

Worship and mobility

If money is one of the great objects of popular worship today, then mobility is another. A few years ago Professor John Adams of London University coined the term 'hypermobility'; fifty years ago the average British citizen travelled five miles a day, but today he or she travels 28 miles. And of that distance, nine miles is abroad, mostly by air. These are average figures, and include many who travel very little but others who do vast amounts of travel; one of our neighbours commutes weekly to New York.

So we expect to be mobile, often without considering the effects on ourselves, our families, the community or the environment. Ann Morisy has pointed out that this mobility becomes a spiritual matter when a very large proportion of the population can organise its mobility without having to encounter any strangers. The flexibility, comfort and power that a car gives us has fed our egos like nothing else, and the more overblown our egos, the more consumer props we need to reinforce the impression and lend security.

Belatedly, politicians are now recognising the environmental problems that are fuelling climate change. Secular prophets like Mayer Hillman warn us that if carbon dioxide emissions need to be reduced by 60% to stabilise the world's climate, the affluent West must cut its emissions by 90%. He suggests an 'energy ration'; you could heat your house for the winter or have a return flight to Florida. But not both.

This means drastic changes in lifestyle. But no more drastic than those experienced by Noah when he entered the ecological covenant with God in Genesis chapters 8 and 9, following the chastening experience of the flood and the ark. Curbing our mobility may well help us to find our wellbeing in community, under God, where we are.

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References are to The Purpose of the Journey, by Ian Yearsley, in The Reader, Autumn 2003; The Stature of Waiting, a spirituality for Public Transport? by Ann Morisy, in City Cries no 36, (ECUM) 1998; and Ethical Implications of Climate Change for Personal Lifestyles, by Dr Mayer Hillman, in Ethical Record, September 2001.

**Elizabeth Goodridge and Ian Yearsley of Southwark Diocese
continue a series on worship.**

**Now that the sun has set,
I sit and rest, and think of you.
Give my weary body peace.
Let my legs and arms stop aching,
Let my nose stop sneezing,
Let my head stop thinking.
Let me sleep in your arms.**

A prayer of the Dinka people, of southern Sudan