

Hamish Preston

Compiler of the *Engaging the Powers* website



Hamish in conversation with Fr. Vincent Gardner, Vicar of St John's and St Stephen's, Reading in their community café.

Hamish was a boy chorister at St Michael's College, Tenbury where he took part in the daily offices of the Church of England for five years. The Old and New Testament readings and the singing of the psalms made a lasting impression on him. After that, his allegiance to the church went downhill. But on retirement, after a career in teaching and as a schools inspector, he was drawn to renew acquaintance with the God he had known as a boy. He attended his local parish church for several years and then moved to his present church.

Although not a regular churchgoer, during those absent years Hamish became interested in philosophy and theology. During the 60's he read both *Soundings*, a ground-breaking series of explorations by a group of Cambridge theologians, and the controversial *Honest to God*. When he came back 'to the fold', he resumed his search for theological enlightenment. More recently, his reading has been much influenced and stimulated by his conversations with his Vicar, Fr Vincent Gardner, who is a theologian. Most of his recent reading has pointed in what might be called a post-Barthian direction.

In January 2000, Hamish launched the *Reading Jubilee Debt Campaign*. Though the national *Jubilee Debt Campaign* is a secular organization, the Reading campaign was aimed at the local churches. All were invited to join and about half of them did so at the outset. After a few years of this, the routine of distributing campaign postcards seemed insufficient. This is when Hamish started to write the series of papers which make up part 1 of the present website. The

aim was to develop the commitment of churchgoers through coming to understand the often shocking realities which lay behind the succession of campaign initiatives on offer. At the same time, the name of the Reading campaign was changed to the *Reading Churches Campaigning Network*, reflecting the wider range of issues which developed during the first decade of the new millennium.

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Hamish is old enough to have reached retirement before the internet came into use. Using it is a bit of a battle for him and there is no way that he could have set up the *Engaging the Powers* website himself. He is greatly indebted to his friend Dominic Roser, a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Oxford, for volunteering to take on this task.

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Hamish would welcome comments. You can contact him by e mail on ghpreston@aol.com.