cancelled, movement curtailed, gatherings reduced or moved online. It may sound faintly familiar. But this is not a shared global pause like Covid. It is a system of restrictions imposed on daily life, where movement is both limited and unsafe. Alongside this, shortages of fuel are further constraining daily life, affecting everything from transport and farming to electricity and essential services.

And just days ago, the Israeli Knesset passed a law expanding the use of the death penalty – a move condemned by international bodies as discriminatory and in violation of international law, and one that risks further entrenching a system widely described by rights groups as apartheid.

At the same time, settler violence has intensified markedly. Homes have been attacked, vehicles burned, olive groves damaged or destroyed. In some areas, entire communities are under increasing pressure to leave. The scale and pattern of these attacks have been so severe that one Israeli commentator, writing in Haaretz, has described them as resembling a “pogrom”.

Land Day has become synonymous with steadfastness – sumud. The act of staying, of keeping the land alive when so much around you is designed to make you leave.

Zaytoun

For a 37sec video about the latest olive harvest see

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/1385618846605224>



Placard seen at a recent US demo sent by Quaker friends on sabbatical to Sandra

Meet Dora Atiiga: Fairtrade Cocoa Farmer, Teacher, Mother, and Changemaker



In Ghana, children make up a third of the workforce growing the cocoa that goes in our chocolate. When incomes are low and there are no schools nearby, many families have no real alternative: children can end up on farms instead of in classrooms.

Dora Atiiga refused to accept that future for the children in her community.

Dora is 31 years old, a Cocoa Farmer, a Teacher and a mother of three girls. She is a member of the Kukuom Union co-operative in Ghana and a graduate of Fairtrade Africa's Women's School of Leadership. But before stepping into these roles, she describes herself very differently: 'a young woman who at first could not express or share my point of view' and 'totally dependent' on her husband Dora often stayed silent.

Joining Fairtrade Women's School of Leadership marked a turning point. The programme brought together women farmers to strengthen their confidence, skills and voice – from financial management and public speaking to negotiation skills. Globally, between 60 and 80% of the world's food is grown by women, yet their voice often goes unheard. Dora chose to claim hers.

Through the course, Dora began to see new possibilities. When she looked around her village, she saw a problem that went beyond her own farm: there was no early-years school. Parents had little choice but to take very young children with them to work on cocoa farms. Fairtrade training had reinforced a clear message: children belong in school.

So Dora started one herself.

She started small, teaching and feeding six children herself. But as parents saw the difference it made, word spread and numbers grew. Today, it has grown into a registered school with around 170 pupils, eight teachers and a cook. Dora continues to provide free

care and education for families in her community – helping to tackle the root causes of child labour.

Dora's days are long: she continues to farm cocoa, run her school and raise her three children. Today, she advocates as a Fairtrade Youth Ambassador for living incomes, climate action and children's rights in her community - not as someone waiting for change, but as someone actively driving it.

In Dora's words

What is a typical day like for you?

'I wake up early in the morning, sometimes around 4:30am. I prepare food and [send my kids] to school, I go to my school and check on how things are going. And then I come back home, come to the cocoa farm... and then in the evening at around 4-5pm I'll go back home and prepare food for my family.'

How has leadership training supported you?

'I had the opportunity to join the Women's School of Leadership by Fairtrade Africa... it turned out to be one of the best decisions I've ever made. As a young woman who at first could not express or share my point of view in public, [I am] now able to advocate on living income and climate action... without fear or panic.'

Why did you start your own school?

'I realised I can use [my knowledge] to help the little ones. Since there was no school for little children in my community, I decided to start one as a dream... as my little way of tackling child labour in my community...'

How did the school grow?

'As time goes on, parents of the community realised it was a good thing. It was helping them. So most of the parents [started] bringing their kids and I couldn't control them myself... so [I started] getting in more and more teachers'.

How has your life changed?

'Once a totally dependent woman on my husband, [I am] now an employer with 9 employees and also giving quality care and education free of charge to children.

I can now boldly say that I'm no more dependent on my husband alone... some are now depending on me.

What keeps you going?

‘Sometimes, I feel tired. There are days when it’s a lot. But each morning, when I wake up, I’m motivated to keep going.’



There is a 35min interview with Dora where she says that is the childrens' smiles, seeing them reading and learning, and having dreams and hope, that keeps her going.....

<https://vimeo.com/1182575269>



<https://www.fairtrade.net/uk-en/get-involved/campaign-with-us/current-campaigns/do-it-fair.html>

Reflections on Food and Health

I sometimes wonder why the health service is not doing more to educate patients about food and health.

Processed meats- sausages, salami, pork pies, ham, etc are now regarded as very risky foods long term. Red meat is now regarded as tending towards disease in the lower digestive tract. Concentration shed chickens are inevitable if large urban populations want chicken and eggs at low prices are not healthy. Chickens and eggs from small holdings or scratching around a farmyard are healthy. Small scale farming with modest goat, sheep and cattle numbers is beneficial for the environment and health. Feeding large urban populations needs a largely plant based diet, constructed around beans, peas, chickpeas and lentils, to reduce global warming, accelerated in part from vast numbers of cattle and sheep in various parts of the world.

When herd sizes are in hundreds and thousands, methane emissions become very problematic, adding to global warming. Debates in farming wonder if ploughing is necessary, as without it

soil compaction from heavy horses and diesel tractors is reduced.

Oil based fertilisers have made for big plant yields but it makes a dependency culture. In a world at war in the Middle East with oil supplies and gas flows stopped and interrupted, some farmers are looking at fallow field agriculture, planted with clover nitrogen fixing plants and rotating fields, as was done in the past before external supplies made it less necessary.

Convenient fast foods are wrecking many people's health, with obesity and type-2 diabetes at a high incidence level in populations. Big Food and Big Pharma are linked. Drugs are used for health problems caused by poor diets. Why is there so little assistance to enable people to eat a better diet, even on very modest incomes?

Jenny, I am sorry that this is such a short article, with not a lot of research details. It may act as a prompt, an encouragement to ponder a few contemporary problems.

Cerys Brangwyn

Action for Women's Integrated development in the DRC



Ashram recently contributed £3000 to Quaker Congo Partnership (QCP) to contribute to the purchase of land and building for the (Association of Women's integral development (AWID)). I received recently the good news that the purchase is now complete. Money in the future will be needed for refurbishment of the building but this is an amazing first step and act of faith by all concerned considering the difficulties of the last year or so. QCP received this message from Isidore, recently appointed manager/ coach.

Today, with the site manager, the CEEACO team, (CEEACO is the national Quaker church) and AWID representatives, I finalized the land purchase. It went well. The team is delighted with this significant achievement for CEEACO in support of its AWID project for the empowerment of women. On this occasion, we extend our sincere thanks to the QCP team.

I thought I would add a few comments and reflections about my involvement in this project.

First a bit about the geography of the DRC. The area in which both QCP and the Conflict Minerals Campaign (CMC) is involved is East Congo. DRC is a very large country. The capital Kinshasa is at the far side of the country. The main cities or large towns in E DRC are Uvira at North of Lake Tanganyika, which borders Burundi, to the north Bukavu and further north Goma, which are near Rwanda. The recent fighting seems to have affected the three towns differently which is understandable in that M23 the militia group concerned in the fighting is funded by Rwanda. Uvira where a lot of the work funded by QCP is focussed seems to have been least affected by fighting but even so people were killed and injured, and there was a great deal of fear with some people fleeing to Burundi. Displacement always increases poverty as finding food and shelter such a major issue. Food was expensive and in short supply, and banks were closed for several months. The link with the mining is that mining has long been major source of employment and so income, particularly for the gold and coltan found in mobile phones, and this is why over many years militias have fought for control over mining sites. This can then be sold or smuggled on to the next link in the supply chain.

One of the issues for engaging as a charity, with donors mostly in UK and recipients for donations in DRC, is communication. This is mostly via Whats app calls, sometimes by email and zoom. Most people in DRC are French speaking so communication sometimes involves translation both ways so adds to time. Access to phones seems fairly normal but computers less so. Electricity supply is not always reliable and money for internet use is in short supply. Time zones are of course a bit different and this made a difference in the recent fighting as people in the DRC wanted to be home before it got dark and more dangerous. It is usual for the QCP trustees who can to visit occasionally. This is always really important in having a sense of direct connection. I also have begun to get a sense of that connection through the regular What's app messages we receive. Pictures of the women and the crops they grow, mostly cassava, peanuts and lemons and the dress-making work and soap production gives an insight into their hard work. Most moving to me were the exchanges during the worst of the most recent conflict about how to organise sharing of food and affirmations of their faith in God.

Sandra Dutson

Ashram has funded a scholarship through the

Sheffield Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund

Extracts from the Fund's March 2026 newsletter -

Our Gaza students are phenomenal: they command our utmost respect. During 2025, through our key Gaza partner, Mona El Farra (currently in the UK) and with the help of Adham Talal Abu Shawish (in Gaza) we managed to contact many of the young women we had been supporting before October 7th 2023. What we discovered was that a good number of them had signed up to continue their studies online, or they wanted to, but lacked the funds. In a powerful act of resistance, these young women were refusing to give up on their education. Despite being displaced from their homes, despite suffering the loss of family members and friends and the Israeli army continuing to kill Palestinian men, women and children, they were asserting their right to a future, not only for themselves but for Palestine.

We are immensely proud to have awarded 38 scholarships in Gaza in 2025. We made direct payments to two universities (where 21 of our students are enrolled) and by late autumn our long-standing partner—the non-governmental organisation, Afaq Jadeeda—was up and running again and could distribute the remaining funds.

Very sadly, we have not been able to reach twenty of our Gaza students. They may have been killed, or displaced within Gaza or aboard, or they may simply no longer have access to a phone or laptop. We just do not know. We very much hope that in time we will be able to trace them.

Heartfelt congratulations go to the 8 Scholarship Fund students who graduated in Gaza in 2025: a truly remarkable achievement.

The Fund also awarded 14 scholarships in the West Bank, selecting students from areas which have been the target of severe and sustained Israeli military operations. Four West Bank students graduated in 2025 but face an uncertain future. The war and the displacement of communities have led to a severe economic downturn in the West Bank. Unemployment is high in both the public and private sectors.

Education and Freedom

“The struggle is not only over land and people, but over the future—and education is central to defining and being that future”. Dr Rania Jawad, Bir Zeit University

Education in Palestine is being systematically targeted by the Israeli government. Universities in Gaza and the West Bank have been destroyed, raided, or rendered inaccessible; students and academics face displacement, arrest, and death; and educational infrastructure has been deliberately dismantled and destroyed. Yet education endures. Teaching, if necessary, takes place in tents, hospitals, and WhatsApp classrooms, as Palestinian universities continue to nurture community, knowledge, care, and resistance.

At an international webinar on Educational Freedom in Palestine, hosted by the Campaign for Higher Education in February 2026, Palestinian academics and student activists made it clear: Palestinian universities are targeted because they foster imagination and political possibility.

Notwithstanding checkpoints, mass incarceration, and surveillance, the university remains one of the few places where Palestinians can gather across divides. It is why students are targeted and criminalised simply for trying to learn.

As one of the student activists at the webinar explained:

For Palestinian students, learning does not begin in the classroom. It begins on the road, at the checkpoint, and in the constant calculation of risk... Despite these conditions, I continue pursuing education as a means of asserting continuity against the fragmentation of life.

The Value of Scholarships

International bodies, such as the UN refugee agency (UNWRA) and UNESCO, are reporting that scholarships are now vital in Palestine. Financial pressures force many Palestinian students to suspend or abandon their studies. Scholarships reduce inequality of access to higher education.

Scholarships also support Palestinian universities, which rely heavily on student fees, and help preserve academic programmes and teaching capacity. This material and moral support is welcomed by Palestinian universities: defending education is inseparable from defending Palestinian existence, imagination, and the right to a future.

Contact me if you'd like an emailed copy of the full newsletter with profiles of some of the students, and a list of all the courses they are taking.

Jenny

Dear Margaret, We have received the £12,000 for the wells -thank you so very much to everyone at Ashram Trust for this wonderful support. It has arrived just at the right time of year for well building and there is a desperate need for water in many villages. Over half the population relies on traditional earth dug wells for their water supply, which are collapsing in much heavier monsoon rains. It has also become too dangerous to dig an earth well nowadays as the water table has fallen and the walls are too sandy and unstable. Many, many thanks Caroline Hart, Joliba Trust.

I've just heard from Caroline that the Ashram donation actually funded THREE wells! Below thanks from one of the villages, and my thanks too - it is truly humbling to see how this gift has transformed lives, and be reminded how precious water is, especially as temperatures in Mali have now risen to over 45 deg C. Jenny

Thank you from the villagers of Lagourou, Mali for the well which has brought life back to the village!



After completion of the well, Moumouni Togo, village councillor, said: I am a councillor of the village of Lagourou. After 5 years of suffering and looking for a partner for the construction of a modern well, God has blessed us with contact with Joliba and their funding partners. We have just had our first modern well since the village was created. We will be eternally grateful to all those who have made possible what we thought impossible.

Before the well was built around 4 a.m. we could hear noises here and there, no one could sleep from that hour. Today, people sleep until 5 a.m., everything is really quiet. Also we have two meals a day now, the children go to school normally, and the village has resumed its lifestyle. The animals are back in the village, everything is back to the way it was before. It feels as though there has never been a water problem in the village.

We are all very happy and this happiness is thanks to you. The only thing we can do is thank you, thank you and thank you again and thank you always. We are used to saying that "No matter how long the night is, the day will come" in Lagourou the day has come with the new well.

Hawa Togo, women's representative -Now my children can continue their studies without being disturbed because the water chore is over and this is thanks to you. The women of the village say thank you, thank you for freeing us from a 12 km walk to get water. We will be able to resume our normal lives. We have already started



to attend the markets in Koporo-na and Koro. My business is the sale of local soap that I myself produce. Once the well was completed, I produced a lot of potash and I sold part of it to buy shea butter to make soap. The sale of soap allowed me to make a profit of £7.50 in the week. All the women have developed their small enterprises. We have suffered too much from poverty and now we have sources of income, what a great relief. During the period of fetching water, I had stomach aches and I thought I was going to die. I had no money to go to the dispensary and I stayed in bed for a week. My husband went to see a Healer and his plants relieved me a lot. We suffered in silence but thanks to you all that has



happened is in the past. I can only say thank you. 12

THE INFLUENCE OF JOHN ON MY LIFE

I decided to write something down after feeling I had asked a question which was misunderstood at the event some of us attended at the launch of the book 'Radical discipleship' in February, about John's influence.

The influence of John on my life has been huge especially on where I live and how to analyse and act in my situation. My question related to his advocacy of 'situation analysis'. The focus seemed to be on the immediate geographical element of situation. I was asking whether this was quite adequate to those elements of our wider situation and in particular to the concern I have developed about those who mine the minerals in our mobile phones especially those in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

I have not been able to track down any notes I made all those years ago on how to conduct a situation analysis so maybe there is something I misunderstood but I wanted to reflect a bit on why I feel my question was still in the spirit of what I had understood.

In a strange way it seems to relate to a childhood memory when a group of us even when we were of junior school age decided to see how long we could make our address. Mine at the time was:

The Bays, 15, Shaws Lane, Great Wyrley, Near Walsall, Staffordshire. England, UK, Europe, The World, The universe.

When more recently I asked children of a similar age they included, the Solar System and the Galaxy.

Over the years I have reflected more on this and find it helpful. The whole address is 'true'. I like to see how far my involvements include every part of the address. My understanding is that at any one time one part of the address may demand more of our attention than others. For instance if you or someone you care is very ill the focus is likely to be your home. Part of my situation analysis has been to see many of my activities as relating to one part more than another. Immediate geographical elements about neighbourhood often relate to church or local politics but we do all relate to the rest of the world through products we buy, which energy companies we use etc and FairTrade for instance helps us understand those relationships better and hopefully act on that understanding.

When we moved to Salford initially some of the reasons related to the need to care for both our mothers, and my interest in transport. Salford suffers immensely from Community severance because of being for many a place you travel through on the motorways which cut through it. Friends who have been to stay are sometimes shocked by the noise of walking over motorways or the need to go through subways. For people who live in Salford these are daily realities.

Anyway one of the issues soon became quite a considerable change to the largely white working class population when the Blair government were elected in 1997. This was because of the policy concerning the dispersal of Asylum seekers. Many who arrived in Salford had their origins in the DRC and I understood in a very general way they had fled because of the conflict generated by the ways the minerals were a source of wealth to those who took control of the mining sites. On one occasion I became involved in Peace Week at the local FE college and explained in simple terms the link between the asylum seekers from the DRC now in Salford and the conflict over minerals especially coltan which could be found in all mobile phones. One young person at this point got out his mobile phone to check on 'coltan' and said loudly 'she's right, she's right' rather reinforcing my point!

Considering the amount of time many people now spend on their phones I think they need to be part of any situation analysis. The minerals as I keep trying to explain now link with a great many aspects of modern life. The expression 'critical minerals' is now used by governments to stress our need for them so this directly connects us with the lives of those who mine them. We know their use in many of the gadgets etc which are needed for the 'green transition'. What is also becoming clearer is that they are also needed for most modern weaponry and space travel.

The present Artemis trip around the moon has generated a real sense of wonder and the responses always of those who have viewed the earth from space has been a sense of being part of one world. One comment on the TV was by an astronomer talking about some of the connections we all may have now with space via satellites. I do think we need more help now in analysing all these links and all their impacts. . The questions which I think Situation analysis emphasised are really vital eg where does the money come from, who benefits, who bears any

environmental health impacts, There is overall a need to understand the realities of life for all involved and not to rush into any situation till we have sought to understand them better. We also better understand the realities if we at least share some of the hardships involved but if that is not possible ensure we learn from what we are told by those with lived experience.

I am currently reading 'Middleland' by Rory Stewart. It is a series of pieces he wrote between 2000 and 2019 during 10 of which he was MP for Penrith and the Borders. I find it fascinating because he walked around

his constituency and met many of his varied constituents on his walks and at local events hearing at first hand their situations in some depth. He sought to understand something of the local history and the geography of the area but it is his real interest in people that shines through. In its own way the book reveals an MP who attempts to do his own situation analysis in all its complexity. It highlights for me how such in depth, highly motivated analysis is something we need to ask of all our politicians as well as ourselves.

Sandra Dutson

***Lamentation, prophecy and prayer from the Belonging Together Ministers' Group,
a response to the conflict in the Middle East.***

The Belonging Together Ministers' Group (BTMG) of the Methodist Church in Britain releases this statement with heavy hearts as violence in the Middle East escalates to distressing and painful new levels. Reports of large-scale attacks, assassinations of political and religious leaders and devastating retaliatory strikes weigh deeply upon us. In this hour of global trembling, the BTMG raises its voice with grief, clarity and unwavering conviction. The escalating violence in the Middle East – including the devastating strikes, assassinations and retaliations reported in recent days – represents a tragic unravelling of our shared humanity, a terrible indictment of our civilisation. We cannot remain silent while God's children are crushed beneath the machinery of war driven by political decisions and military ambition.

As an ethnically diverse fellowship whose members bear the histories, memories and wounds of many nations, we feel the shock waves of this conflict in our bones; its poison curdles our blood. Our global connectedness gives us painful nerve endings that cannot ignore the cries of widows, the terror of children, the devastation of families and communities, and the desecration of human dignity across the lands of the Middle East. History continues to show that armed conflict does not yield lasting peace, justice or security.

We **proclaim with prophetic urgency that war is a lie**. It promises security but brings only fear and anxiety. It claims to resolve conflict but multiplies hatred and hostility. It asserts strength but exposes the frailty of our moral imagination and the mutability of our human conscience. We lament the **futility of war** and reject the illusion that peace can ever be born through fire and steel, through bombs and drones. The shock waves threaten global safety, deepen geopolitical fragility and make the world an increasingly unstable and dangerous place for all people. The blood of innocents testifies against every nation and every leader who believes the world can be healed by weapons.

We **condemn the killing of civilians** – God's image-bearers, whoever they are – whose lives are extinguished by decisions made far from their homes, their prayers, their aspirations and their hopes. Each lost life is a divine tragedy; each extinguished flame is a celestial funeral. Each shattered family is an open and gaping wound in the heart of creation.

We **decry the carnage and havoc being unleashed**, not only for those in this present moment but for the generations who will inherit broken cities, poisoned trust, psychological scars and a world rendered more unstable and more dangerous. Destruction is easy; reconstruction – of cities, of societies, of the human spirit – takes decades, beyond the murky horizon of political expediency.

We speak now not as geopolitical analysts or political commentators but as disciples of Jesus Christ, who commanded us to love our enemies and who wept for a city that chose violence over peace. We **call upon all leaders and nations involved**, directly or indirectly, to turn away from the reckless path of escalation. We urge a return to diplomacy, restraint, humanitarian action and the sacred priority of human life. We implore the international community to reject the (il)logic of vengeance and to pursue the hard, holy work of peacemaking. As a people belonging together across nations and cultures, the BTMG remains committed to standing with the suffering, amplifying the silenced, and praying without ceasing for a peace rooted in justice, dignity, solidarity, truth and compassion.

May the Spirit of God afflict the powerful, comfort the afflicted and spark the healing of the nations.

For and on behalf of the Belonging Together Ministers' Group of the Methodist Church in Britain

Ashram Zoom Meetings- some thoughts from participants.

If you feel like joining us no matter where you are in the world please drop me an email requesting the link and we will look forward to seeing you. The meeting is on Zoom fortnightly on a Tuesday evening 7.30pm to 9. pippah52@gmail.com

I host these meetings fortnightly and certainly find them enjoyable and stimulating. No matter how fed up you are, or feeling old age, they seem to bring me back to being with friends and remembering who you are and what you can do. Sometimes we are following a course and others just suggestions from people or the topic that grows out of our conversation. I always feel energised after the meeting even if I wasn't .

Pippa

I very much appreciate being able to stay in regular contact with other Ashram members from around the country. It's an environment where I feel I can say what I really think or believe about topics, which might be more difficult in other "church" groups. Some of the participants talk about things they do locally, or more widely, which I find both inspiring and challenging!

Linda Marshall

The Tuesday Zoom gathering has now been running for nearly six years, having started at the height of the COVID restrictions. Since they came to an end I have not been able to be a regular member because a number of other meetings I was committed to fell on a Tuesday. But when I have been able to attend it has been a useful means of keeping in touch with some other Ashram members in between weekends. There have also been some interesting discussions: the one about anarchists that spread across several meetings springs to mind.

Ian Parker

Via the wonders of technology, on alternate Tuesday evenings a group of Ashram members from various parts of the UK, including (amongst others) Staines, Derbyshire, Cornwall, Cumbria and the Isle of Mull to discuss a variety of topics and to share news. Sometimes we follow an online series, sometimes we just come up with our own ideas. We've recently just finished a series provided by the Church Urban Fund, entitled Growing Good.

For me, it's a chance to share thoughts and ideas about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus in current times with other like-minded people – although we're not so like-minded that we always agree!

Lorraine

I find the Ashram get-togethers on Zoom stimulating and encouraging. Whilst being with like-minded people is an encouragement in itself, it is also about the willingness to plunge into challenging issues with eyes wide open. Also, it is such a forgiving group that I do not feel guilty if I have not done my homework, and I still want to attend even when ill-prepared!

I will end with this wonderful quote which I feel endorses what our little group is doing:

Rufus Jones, a Quaker, was organising a world conference for peace in the 1930s. At a time when rumours of a second world war were abounding, he was feeling sceptical about the power of large gatherings to change things and he wrote to a friend: "I pin my hopes to quiet processes and small circles in which vital and transforming events take place."

This is what the Ashram group is doing!

All the best,

Euan

London Ashram Group reflects on the Ashram Commitments

The London Ashram Group continues to meet monthly alternately on Zoom and in person. With this combination of meetings, we are able to include members between the South West and Bedfordshire as well as London. Only two members attend both groups. In both groups, since the beginning of 2025, we have been discussing the separate commitments. At the end of the meeting each of us records a sentence or two which for our meetings scrapbook. The following are some of the individual reflections that have been recorded after the discussions in both groups.

To hold to the truth as it is in Jesus

- Everyone pitched in on the 'truth as it is in Jesus' and which gave a reasonable coverage to its biblical background as questioned by Pilate and to its context for us in our own situations and the world of today.
- We started our discussion of the commitments considering 'To hold to the truth as it is in Jesus'. Quite challenging to me to understand what that means.
- Discussing the first one of the Ashram commitments it was very useful to have two members present with degrees in Theology.
- A very interesting and relevant discussion.
- An opportunity to have an open and engaging discussion on the first commitment.

To support each other in good and ill

- The discussion regarding support given and received was very helpful.
- As we began our discussion on the second of the Ashram Commitments I felt I didn't have much to contribute about who supported me or who I might be supporting, but as the time was coming to an end I suddenly realised that I get most of my support from Ashram members and gatherings of one sort or another.
- At the beginning of the discussion the emphasis of the commitment seemed to be on who we should be supporting. I then remembered an occasion when I had asked someone to support me in cat care and she said it was the first time anyone had asked for her help. So, perhaps, we should also be asking for support.
- Interesting discussion on giving and receiving support and the importance of mutuality.
- Interesting to think back to how the second of the Ashram commitments has affected us in different ways.
- A good discussion about supporting each other, receiving support and concluding with the idea of mutual washing of feet.

To challenge evil with the power of love

- The discussion around the theme brought a few new insights to bear, plus some encouragement at a time of despair with warring countries with their pathetic leaders.
- My big question of the day was 'how do we challenge evil' if we can no longer define what is evil.
- I found the discussion very helpful in helping me to see evil as something that can be seen in small actions which can be challenged by an individual. And love is what I should employ all the time – which is a challenge in itself!
- Identifying evil is the easy bit – summoning up sufficient love to confront it is more demanding!
- Very good to reflect a bit about evil and how to respond to it.

To offer the Kingdom in political and economic witness

- It was the economic bit not the kingdom bit that tested my perceptiveness. Yes, our discussion revolved around the Ashram commitment which mentions our allegiance to political and economic witness. It was good to give it a go and listen to each other's insight, but for me, the economy that crushes the most vulnerable, most exploited, the most down-trodden, is the economics of institutions and organisations of which I can do nothing about. And it's that aspect of economic witness that pains me every time I read the commitment.
- I find it difficult to work out what actions I need to do to offer the Kingdom in political and economic witness. The discussion did help.
- Useful discussion on offering the kingdom in political and economic witness and what it means to us as individuals.
- Interesting discussion topic which made me ask myself whether I am still giving out any political or economic witness.
- Challenging to consider what I am doing/showing political and economic witness.

To work for the New Community of all Humanity

- How to live a life in awareness with the rest of the human family when I scarcely know my own family? Yet realising that is no excuse for the natural tendency to "other" anyone else who is different from me, or with whom I disagree, so once again I look to Jesus for an example of how to be fully human and family.
- It was good to talk about community and how we approach people we don't know well at a time when exchanging Christmas cards at least keeps us in touch with many people we know or have known very well.
- I had been feeling overwhelmed with things that needed doing, so spending time in a discussion about a new community and what that might involve was very good to take me out of myself and into the wider world.
- I found the discussion helped me to understand that working for the New Community of all Humanity starts with how I respond to people with whom I have contact every day.
- Interesting discussion on the new community of all humanity and its implications in the here and now.
- Challenging discussion for me- what am I doing to work for the New Community of all Humanity.
- Thanks to a member giving a biblical framework to the discussion. Although it is the second time I have discussed this, I still find it challenging.

To risk ourselves in a lifestyle of sharing

- The discussion on the 'risk to ourselves in a lifetime of sharing' was very interesting especially in the way we considered 'risk' and its implications as a subject and 'sharing' in the different formats that usually take place.
- An interesting discussion on risking ourselves in a lifetime of sharing. Thinking of the different communities in which we live, what is the impact for us if we risk and what can we share.
- Good to share life experiences about sharing at all stages of our life and how important it is that we do.

Liz Urban

Mark's story: Jesus and his disciples (reduced version)

1. Introduction: Jesus and Disciples in Mark

At first glance, Mark's Gospel is entirely focused on Jesus. Yet Jesus almost never appears alone. The majority of Mark's narrative scenes concern Jesus in the presence of, or in relationship with, his disciples. Indeed, it has been estimated that around half of Mark's stories involve Jesus together with disciples. The Gospel presents, in effect, the disciples' version of the Jesus story, since they are almost always present, even if only in the background. It is difficult to imagine who else could have been the source of many of these traditions.

Mark portrays a range of groups associated with Jesus, arranged in what appear to be degrees of closeness and commitment. These include the crowd, followers, disciples, the Twelve, and within the Twelve a group of three (Peter, James, and John). Mark's language suggests that discipleship is not a fixed status but a dynamic and contested reality. Different people respond to Jesus in different ways, and even those closest to him do not consistently live up to the demands of discipleship.

This layered presentation may reflect both historical memory and the varied responses to Jesus within the early Christian communities. Mark appears concerned to show that proximity to Jesus does not automatically equate to faithful discipleship. What matters is not position, but action: hearing, following, and remaining with Jesus.

2. The Crowd

Mark frequently refers to "the crowd" using the Greek term *ochlos*, often modified by words meaning "great", "large", or "many". The crowd functions as a constant presence around Jesus,

listening to his teaching, witnessing his healings, and reacting with amazement to his authority.

For most of the Gospel, the crowd is portrayed positively. They are generally sympathetic to Jesus and stand in contrast to the religious authorities. Their support often prevents Jesus' arrest, as the chief priests and scribes fear public reaction. The crowd is described as astonished by Jesus' teaching and glad to hear him.

Only towards the end of the Gospel does the crowd become hostile or ambivalent. In the passion narrative, crowds appear who are stirred up by the chief priests, and it is these Jerusalem crowds—distinct from the Galilean followers—who call for Jesus' crucifixion. Mark carefully distinguishes between these groups, suggesting that popular support for Jesus was manipulated rather than naturally withdrawn.

Notably, Mark often attributes the same responses to the crowd as to the disciples. Both groups are amazed, both follow Jesus, both receive teaching and food, and both ultimately fail him. This overlap blurs the boundary between crowd and disciple and reinforces Mark's emphasis on action rather than title.

3. Followers and Disciples

"Following" Jesus is a central image in Mark's understanding of discipleship. The verb *akolouthein* is used for a variety of people and groups, indicating that following can range from temporary enthusiasm to deeper commitment.

The term "disciples" (*mathetai*) appears frequently in Mark and refers primarily to Jesus' own disciples, though not exclusively to the Twelve. The word itself means "learners",

emphasising relationship and formation rather than office or rank. Mark distinguishes between a wider group of disciples and the Twelve, who are selected from among them.

Jesus and his disciples are often described as a single unit, travelling and ministering together. Paradoxically, Mark can describe Jesus as being “alone” when he is with his disciples, highlighting the intimacy of this relationship. At the same time, Mark is careful not to idealise the disciples. They misunderstand Jesus, fear his power, fail to grasp his teaching, and ultimately abandon him.

4. Women as Followers and Disciples

Although Mark does not explicitly mention women followers until late in the Gospel, he makes clear that women played a significant role in Jesus’ ministry. At the crucifixion, Mark identifies women who had followed Jesus in Galilee and ministered to him, supporting both Jesus and his disciples during their travels.

These women remain present at key moments where male disciples are absent: the crucifixion, burial, and discovery of the empty tomb. They embody a form of faithful following that contrasts sharply with the flight of the Twelve.

Scholarly interpretation suggests that women are included within Mark’s broader understanding of discipleship. Passages describing those who sit around Jesus and hear his teaching imply a mixed group, forming Jesus’ new family. Mark’s use of family language—brothers, sisters, and mothers—supports the inclusion of women within the community of disciples.

5. Degrees of Discipleship

Mark presents discipleship as a matter of practice rather than position. The crowd can follow, disciples can fail, and members of the

Twelve can cease to act as true followers. Being called or appointed does not guarantee faithfulness.

Discipleship, in Mark, is defined by actions such as following, listening, and staying with Jesus—especially in moments of difficulty. It is dynamic rather than static, something that must be continually enacted rather than possessed.

Mark draws attention to the irony that those closest to Jesus often fail most dramatically. Despite their privileged position, the disciples misunderstand Jesus’ mission and abandon him at the moment of crisis. In contrast, marginal figures—women, outsiders, and unnamed followers—often display greater faithfulness.

6. Conclusion: The Conga of Discipleship

Mark’s Gospel presents discipleship as a moving procession, with Jesus at the front leading the way. People join at different points and with different levels of commitment. Some hold on only briefly; others fall away as the pace quickens and the cost becomes clear.

What matters is not how close one begins to Jesus, but whether one remains with him to the end. In Mark’s stark conclusion, even the disciples and the Twelve flee, leaving Jesus alone. The Gospel thus challenges its readers to consider their own place in the procession and whether they will endure.

Discipleship in Mark is not guaranteed by status, proximity, or past commitment. It is revealed in perseverance, especially when following Jesus leads to suffering and loss. Those who endure to the end, Mark insists, are the true disciples.

Markan Discipleship in Urban Practice (pt 2)

John Vincent

TWO INSTANCES OF EISEGETICAL DISTORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE BY THEOLOGY

Dear All,

I hope all's well and happy with all of you, and of course with our Dear John, but for whom I would not be writing as I do now!

In the process of researching for a book provisionally titled: *Words and Rhetoric of Jesus: Contextual Audience-Centrism and Contradictions*, I encountered several instances of distortions of key concepts in scripture by one or another theology. These were done by textual interpretation where influential theologians and powerful institutions infiltrated their own subjective ideas (eisegesis), rather than drawing meaning out of the text (exegesis or objective analysis), thereby distorting the original meaning of a text, a person's words, or the subject matter being written about.

Here, I mention just two such instances; one, the distortion of words attributed to Yahweh the god of Israel, and the other, the distortion of words attributed to Jesus. Knowing these were certainly new to me, and maybe for you as well.

The first below was when I was researching in order to determine whether the concepts of "Yahweh" (the most used word in the Judaic Tanakh / Christian Old Testament) and the "Father" (numerously attributed to Jesus in the narratives about him), were viewed as one and the same in Jesus' time, or not?

1. Jesus is placed in narratives about him mainly in First century Galilee, Judea, and Samaria. At that time, the vast majority of people visualised Yahweh as being exactly monotheistic (for example see: Devarim (Deut.) 6:4 and Yeshayahu (Isa.) 45:5), anthropomorphic, with attribution not only of that corporeal, but also that anthropopathic, namely, having humanlike emotions.



Image credit: Clara Amit,
Israel Antiquities Authority

Further, in 2020, a clay head that dates back almost 3,000 years which may be a rare depiction of Yahweh, was found in a large building in Israel that may have been a palace. That is despite the prohibition of creating images of Yahweh, given to Israelites by Yahweh, and according to Yahweh's Ten Commandments.

However, transcendental views prevailed among scholars of the time; for instance the prominent Judaic theologian, Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 BCE to c. 50 CE), a contemporary of Jesus, even viewed anthropomorphism as an error amounting to transgression. Yet, there is no evidence of him advocating any alteration of anthropomorphic or anthropopathic language in the Tanakh.

Nevertheless, the academically recognised, and distinguished Torah (Pentateuch) scholar Onkelos, together with two prominent Rabbis, Eliezer ben Hurcanus and Joshua ben Hananiah produced an Aramaic translation of the Torah, namely the Targum Onkelos around 200 CE, which altered anthropomorphic and anthropopathic language of, and relating to Yahweh, in order to counteract the common view that he has a body.

I identified the following clearly apparent changes made to the Torah in the Targum Onkelos to that end:

1. Bereshit (Gen.) 3:5 – “you will be like God” to “you will become great ones”; 2. Bereshit (Gen.) 7:16 – “the Lord closed the door before him” to “Adonoy protected him with his word”; 3. Bereshit (Gen.) 8:21 – “And the Lord smelled the pleasant aroma, and the Lord said to Himself” to “Adonoy accepted his

offering with favour and Adonoy said with his Word”; 4. Bereshit (Gen.) 22:14 – “The Lord will see” to “said before Adonoy”; 5. Shemot (Exod.) 19:20 – “The Lord descended upon Mount Sinai” to “Adonoy became revealed on Mount Sinai”; 6. Shemot (Exod.) 22:27/28 – “Thou shalt not revile the gods” to “You shall not have a judge in contempt”; and 7. Shemot (Exod.) 24:10 – “beneath His feet” to “throne of His glory”.

As for the second, it was when researching the translated English phrase: “kingdom of heaven” attributed to Jesus in Koine Greek, in order to analyse contextual audience-centrism.

I was initially surprised that the compound common noun phrase: “βασιλεία τοῦ οὐρανός” (*basileia tou ouranós*; kingdom of heaven) is not attributed to Jesus, and does not appear in the Hebrew Tanakh or the Greek New Testament at all! The most reliable academic New Testament, Nestle and Aland’s *Novum Testamentum Graece*, which derives from extant ancient manuscripts, now in its 29th edition (NA28) has “βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν” (*basileia tōn ouranōn*; kingdom of the heavens; i.e. the plural). This phrase together with its counterpart, “kingdom of god” created a new concept attributed to Jesus, since they are not found anywhere in the Tanakh, or in Judaism of the times.

“οὐρανός” (*ouranós*; heaven) and “οὐρανῶν” (*ouranōn*; heavens) are certainly not limited to difference in grammatical number in context of usage at the time Jesus, but refer to entirely different spheres. While the former meant: ‘sky or heaven’, and indicates the Earth’s atmosphere (attributed to Jesus at Mt.5:18, 16:2&3, 24:35; Mk.13:31; Lk.4:25, and 21:33), the latter referred to that outside not only of the Earth’s atmosphere, but also outside the entire universe, being the abode of the gods, deities, and angels (attributed to Jesus initially at Mt.3:2 7 and repeated in Matthew some 35 or more times, Lk. 21:26, and probably in the ‘Gospel’ of the Hebrews and some other narratives left out of the canon).

As usual, it is theology that changes the Jesus in the narratives by eisegetical interpretation, here rendering drastic difference in meaning of words attributed to Jesus by his earliest biographical narrators. The primary behind this was the ‘One Heaven Theology’ that rejected the antiquitous scientific cosmology of multiple heavens attributed to Jesus, with mainstream Christian theology shifting toward a singular heaven. Theologies that generate doctrines come from influential individuals and powerful institutions. Accordingly, the earliest influentials of ‘one heaven’ were Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 130–202), Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215) and Gregory of Nyssa (c. 332–395), while the immensely powerful institution the then Church, at their First Council of Constantinople codified it as a doctrine by inclusion in the Nicene Creed of 381 CE.

Bearing length in mind, I have removed foot notes including references to secondary texts. Should anyone want such justifications, just let me know.

I much welcome your thoughts, input, and criticisms.

As always,

Nirmal



Nirmal Fernando
Thundola Village, Ittakanda
(Sinharaja Rain Forest)
Sri Lanka
curlsu@hotmail.com
April 2026

And finally- a thank you from a young man with a papaya orchard in Mali !

The people of Yorosso in Mali used to grow cotton but the rainy season is now too short for cotton plants to produce a harvest., and cotton has impoverished the land so food can't be grown. 80% of young people currently need to migrate to find work in order for their families to survive and they often suffer greatly in the process.

In July 2023 Ashram donated £1000 to help fund the growing of grafted mango, orange, cashew, papaya, shea and guava trees. Trees are less vulnerable to drought and variable weather than other crops and can be hand-watered. They can produce a viable income and help to restore the land and reduce flooding and erosion in the monsoon rains.



Aboubakar Kone in his papaya orchard

One of the beneficiaries, Aboubakara Kone says

"Every year after the harvests I went to work in gold mines. For five years I never earned anything. I left with my best friend and he died in the mine shaft. As soon as I learned about the orchard project I applied and by the grace of God I was selected. I dug two water troughs and planted 200 papaya saplings. After 7 months I started harvesting fruit and raised £1800 not counting the fruits we consumed in our family and those I gave to neighbours and friends. I am really happy and I sincerely thank those who have trusted and helped me."



DATES

2 – 4 October 2026 Community weekend
Hinsley Hall, Leeds

COMMUNITY

Community Office: John Vincent
7 College Court, Sheffield S4 7FN

Enquiries

ashramcommunity@hotmail.com

Ashram Community Trust is a Registered Charity
Registered Charity No: 1099164
Charitable Company No: 4779914
Website www.ashram.org.uk

Act Together editor: Jenny Medhurst
medhurst@phonecoop.coop

Articles for the Autumn 2026 edition needed by September 6th. Contributions from members / associates who do not attend national Community events are especially welcome!

MEETINGS/ZOOM GROUPS

Please contact the convenors if you would like to know more about meeting or events. They are the local contact points for the Community.

Convenors

London – Linda Marshall –01784 456 474
Saturday Meetings – Monthly on Zoom or in person

North-West – Sandra Dutton
smdutton@btinternet.com
Meetings bi-monthly on Zoom or in person

Community Zoom meetings fortnightly – Pippa Thompson – 07918 757068.