

Prayer of the Month • John Bell

A prayer for social justice:

Here is a gaping sore, Lord:
Half the world diets, the other half hungers;
Half the world is housed, the other half homeless;
Half the world pursues profit, the other half senses loss.
Redeem our souls,
Redeem our peoples,
Redeem our times.
Amen.

John L. Bell (born 1949)

This prayer exhibits a typical use of arresting images by John Bell, member of the Iona Community, who has just celebrated reaching the age of 70. To admit what things are like is not always easy, but is halfway to a solution. But for the solution we need God's help, for to make it happen is not something we can do on our own. Redeeming changes things, changes everything.

John Bell was born in 1949, and in 1974, while studying at the University of Glasgow, he was elected president of the Students Representative Council. In 1977 he was elected Rector of the University of Glasgow, while still a student (the rules were later changed to prevent students from standing for this post). After spending some time in the Netherlands and two posts in church youth work, Bell became employed full-time in the areas of music and worship with the Wild Goose Resource Group. He is a past convener of the Church of Scotland's Panel on Worship and also convened the committee to revise the *Church Hymnary*, resulting in the 4th edition (also known as *Hymns of glory, songs of praise*, 2005). He has composed hymn texts and hymn tunes, and edited several collections of music, including those for the world church. He is a frequent broadcaster, and often presents programmes on the BBC, majoring on contemporary religious songs from various parts of the world. He is a regular contributor to 'Thought for the Day', part of Radio 4's *Today* programme.

Colin Lunt