

GUEST COLUMN
MOHAMED SAHNOUN

Peace, bread and health

In my culture, as in most other cultures, we wish somebody well when we wish them peace, daily bread and good health. These three things embody humanity's greatest longings.

The main precondition for peace, or comprehensive security as some call it, is good global governance, with a more dynamic strategy for conflict management.

I see no way of achieving daily bread for all without a world trade market which is genuinely open, and a collective effort to check poverty both at home and abroad, as set by the Millennium Development Goals.

Thirdly, when we talk of a long healthy life on Earth, what we actually mean is the protection of the environment. This can be achieved, in the view of environmentalists, by tackling the population issue in the developing world, and by addressing over-consumption in the developed world, in particular that of energy.

Insecurity

The three issues have to be addressed together. We cannot make progress in one area without progressing in the others. But let me elaborate a little on the first of these—peace.

It is easy to understand the frustrations, the scepticism and the despair of so many people around the world. Some have given up hope and see no way to achieve change through the ballot box. Some try to change their situation through revolt and armed struggle. And many are in total disarray and heed the voices of extremism, fundamentalism, and terrorism. The dramatic events of 9/11 made clear that we should not minimise these dangers.

In one sense, however, comprehensive security should be less problematic now than before in this post Cold War era. Although a few regional and interstate tensions remain here and there, most of the conflicts today are internal but

with the potential to expand beyond national borders. Most analysts agree on the causes of conflict. Simple insecurity is the most common one—when people sense they are about to be excluded, from power, from jobs, from resources, and feel threatened by starvation and total annihilation. These fears are often triggered by environmental degradation, systemic underdevelopment and a history of bad governance—corrupt regimes, the legacies of colonial divide-and-rule practices and the Cold War superpowers' support of dictatorships which they perceive to be loyal allies.

Local intervention

The end of the Cold War brought a new era of mediation, peace building, reconstruction and multilateralism. Yet we are now in danger of losing sight of these achievements, while the West's role in Iraq has raised fresh debates about the proper conditions for humanitarian intervention.

The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, on which I served, concluded that the international response to humanitarian threats should be based on the 'responsibility to protect' rather than the 'right to intervene'. And when the governments concerned fail to shoulder this responsibility, the best institutions to do so are those closest to the affected areas. Decentralising and empowering should be the accepted principles for conflict prevention. The conflict management process should be as close to the people as possible—the best interveners are always local.

Having dealt myself with conflicts in the African Great Lakes region, Somalia, the Ethiopian-Eritrean dispute and Sudan, I can testify how helpful it is to be able to rely on local non-governmental organisations, and on traditional mechanisms such as community elders. Yet little is being done to enhance these institutions in

terms of their resources and management capacity.

Those that depend on international funding need more resources if they are to play a more useful role as an early warning system for famines, droughts and civil wars. They will also need more expertise and training if they are to analyse early warning signals and plan timely responses.

Close co-operation between the UN, multilateral agencies, regional organisations and civil society groups would increase our ability to check humanitarian tragedies, as well as giving root to good governance. In the end, both politically and financially, it would cost all of us a lot less.

Meanwhile, peacemakers everywhere must work tirelessly for the kind of change which can free human beings from fear, insecurity and selfishness. Let us help, counsel and support one another, and may our striving for peace—both internal and external—prove so strong that it becomes a door at which people knock to share in our aspiration.

Mohamed Sahnoun has served inter alia as Adviser to the President of Algeria on diplomatic affairs; Deputy Secretary-General of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU); and Deputy Secretary-General of the League of Arab States. He served as Algeria's Ambassador to the United States, France, Germany and Morocco, as well as the United Nations.

He is currently UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Special Adviser on developments in the Horn of Africa region. January 2007 marks the beginning of his presidency of the International Association of Initiatives of Change.

FOR A CHANGE

FINAL
ISSUE

Living with change

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Letting go

In the yogic tradition, the practice of *pratyahara* teaches you to let go, through first facing up to your pain and entering into it. This requires determination.

We tend to defer things like this which have to do with our wellbeing, and it isn't difficult to find distractions in a city like London. People on the underground manage to listen to their ipods, read the newspaper and even answer their mobiles, all at the same time.

Pratyahara sounds difficult but, according to the Swedish swami Yanakananda, it can be practised anywhere. He tells the story of a shopkeeper in the busiest part of town, who could close his eyes at any time and enter into a deep rest within himself.

Do we dare to go against the idea that we have to achieve and that doing a lot of things at the same time makes us better people?

Squatting

I have met more squatters in London than I have in my whole life. That's not surprising because the rents here are extremely high and not everyone can afford them.

Last October there was a protest in Copenhagen, Denmark, against the closure of the Youth House, which was given to the autonomous squatter movement in 1982. It became a place where musicians, artists and students could get together to play music, paint and talk. The protest ended in trouble with the police and many arrests.

Young people get depressed and frustrated when they can't express themselves in a creative way. A young Colombian I met at New Generation, a group in London which offers free workshops for refugees, told me that she wanted to kill herself before she met them because she couldn't find the space to dance, paint and act. That's why we need places like the Youth House.

Goodies and hoodies

As a Mexican, I have been surprised to see how disrespectful young people in London can be towards their elders. I once saw two girls in the street randomly hitting people who walked by. I couldn't believe what they were doing and I couldn't believe that the people they attacked didn't say anything back. It was as if they were trying to ignore the situation.

I remembered this incident when I went to see a performance of Shakespeare's *King Lear* by the Maly Theatre of St Petersburg. Unusually, they presented Lear's two older daughters, Goneril and Regan, in a sympathetic light. They are the ones who sweeten their father's ear in order to get their share of his inheritance, while the youngest daughter, Cordelia, refuses to do so and is condemned to exile.

The director, Lev Dodin, points out that although young and old may not like each other, they depend on each other. Lear is an unpleasant old man, and reluctant to give up power, even after he has promised his daughters his kingdom.

The play challenges our tendency to divide the world into goodies and hoodies, rather than recognising the conflict within each person.

Yes or no?

In Mexico it is rude to say 'no'. If someone invites you to lunch and you cannot come, you may say 'yes', because you don't want to be rude. In the UK, on the other hand, if people can't do something they just say no, as simple as that.

In Mexico we love surprises and when people drop by our house it's a great joy—even if they're expecting lunch. In the UK that would be seen as impertinent. And in Mexico, we kiss everyone when we arrive and when we leave: which makes it quite difficult to slip away quietly. When I first came to London I never knew who to kiss, and whether I needed to call people to ask if I could visit.

So it was a relief when I rang an Argentinian friend out of the blue, when I visited Barcelona this summer. I expected him to say we could meet in a few days' time: instead he turned up five minutes later on his bike.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Who cares?



With a name like *For A Change* the choice of theme for the last lead story was an obvious one: living with change. And of course it's not only at milestone moments like these that we face change. We wake up to it every day – global change, institutional change, personal change.

Read the papers and watch the television and you are left with the feeling that the world is in chaos – environmentally, morally, spiritually. The founder of Initiatives of Change, Frank Buchman, believed that the only thing to do in a crisis was to help people to change. If that is true, we've all got a lot of work to do – starting with ourselves. And therein lies some of the best news the world has ever heard – that however bad things get there is always the next step for each of us to take.

Here in the UK, there are signs of a growing awareness of the need to live with a conscience: department stores invite consumers to drink fair-trade beverages; the Post Office encourages people to make small changes at home such as using energy-saving light bulbs; and a bunch of people called *We Are What We Do* have launched a global movement calling for small actions which can affect real change in other people and the planet.

In their first book, *Change the World For a Fiver* (Short Books, 2004), they promoted 50 ethical actions from recycling mobile phones to refusing plastic bags. A Ugandan head teacher read the book and launched an 'anti-bigamy' campaign to combat a big problem in his country. Now there's a new book, *Change the World 9 to 5* (Short Books, 2006) with 50 actions aimed at large organisations: businesses, hospitals, schools.

Some might say that such initiatives trivialise the seriousness of the change needed in our world. What I like about them is the attitude of care they engender in folk. For, as someone once said, 'What the world most needs is deep people'. That is surely worth reflecting on as we approach Christmas with its invitation to a New Year.

Laura Boobbyer

Laura Boobbyer

FOR A CHANGE

For A Change is about change, how to make it happen and how to live it. We believe that what happens inside people has an effect on the world around them. At the heart of global change lies change in the human heart.

We draw our material from a wide range of sources, including Initiatives of Change. We give a voice to people all over the world who are making a difference. We invite our readers to join them. Your stories are our stories.

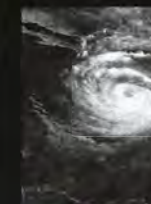


Initiatives of Change

Initiatives of Change (formerly Moral Re-Armament) works for moral and spiritual renewal in all areas of life. It was initiated by Frank Buchman, an American who believed that change in the world must start in individuals.

Initiatives of Change is open to all. Its starting point is the readiness of each person to make what they know of God and eternal moral values central in their lives. This personal commitment to search for God's will forms the basis for creative initiative and common action: standards of absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love help to focus the challenge of personal and global change.

These ideas have given rise to an international community in more than 70 countries, working in such areas as reconciliation; tackling the root causes of corruption, poverty and social exclusion; and strengthening the moral and spiritual foundations for democracy.



COVER
Gettyimages
Hurricane Nora
22 September 1997

CONTENTS

DEC/JAN 2007

VOLUME 19 NO 6

04 **Lead story**
Hate it or love it, there's no living without change—be it global, institutional or personal

10 **Profile**
Patrick Colquhoun doesn't do giving up: whether in love or in fighting corruption

12 **Photostory**
A new film about grassroots peacemaking in Nigeria features sworn enemies who now work together

14 **In my view**
Nasr Abu-Zayd on reason and Islam; Yehezkel Landau and Saliba Sarsar on the dignity of difference

18 **Past and future**
Nineteen years of 'For A Change'—and the promise of things to come

24 **Guest column**
Mohamed Sahnoun wishes the world peace, bread and health

16 **People**

20 **First person**

21 **Turning point**

22 **A different beat**

23 **Reflections**

This is the final issue of *For A Change*. It will be relaunched as an internet publication in early 2007.

See p19 for further information, and p22 if you have questions about your subscription.



EINAR E.

Norwegian cartoonist Einar Engebretsen (81) has been illustrating *Ear to the Ground* since our first issue, in September 1987. With this cartoon for the last issue, he sent the following caption: 'Goodbye. Don't cry—somewhere, somehow, someday we see you we guess... in a new dress!'

FOR A CHANGE

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Climate of change

The world has the resources to respond to climate change, maintains Alan Porteous. But we need to get on with it.

HUMANITY is faced with a menacing question. What happens if we hit nature's thresholds, the so-called tipping points of the global systems that sustain us? And will we be left with the resources to adapt?

The evidence for global climate change is becoming ever more visible. Nine out of ten of the world's glaciers are in retreat. Arctic sea ice is melting at a rate of about 9 per cent per decade. Ten of the warmest years since the beginning of the 20th century have occurred since 1995; there have been a cluster of '100-year' droughts; and hurricanes are becoming more intense.

Disturbing images of polar bears swimming desperately between remnants of sea ice illustrate the impact of climate upheaval on wildlife and ecological systems. Global warming also poses threats to food production.

Early in 2007 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) will present its Fourth Assessment Report on the state of the world's climate. This will embody the most comprehensive collective understanding yet of the scientific, technical and socio-economic implications of climate change.

IMAGES OF POLAR BEARS SWIMMING DESPERATELY BETWEEN REMNANTS OF SEA ICE ILLUSTRATE THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE UPHEAVAL

For sheer volume and detail, the report may not be an easy read. The process of writing has been laborious, involving hundreds of lead authors and thousands of contributors and reviewers. There have been vigorous debates between strongly held views, and word-by-word arguments in the editing process. Consensus has been achieved across a spectrum of languages and political environments.

In preparing the report, the IPCC has had to contend with a fair amount of scepticism and disagreement arising from its Third Assessment Report, published in 2001. This proposed that the global temperature would increase by between 1.4°C and 5.8°C by the end of the 21st century. This wide range made it difficult for policy makers, conservationists and engineers to develop precise strategies.

At the time, there was controversy over satellite data from the 1990s which appeared to show that the upper atmosphere was cooling, contradicting the rising temperatures shown by surface measurements. It has since been discovered

that these data were misinterpreted. Once this was recognised and fixed, the upper atmosphere data backed up the trend at the surface.

Other sceptics pointed to measurements in the third quarter of the 20th century which had appeared to show a cooling world—and had led *Newsweek* to predict a 'drastic decline in food production, with serious political implications for just about every nation on earth'. We now understand that this cooling was caused by high levels of dust and other particulates which blocked more of the sun's radiation than usual. These emissions were caused by human activities, and efforts to reduce them in recent years have mitigated their effect.

We saw a natural example of this effect in 1991, when Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines erupted. The resulting ash cloud reduced the global temperature by an estimated 0.3°C.

The Fourth Assessment Report will leave little room for doubt that, in terms of the maintenance of the Earth systems on which we rely for our quality of life, climate change is the most compelling problem of this century. As far as we can tell, we are facing the greatest disruption since modern human settlement began some ten millennia ago.

After the retreat of the last ice age about 12,000 years ago, the climate became relatively stable, permitting settlements and farming to develop. There have been occasional blips in the climate regime since then, such as the Medieval Warm Period about a thousand years ago, when the Norse established settlements in Greenland—only to abandon them a few generations later when a cooler climate returned.

The Little Ice Age, lasting from about 1300 to 1850, brought periods of widespread famine, political and social upheaval. Millions, from Europe to China, died of disease. Yet it is likely that average temperatures were only a few degrees below what we experience today.

If we go back further, say half a million years or so, we find evidence of the link between the atmospheric temperature and the concentration of so-called 'greenhouse gases', particularly methane and carbon dioxide. These gases have been relatively stable during the past 10,000 years, but have been rising quickly since the start of the industrial revolution about 250 years ago.

We have been living in one of the most benign periods of climatic stability in human history, and, as a result, we have multiplied and prospered. But now our numbers and our prosperity are putting everything at risk.



If we accept this prognosis, questions that were once theoretical become pressing reality. How long do we have to turn things around, and how do we invest that time wisely? Do we have the resources to cope with what may be ahead?

Some signs of our ability to manage the future are not good. In the European heatwave in the summer of 2003, 35,000 people died—most of them in the world's richest countries. By the middle of this century, scientists estimate, half of Europe's summers will be as hot as 2003's.

There is ample evidence that environmental degradation leads to social and political instability. In his book *Winds of Change* (Simon & Schuster, 2006), Eugene Linden makes the point that 12 of the 14 nations that have required UN peacekeeping operations since 1990 have lost 90 per cent of their forests.

The Kyoto Protocol, an international agreement to limit greenhouse gas emissions in industrialised nations, is going to be too hard for many countries to achieve within the agreed timeframe. Others, such as the United States and Australia, have not ratified the Protocol.

Economists find it difficult to create pricing models that might guide investment and political action. For a start, no one can predict the timeframe: do we have a decade or less, as is often argued, or might our customary way of life survive for longer? How quickly and at what cost can we reduce our still-growing consumption to sustainable levels, adopt renewable energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

There are hopeful precedents. In the 1980s understanding dawned of how chemicals commonly used in refrigeration and aerosols were raising chlorine levels in the stratosphere and damaging the ozone layer which protects the earth from the harmful rays of the sun. The findings were shocking enough for countries to adopt the Montreal Protocol, which cut the manufacture and use of these chemicals. As a result the ozone layer is tipped to recover, although the process will take decades.

EVEN POPULAR MAGAZINES EXTOL GREEN LIFESTYLES AS TRENDY

The Asian tsunami of Christmas 2004 showed the modern world's vulnerabilities but it also triggered a massive public response which spoke of resilience. It engendered a fresh consciousness about looking out for weaker communities and poorer individuals.

Across the world, there is a groundswell of initiatives to conserve and rebuild. There is a new appreciation of the indigenous knowledge and social skills that served us well in our ancestral homes but have been lost in the rush to exploit and develop. Businesses and industries are developing ways to become energy efficient and 'carbon neutral'—by cutting emissions themselves and also paying others to save energy for them. A recent example in the *Financial Times* reported BSKyB's purchase of energy credits from a wind power project in New Zealand and a Bulgarian hydroelectric scheme. In September California became the first US state to legislate for mandatory reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, setting what could be a vital precedent for the country. Even popular magazines are extolling green lifestyles as trendy.

Global crises, like those in our individual lives, inevitably throw us back on our personal resources. They challenge how we use our material possessions, question our strength of character, and test our relationships with those close to us. Personal and interpersonal resources are highly renewable, respond well to investment, and require little activity at the cash register. Their development yields dividends which outperform the most aggressive material investments.

The people power from these resources can and is changing political and corporate will. It will restore the landscape, clean the air, and protect what would otherwise be destroyed. But it won't be easy, may only be partly achievable, and could not be more urgent. ■

Alan Porteous is an agricultural climatologist at the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research in Wellington, New Zealand.

Business of change

When the whole context in which you've existed changes, what do you do? The Managing Director of a family firm describes his experience.

OUR FAMILY firm was founded by my great-great-grandfather in the early 19th century. My forebears had a strong Christian ethos, and this had significant consequences for the company when, in the 1930s, my grandfather accepted the challenge to let the Methodist faith, which he proclaimed and practised on a Sunday, affect the way he ran the company from Monday to Saturday.

His first idea was to go back into the factory with his eyes open as if he were a stranger. He saw, for the first time, the men's real working conditions. There were no washing facilities. There was no canteen. The yard was dirty. There was no sick pay. There was little or no pension provision.

So, in an experiment of faith, he began to change these things. He built washing and canteen facilities, introduced sick pay and persuaded all the shareholders to give some of their capital to set up a fund for the benefit of employees and their dependants. During the Depression he deliberately created work and took on staff.

This experience convinced my grandfather and father that what was morally right was economically viable. Over the next 60 years, the business achieved worldwide success based on quality, reliability, integrity and service. They saw the firm as a model for how relations between shareholders, management and employees could be, a working example of an alternative to industrial conflict and class war.

I came into the business in 1982, straight from university, with various unspoken, and even unconscious, assumptions. Among these were:

- that life would go on for our company and for me as it had done before.
- that there would always be a business to run, markets to support us and a job for life for everybody employed in the company.
- that change would only come in small, incremental and digestible amounts.
- that we shareholders were meant to be stewards, not entrepreneurs.

In 1994, after 12 years in the firm, I became Managing Director, responsible for the day-to-day running of the company. Over the next three years, sales increased and exports grew. In 1997 we had our highest ever level of sales and of profit.

The next year, our profits halved and in 1999 we had our first recorded loss in over 70 years. Over the next four years our home market collapsed and export markets shrank as customers moved their production to countries where we could not compete.

In responding to this business crisis, our company went through four stages: denial, coping, positive acceptance and planning.

We were slow to realise that this was more than just another cyclical downturn, albeit a pretty deep one, and that business was leaving our traditional markets in Europe for good. As a result of that denial we waited too long before we began to implement changes.

Coping involved having to reduce our workforce by about a quarter: a huge shock, both corporately and individually. We also brought all the employees together on one site which helped to improve communication and change the culture of the company. At the same time there was a transition of generations, as seven of the nine directors and three senior managers retired, and a new management team took their place.

'Our company went through four stages: denial (above), coping, positive acceptance and planning'

Then we accepted that, rather than having reached a new equilibrium, change was going to continue. This positive acceptance of change led us to switch the emphasis of our business into new fields. Many of our staff had to learn new skills: they have done so enthusiastically and with great success.

These responses were all essentially reactive; we had been managing change. But the time comes when you have to move from managing change to leading change. This required me to take active responsibility for our future.

As I was told on a training course, 'the only way to transform your company is to transform yourself'. I had to address attitudes which undermined my ability to be entrepreneurial: my tendency to feel a victim of circumstances, to prefer to avoid things rather than confront them, my fears, my aversion to risk-taking. I had to become willing to break rules, customs, precedents, assumptions and expectations which I had previously accepted as givens.

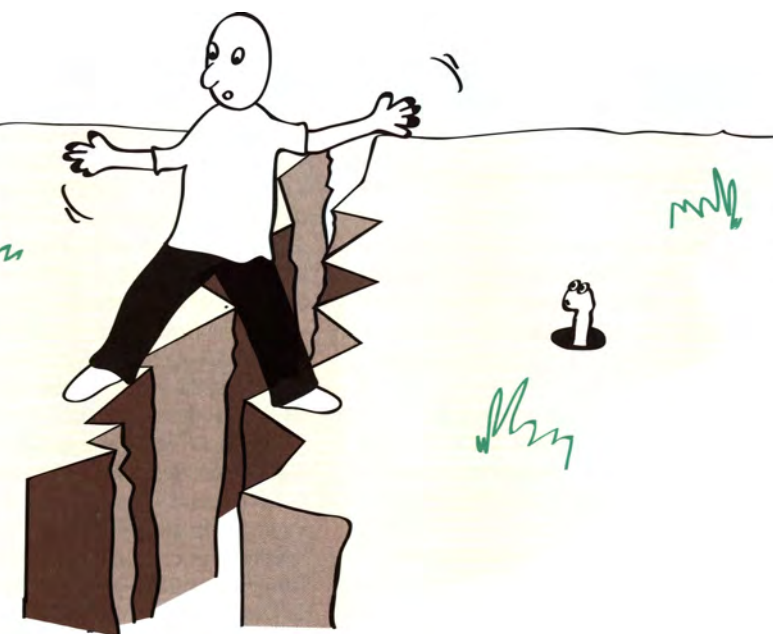
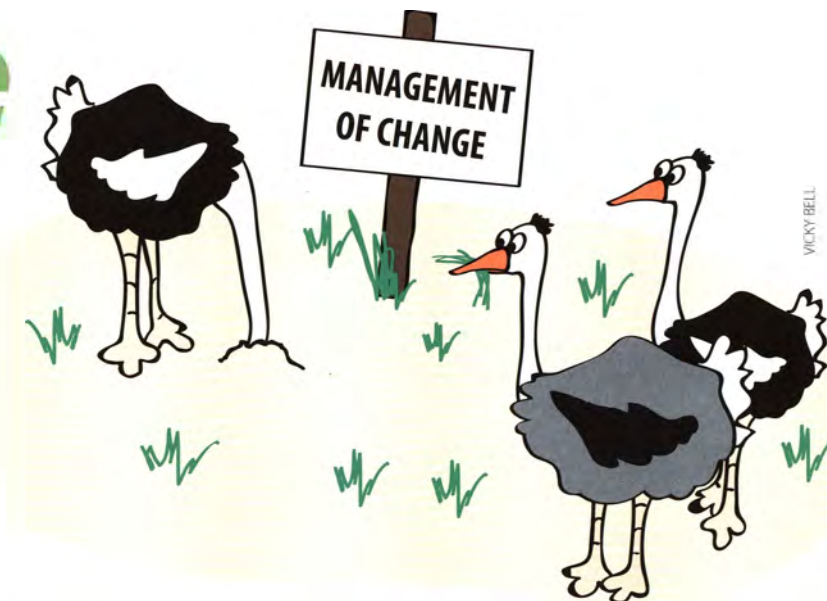
This fourth, planning, stage has involved developing a long-term plan, making a fresh statement of the values which matter to us, developing new products, and identifying a whole new direction and technology for the company to adopt.

After the collapse of communism, the purpose which had inspired my father and grandfather lost some of its force for me: it no longer seemed relevant to talk about our company as a model of an answer to class war. But through the development of new, environmentally adapted and biodegradable products, a new sense of purpose has begun to emerge, around the idea of sustainability, which makes sense in the context of today.

This idea of sustainability implies long-term economic viability; relationships of trust and integrity both inside and outside the firm; satisfied staff who enjoy their work; and products and processes which do not denude or damage the environment.

In the last seven years, our company's markets have changed; our products have changed; our locations have changed; our structures have changed; our people have changed. I expect that we will be radically different again in five years' time. But what I have learnt, above all else, is that change really does start with me. ■

The writer has asked to remain anonymous.



'When the whole context in which you've existed changes...'

Life of change

Mary Lean reflects on a major upheaval in her life.



EDWARD PETERS

‘YOU MUST have seen a lot of changes in your time?’ the visitor asked the ancient churchwarden.

‘Yes,’ he replied, ‘and I’ve opposed every one of them!’

I can identify with that. I hate change. It makes me edgy, fearful and insecure—particularly if I don’t know where it is leading. I’m the sort who likes to know what I’m doing. If it’s not broke, don’t fix it. And if it is broke, don’t tell me.

So it was a surprise to find myself, almost exactly a year ago, deciding that the time was coming for me to stop editing *For A Change*—even though that might mean the end of the magazine in its present form.

The decision has been a long time coming, and was, of course, bound up with such practical factors as staffing and funding issues, and falling subscriptions. At the same time visits to our website were mushrooming: a fact which has led to the decision to relaunch the magazine as an internet publication (see p19).

But it was also tied up with my personal journey.

I have hardly missed an issue since *For A Change* was launched 19 years ago. Although the magazine was not my idea, it quickly became my baby. I was (and am) passionate

‘I FELT AS IF I WAS POISED ON THE TOP OF A CLIFF, ABOUT TO LEAP INTO SOMETHING COMPLETELY NEW’

about bearing witness to the points of light and hope in the world, which are as real—but much less reported—than the darkness. I’ve always seen this as something more than a job: a calling from God, to whom I gave my life 35 years ago.

The magazine also, to a large extent, became my identity. Any criticism or suggestion felt personal. So when, two years ago, it was suggested that its days might be numbered, I was incandescent.

At the same time, my life was beginning to take a new direction. In 1999, I had taken part in a ‘week of accompanied prayer’ in my local community, a form of retreat in the midst of everyday life. Each day I met with a trained

spiritual director, who helped me to edge towards a deeper relationship with God.

At the time I felt as if I was poised on the top of a cliff, about to leap into something completely new.

After the week was over, I went on seeing my director, who continued to listen with huge patience to my inner circlings. She was trained in the tradition of St Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, who has been described as the first psychologist—a man with a deep understanding of the forces, both internal and external, which pull good people away from serving God with true inner freedom.

Out of his own experience of seeking God, Ignatius developed his *Spiritual Exercises*, a programme of prayer and meditation which can be undertaken on a total immersion basis during a 30-day silent retreat, or spread out over several months alongside one’s daily life.

I embarked on the second form of the *Spiritual Exercises* in 2000, and they changed my life, opening my heart and mind to the God who loves me as I am and longs for me to fulfil my full potential, and to a rediscovery of Jesus, the person at the heart of my Christian faith. The experience set me on a path which has led me to get training in how to accompany people in their journey of faith.

One of the things Ignatius was particularly keen on was letting go of ‘inordinate attachments’—the non-negotiables that we put between ourselves and God. The first step is often to recognise that one has these attachments and to be real about them: to admit to God that there are limits to what one is prepared to do—however much one would like this to be different.

Which is about where I was in October 2004, when the suggestion that *For A Change* should close first came into sharp focus.

Over the next few months, I wrestled with the external conflict about the magazine’s future, and the inner conflict between my passion for the magazine and a faint sniff of a change in the wind, suggesting that the time might be coming for me to do something new.

On a couple of occasions I found myself praying with a story from the New Testament. Peter and his colleagues are cleaning their fishing nets by the lake, when Jesus arrives. He asks Peter to row him out in his boat, and uses it as a floating platform from which to address the crowd who have followed him



MICKY BELL

there. Afterwards he suggests that the fishermen let down their nets. They point out that they have been fishing all night without catching anything, but do as he suggests. The catch is so great their nets nearly break, and once they get to shore, they leave everything and follow Jesus.

This is a wonderful story, but I found myself getting hung up on the fish. There they all are, flapping around on the shore, and Peter and his partners just get up and leave them. What a waste! And, if you’ll forgive an unflattering comparison, the fish came to symbolise the readers of *For A Change*, who drew inspiration from the magazine, and might feel high and dry if it closed.

In July 2005 I went to an island, off the west coast of Scotland, for a silent retreat: no books, four times of personal prayer a day, and a daily meeting with a director. I was scared about all the silence and space: but loved it. The setting was beautiful: views of islands floating between the sky and the sea; orchids on the roadside and in the hills; rockpools sparkling on the shore. It was a chance to take off my protective armour and begin to recognise the tone of voice in which God speaks to me: gentle, practical, often humorous, so different from the strident and censorious accents I tend to ascribe to him.

One day it was suggested once again that I pray with St Peter’s call. I imagined the story as if I was Peter: my pride when Jesus asked to use my boat, my scepticism when he suggested I had another go at fishing, my astonishment at the catch, my

eagerness to get everyone organised to deal with the fish, my arguments for staying with the job in hand rather than going with him to do something new—and ended up feeling, ‘how can I possibly not go with you?’

‘But what,’ I asked him later that day, ‘if I just can’t leave the fish and come with you?’ And I felt he was saying, ‘Then you can’t, and I’ll ask you another time.’ I found this both disconcerting—I like to get on with things—and a relief.

I returned to work with a lightness of spirit which lingered on beneath the surface. As opportunities began to open up for me to use the skills I was learning on my training course, the new scent on the wind grew stronger. That November, an email from a colleague who was having to withdraw for health reasons convinced me that the time was coming for the print version of *For A Change* to close. I discussed this with my colleagues and realised that even if others decided to continue the magazine, I was going to leave. I could not believe how peaceful I felt about a decision which I had been fighting only months before. God had waited for me and asked again, and this time I was able to respond.

So now I am back on the cliff edge, wondering whether the wings of the hang-glider will carry me. It’s a scary place to be, but an exhilarating one as well.

The experts say that every transition begins with an ending and ends with a beginning. In between there is a ‘neutral zone’, the period when the circus performer

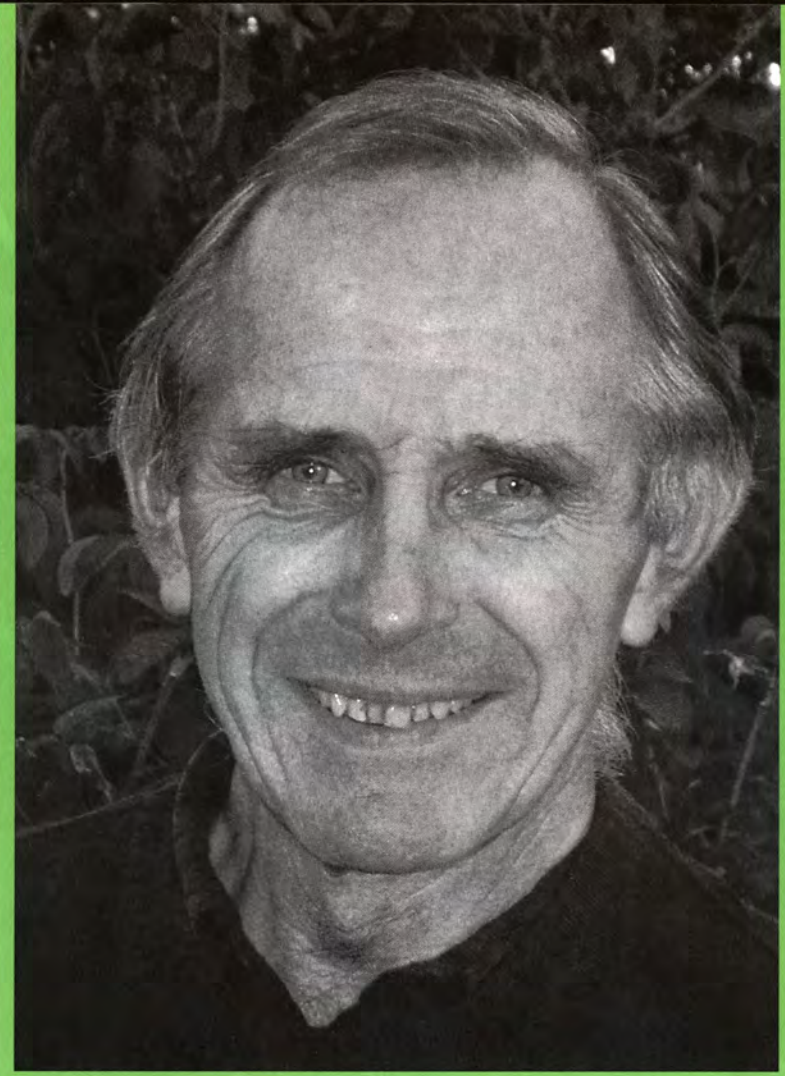
‘IN BETWEEN THERE IS A ‘NEUTRAL ZONE’, WHEN THE CIRCUS PERFORMER IS IN MID-AIR BETWEEN THE TWO TRAPEZES’

is in mid-air between the two trapezes. The temptation, they say, is to try to fill this space, rather than allowing oneself time to say goodbye to the old and grow into the new.

All processes of transition go through these stages: even if sometimes they are jumbled or concurrent. Even a change for the better—a marriage, a much desired pregnancy, a promotion—involves a loss, which needs to be acknowledged.

For the truth is that we can’t live without change. Of course it is easier if, as in my case, we have some control over its pace and time. But even painful endings open the door to new beginnings.

In fact, the only thing I hate more than change is staying the same. ■



FRANCES COLQUHOUN

To Romania, with determination

His dream was to go to Antarctica. Instead he has spent his life challenging totalitarianism, and its aftermath. Patrick Colquhoun talks to Mary Lean.

YEARS AGO, when he was living in Oxford, Patrick Colquhoun rode his bike at full speed into the back of a truck. He went on down to the river to ride along the bank directing a boat in a sculling race. Two hours later he had an x-ray, and discovered he had broken his neck.

Call him bloody-minded or heroic, Patrick Colquhoun is not easily deterred. He takes his motto—'persevere unto the end'—from his great-grandfather, who spent nine years in the Arctic looking for John Franklin's lost expedition of 1848. Whether in love or in fighting corruption in Romania's hospitals, he doesn't believe in giving up.

Colquhoun is Director of Medical Support in Romania (MSR) a British charity which works with one hospital in Romania to promote high standards of healthcare throughout the country and region. He first got involved in 1990 after watching a TV programme about Romanian orphanages. 'Dad, what are you going to do about it?' asked his

12-year-old daughter. Within weeks he was on his first trip to Romania.

The trip, which took supplies to a children's hospital in Oradea on the Romanian border, was also a recce. On his return medical friends advised Colquhoun and his colleagues to focus on one institution and to take medical professionals on every visit. They settled on Salaj District Hospital in Zalau, some 80 miles from Oradea.

Sixteen years on, the charity has organised 320 visits to Zalau by 200 hospital and medical staff, who pay their own fares. They have delivered £3.2 million worth of equipment, trained local staff to use it, and provided the consumables to keep it in operation. 'We're not there as Lady Bountiful,' says Colquhoun. 'We see it as working together with the people at Salaj to reform healthcare in Romania, by piloting changes at the hospital.' He looks forward to the time when Romanian hospitals will set up local NGOs to fundraise, just

as Leagues of Friends support National Health Service hospitals in the UK.

He stresses that the British visitors gain as much as they give, and quotes two Cambridge medical students who wrote on their return, 'Our experiences confirmed and strengthened our desire to be the best doctors we can possibly be.' The British health workers tend to return again and again: something appreciated by their Romanian hosts who, Colquhoun says, are fed up with 'medical tourism'. Since 1994 the hospital has been twinned with Hinchingsbrooke Hospital in Cambridgeshire.

Hammer blow

Colquhoun was made an honorary citizen of Zalau in 1998. His proactive stance on corruption has earned him enemies. He went public on the endemic bribery in Romanian healthcare at a civic celebration in Zalau in 2003 and gave a paper on the subject at a conference on healthcare reform in Bucharest in 2005.

'Reforming Romania's healthcare is not just a theoretical thing,' he says. 'It's about individual people who don't deserve what they've been landed with.' He cites a patient whose anaesthetist said that he might not bring her round if she did not give him enough money. 'Such euphemisms as "presents" or "brown envelopes" do not describe the reality. Bribes are what doctors receive. Terror is what the population experiences.' Sums can range from £1.50 per day to persuade the orderly to remake your bed to much larger sums for an operation. For the elderly, struggling on a minimum pension of about £17 a month, the costs can be prohibitive—and deadly.

The problem is widespread in virtually all post-Soviet countries, Colquhoun maintains. Just as he sees Salaj Hospital as a lever for reforming Romania's professional standards in healthcare, so he believes Romania could show the way in the fight against what he calls 'medical terrorism'. 'At the moment if you mention Romania, the first word which springs to mind is "orphanages",' he says. 'What if Romania became known for being the first of these countries to stop bribes to doctors?'

Colquhoun (67) grew up in Eton, England, and went to its famous school, where his father taught classics. At Oxford he studied Politics, Philosophy and Economics and came to see human choices as the key to all three disciplines. He became fascinated, and concerned, about the 'monstrous evil' of Soviet-style totalitarianism. Between school and university he had gone to work in the wilds of Canada and ended up in hospital after putting an axe into his shin: 'I had to be got out on a makeshift stretcher and then by canoe.' In hospital, he read *Human Destiny* by Pierre Lecomte de Nouy. It made a big

Bribes are what doctors receive—terror is what the population experiences

impression: 'He said the next great step in the evolution of man was in the moral and spiritual sphere'.

So he was already searching for some way of making a difference to the world when, in his last term at Oxford, he went to see a film produced by Moral Re-Armament (now Initiatives of Change). Afterwards he got talking with one of the organisers of the film show, who asked him if he believed God could speak to him as well as hearing his prayers. 'I said "yes" and hoped that would be the end of the matter, but he suggested we try listening to God there and then.' The thought which struck him 'like a hammer blow' was to give up his plans, inspired by his explorer ancestor, to go to Antarctica.

Although he ignored the thought—and later failed his interview for Antarctica—the moment was a turning point. Intrigued by the experience, he went to the MRA centre at Caux, and decided to throw in his lot with the bid to bring change in the world which he encountered there. He took a look at his life from the viewpoint of absolute standards and found the courage to tell his parents things he had been hiding from them. 'It confirmed some of their fears and relieved others. So, although they were alarmed at the direction my life was taking, they knew they could trust me.'

Undeterred

The practice of searching for God's guidance in silence, and of following flashes of intuition, has been the key to what Colquhoun describes as 'finding a calling'. This, he points out, is a 'step by step' process—a light to your feet rather than a searchlight ahead'. He loves to tell a story, and those which are not about hair-raising exploits are about the coincidences which pepper his path. 'I tend to think everyone I meet has something to contribute.'

He can name the day and hour (7.10am on 8 January 1964) that he fell in love with Frances Cameron and knew that he would marry her. He was undeterred when she turned down his first proposal. He tried again in 1970, by post, as she was in Australia. 'I had an absolutely clear thought when to write,' he says. 'The next day I learnt that my father had cancer. Frances took a couple of months to say yes, and during that time I was at home with my father and mother. I got her answer not long after he died.' They married in 1971, and in 1973 went to live in Cambridge, where their two daughters were born.

At about that time, they read the lecture written by the Russian dissident, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, in acceptance of the 1970 Nobel Prize for Literature, but never delivered. Its theme was integrity and the moral and spiritual values essential to freedom; they felt it might lend itself to visual interpretation. A friend, Ailsa Hamilton, made an experimental slide-tape presentation, and in 1980 they set up a charity, Anglo-Nordic Productions Trust (www.aprtrust.org.uk), to make it into a film, *One Word of Truth*. The experience was to lead to friendships with several former Soviet dissidents, including Solzhenitsyn himself, Irina Ratushinskaya and Vladimir Bukovsky.

Sowing seeds

After raising the funding for the film, Colquhoun spent much of the Eighties developing its use in education, visiting many countries, including the US and South Africa, where he showed the film 72 times in 28 days. It was translated into 17 languages, shown on TV in 10 countries and became a resource in the Civic Education curriculum of the Czech Republic. On his visits there he got to know doctor, playwright and stateswoman Jaroslava Moserova whose play, *A Letter to Wollongong*, became the Trust's second film.

'Showing a film is like sowing seeds,' he says. 'You never hear 90 per cent of the outcome.' So he cherishes the memory of a young woman in Toronto, Canada, who spent two years trying to get hold of the video after seeing it on TV. 'She was a nurse and single mother, working nights and living in awful conditions. She said, "Seeing that film has been the one thing that's kept me going these last years." I'd do the whole thing again just for that.'

Just as he would do the whole Romanian venture again for Eva Szabo, a young Romanian who lost her leg to bone cancer at 19 and who MSR was able to help (see FAC June/July 2003). After a long battle she now attends university in Budapest. MSR is currently raising money to buy her a new artificial leg.

And has he ever felt like not persevering to the end? 'Not really, no. There are some things I haven't started yet. I haven't been to Russia. And I'm still looking for someone to sell a million copies of *One Word of Truth* in Mandarin!' ■

www.msr.org.uk

Building peace from the grassroots

THIS MONTH sees the release of a new film, *The Imam and the Pastor*, which tells the story of a remarkable peacemaking partnership in northern Nigeria, a region where thousands have been killed in Muslim-Christian conflicts.

The film's protagonists, Imam Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa and Pastor James Movel Wuye, have first-hand experience of the violence, both as victims and as militia members. Close relatives of Ashafa were killed by Christians; Wuye lost his hand when Muslims tried to kill him. Today they are joint Directors of the Interfaith Mediation Centre in northern Nigeria's main city, Kaduna.

'The pastor is a Pentecostalist, an evangelical Christian,' says the film's producer/director, Alan Channer. 'The imam describes himself as a fundamentalist and is a member of Kaduna's Sharia Implementation Committee. They are rooted in their religions and passionate about them, yet they have this rapport. They have been in the militias and seen the

redundancy of violence. So they speak with great authority.'

The two men spoke about their work at a conference at the IofC centre in Caux, Switzerland in August 2004. Channer's father, David, and the film's assistant producer, Imad Karam, heard them, and felt that they had found a story which might make the basis for a film on Muslim-Christian relations. They sent Philip Carr, an experienced director and cameraman, to Nigeria to see them in operation on the ground.

'When Philip rang us on his return, his voice was quivering with excitement,' says Channer. 'He had been the only foreign media representative at a peace festival in a town where only a year before hundreds of people had been killed in communal clashes. Even as the festival began it was not clear whether the peace would hold: the military police were there and there was colossal tension under the surface. He returned convinced that this was an authentic grassroots initiative.'

In June 2005 David (then aged 79) and

◉ EVEN AS THE FESTIVAL BEGAN IT WAS NOT CLEAR WHETHER THE PEACE WOULD HOLD ◉



DAVID CHANNER

Left: Alan Channer (third left), with members of the Interfaith Mediation Centre and Nigerian soldiers, at the peace plaque which marks the signing of the Kaduna Peace Declaration in 2002. The signing of the Declaration, by Muslim and Christian leaders and the Governor of Kaduna State, was facilitated by Ashafa and Wuye. Below: David Channer with Haruna Yakubu of the Interfaith Mediation Centre. Bottom left: Pastor James Movel Wuye (left) and Imam Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa. Other pictures are taken from the film.



ALAN CHANNER

Alan Channer went to Nigeria to film interviews with the two men. 'We arrived at the airport, expecting to go to Kaduna. But instead we were taken to Jos, 200 miles south-east, where they were holding a training camp. We found the imam addressing a crowd of spell-bound Christian and Muslim youths, and the pastor conducting a role play with another group.'

The film has a special poignancy for Channer, because his father developed cancer shortly after returning from their second visit to Nigeria in December 2005, and died in September just before the film was completed. 'The Nigerians have such respect for elders and they loved seeing him filming,' says Channer. 'They all called him "Dad". When he died I got a text message from the imam saying we had lost "a hidden jewel". The pastor left a phone message, "I've just heard that your Dad has transited... The Lord has taken Daddy, but his spirit lives on." His life and his work came together, and a Nigerian conducted his cremation service in London.'

For Karam, a Muslim from Palestine, working with Christians on the film has been 'an amazing insight into the other side of Christian-Muslim relations'. He hopes that the film will spark debate about dialogue. 'It's an amazing, authentic story in the midst of all the negativity.'

The Imam and the Pastor will be launched at the UN in New York on 28 November and in the House of Commons in London on 6 December.

Mary Lean



JOANNA MARGUERITE

Faith and reason in Islam

Egyptian professor Nasr Abu-Zayd speaks up for Islam's respect for the rational.



THE CONCEPT OF REASON THAT DOESN'T DENY GOD IS THE PRODUCT OF ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY

the issue of 'faith and reason' in Islam is too complicated to be presented in such a simple polemic statement. Any student of Islamic theology and Islamic philosophy knows better. Surely the Pope is aware of the history of Islamic theology and philosophy. Surely he knows about the rational group of Muslim theologians known as the Mu'tazila and, perhaps, has even studied some of the writings about Aristotle by Averroes, the Muslim philosopher also known as Ibn Rushd!

As for the issue of 'violence', in Islam, there is no intrinsic connection between faith and violence; violence is an exceptional state of affairs when the community is under attack from outside. This state of affairs existed in the 7th century when the first Muslim community faced the danger of being destroyed. This explains the existence of talk in the Qur'an about 'jihad', which means exerting the utmost efforts to attain some objectives.

Qur'anic worldview

Unfortunately, conservative Muslims as well as certain terrorist groups ignore the historical context of these verses. They believe that the injunctions in these verses are binding regardless of time and place. They also ignore the fact that there are two types of jihad mentioned in the Qur'an, the spiritual and the physical. The objective of the physical jihad, which is called the lesser or the minor jihad, is to protect and defend the community, whereas the objective of the spiritual jihad, which is called the great or the major jihad, is to attain the highest humanistic state.

While the spiritual jihad is an individualistic religious duty, the physical jihad is a political not a religious institution. Like any other citizen, every Muslim is obliged to defend the country in which he lives. The physical jihad is not an individual task, but an affair of state.

Reason, on the other hand, is intrinsically connected with faith. In the Qur'an, reason is presented as the only valid foundation for faith as well as action. The Qur'anic worldview is

basically rational; irrational thinking and irrational behaviour are condemned and tantamount to disbelief.

The question of 'faith and reason' is present in Islamic theology where the Mu'tazilites very early stated that the only avenue to knowing God is through 'reason' and the only avenue to understanding God's revelation, the Qur'an, is by interpreting divine action as rational; rationality is the law according to which God acts and according to which humans should act and judge.

All fall short

The concept of reason that doesn't deny God, to which the Pope invites us as precondition for productive dialogue, is the product of Islamic philosophy. Averroes, who lived in Andalusia in the 12th century, wrote a treatise on 'Harmony between Reason and Revelation' that was translated into Latin and caused intensive discussion within the Church.

In conclusion, Islam is essentially no different from Christianity in its spiritual dimension as well as its humanistic orientation. Muslims, on the other hand, are humans just like Christians. Both have committed crimes of violence against the teachings of their faith in certain historical circumstances. God, who is beyond the boundaries of socio-historical human conflict, always teaches the ideal. All humans, Muslims and Christians as well as Hindus and Buddhists, fall short of the ideal teachings of faith. Instead of increasing the conflict by highlighting the differences, we need to understand and promote the similarities. ■

Egyptian-born professor Dr Nasr Abu-Zayd lives in the Netherlands. He lectures on Islamic studies at Leiden University, and on Islam and Humanistics at the University of Humanistics in Utrecht where he holds the Ibn Rushd chair.

THE POPE'S LECTURE in September in Regensburg, Germany, about faith and reason in Christianity provoked the anger of Muslims all over the world. In some minor instances there were violent reactions.

Though I would have preferred an intellectual, peaceful response, we have to understand the inflammatory context in which Muslims all over the world feel vulnerable and that their faith is under continuous attack in the West. The memory of the Danish cartoons is still alive alongside negative statements about Islam spoken by the American President. After 11 September and especially after the US led 'war against terrorism', Islam became the target of attack, insult and defamation in many circles in the West, giving credence to the stereotype of Islam as violent, uncivilised, and anti-modern. The Pope's quotation of a derogatory statement by a 14th century Byzantine emperor about Islam and the Prophet evoked this stereotype in all its characteristics. Given the Muslims' furious anger following the Danish cartoons, we can understand this reaction to the Pope's remarks. However, understanding the causes does not mean justifying the violent reaction.

Jihad

The Pope should have anticipated the consequences of inserting this quotation in his lecture about faith and reason in Christianity: as a scholar, I see no need for it. As a professor, the Pope should have known that

The path to hope and dignity

Despair and fear are the enemies of peace, write Saliba Sarsar (left), a Palestinian American, and Yehzekel Landau, an Israeli American.



OUR GLOBAL society is fast losing its balance and its moderate centre. It is becoming more and more polarised and violent. Human life and dignity are losing their sacred character for an increasing number of people, including those who claim to be religious.

The atrocities perpetrated against civilians on 11 September and since, the 'war on terrorism', the horrific slaughter in Iraq, the interminable Arab-Israeli conflict including the latest Israel-Hizbullah war, the unsettling prospect of a nuclear-armed North Korea and Iran, even cartoons deemed offensive to religious believers—all these factors have dashed any hopes that the end of the Cold War and the onset of a new millennium would generate a peace dividend, with greater international stability and prosperity.

Instead we witness more blatant expressions of authoritarianism, tribalism, religious extremism, terrorism, and militarism, together with a retreat from responsible politics and multilateral solutions. Ideology eclipses realism. Global organisations and initiatives remain hostage to narrow self-interest. The zero-sum game of power politics imposes its ugliness on our lives, mainly as a fearful, even desperate, reaction to terror.

As private and state terrorism continue to plague the world, it has evoked deep pain and revulsion in our psyches. The struggle against this vicious threat has generated a macro-myth that divides humanity into the 'virtuous, righteous, heroic' fighters against the 'evildoers'. Such dehumanisation simplifies complex problems and leads us away from effective strategies to counter the real threats we face. Whole populations are estranged

from each other, waiting for the least provocation to denigrate and attack. Too often the threat is exaggerated, making the response incommensurate with the real danger.

We can easily succumb to despair when we feel helplessly vulnerable in the face of such horrors and threats. Primal survival instincts are apt to trump compassion, ethical restraints, and legal safeguards regarding human rights. Faith turns fanatic, and morality is sacrificed for short-term advantage. Power turns into brute force and evil deeds, and the weak discover their own strength in evil deeds, as well. Words become weapons, truth is warped into falsehood, and the human face dons the mask of death.

Distortion

Why are we torturing and killing innocent civilians in the name of security or liberation? Why are warriors bombing residential neighbourhoods and houses of worship, and despoiling God's creation? Are cartoons mocking prophets and sacred traditions illustrations of free speech or of media insensitivity and irresponsibility? Is denying or belittling the Holocaust and other genocides a result of outright ignorance, or a sad commentary on our inability to face the truth, shoulder responsibility, and demonstrate solidarity with our fellow human beings? Isn't it sinful when civility, honour and justice are crushed in the name of freedom or security? Isn't it a grotesque distortion of religion when tolerance, caring, and forgiveness are violated in the name of the Divine?

While the questions are legion, satisfactory answers elude us. What is clear is that we stand at a crucial juncture in human history,

between a 'clash of civilisations' and affirming the 'dignity of difference'. Choosing the right path requires responsible leadership and a shared commitment to change negative attitudes and behaviour in favour of dialogue, conciliation, and a culture of peace. Such transformations must first happen within each one of us and in our interpersonal relationships. We challenge ourselves, our compatriots, and our leaders—including religious leaders—to favour compassion over callousness, solidarity over selfishness, and peace with justice over the suppression of dissent.

The Western and Muslim worlds do not have to be like each other, or even like each other, to embrace dialogue and diplomacy as preferred methods of interaction. Muslims in Western countries can serve as cross-cultural mediators if they are enlisted and trusted by the disputing parties. Enlightened self-interest and a concern for our children's welfare should suffice as motivations to work toward an accommodation of differences.

Westerners and Muslims alike need rational, humane governance and better mutual understanding. Honest engagement with each other will reveal shared values, including a dedication to social justice. We all need political and economic reforms that distribute resources more equitably. We all need to safeguard human rights, increase funding for educational and cultural exchanges, and commit ourselves to resolving conflicts through peaceful means.

Winning the hearts and minds of others, particularly frightened or humiliated peoples, will not be achieved by hard power. Investing in peace-building and in basic human needs like food, medical care, shelter, and education instead of high-tech weapons will create the necessary foundation for sustainable change. Our hope lies in first imagining, then working to create, an interdependent world in which the good of every individual depends on realising the good of all. ■

Saliba Sarsar is Professor of Political Science and Associate Vice-President for Academic Program Initiatives at Monmouth University in New Jersey. Yehzekel Landau is Faculty Associate in Interfaith Relations at Hartford Seminary in Connecticut.

people making a difference



ED SWINDON (3), REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION OF CARDBOARD CITIZENS

A walk on the wild side

TERRY O'LEARY'S brother was doing a PhD when he discovered he had a life-threatening disease. O'Leary dropped everything in order to take care of him. When he died, she was left without money, without a job and without a home, since she was not allowed to go on living in her brother's council flat. She suddenly found herself living in a hostel. 'There's a whole life before homelessness,' she says.

She was ashamed to call her friends and tell them that she didn't have a place to live. The only thing homeless people have is time, and nothing to do with it. She tells me they can't go to a pub because they don't have money and they don't have access to most things, since they don't have an address. And let's not forget that it also gets cold out there in the winter. This situation creates a sense of camaraderie amongst homeless people. 'They tell you where to go in order to get a free meal, or if they have a sandwich or a fag they just share it with you,' says O'Leary.

On the streets of London, she was exposed to many things, 'I'm fortunate not to have an addictive personality; I never got hooked on

drugs. I remember that I tried smoking heroine with some people and I threw up all the time because I couldn't stand it. I don't know where I would be if I had liked it.'

Nine years ago, she met Cardboard Citizens, a homeless people's professional theatre company, directed by Adrian Jackson. With them she found an outlet for her creativity. Today they have employed her as a workshop leader and she directs plays based on true stories.

WE ARE WORKING TO IMPROVE THE RIGHTS OF THE HOMELESS. ALL WE ASK IS LITTLE BITES.

When I arrived for a performance of Cardboard Citizens' play *Birds*, directed by O'Leary, I expected to find only homeless people in the audience, but I was surprised. People of different ages, ethnicity and social background were sitting in a circle looking at each other. This was most unusual since audiences generally don't face each other or

have to interact; all they have to do is sit as quietly as possible in front of the stage.

The host, Cardboard Citizens' Tim Arthur, asked us to introduce ourselves by saying two things: one that was true and one that was false. I chose to say first that I was a famous actress in Greenland (I am from Mexico) and second that I had climbed a hill on stilts. I was amazed to see that everyone believed my first, untrue, statement rather than my second one.

The second exercise consisted of persuading someone to stand up or being persuaded oneself. Arthur asked us to be convincing and use valid arguments in order to achieve our aim. 'Persuasion is an art,' he said. 'Think around a situation and be truthful.' This is a premise of the Forum Theatre genre, where the audience is invited to actively participate in the solution of a problem shown in a play. The genre was developed by Augusto Boal, from Brazil.

Birds is about Don, who as a young girl is persuaded to carry drugs to the Caribbean, in exchange for a holiday. She gets caught at Heathrow and is given eight years in prison. After she gets out of jail, her stepfather opposes her mother's plan to help her. Don

ends up living in a squat with a man who provides her with drugs, cheats on her and gives her a sexual disease.

The actors performed the 20-minute-play. Then they performed it again allowing the audience to stop the action whenever they thought Don could have taken better decisions. Each actor had to do their best to keep things the way they were originally, unless the person who intervened was persuasive enough. A woman stood up and argued that if Don was nice to her angry stepfather he would be more understanding. She acted it out and it actually worked. Everyone burst out laughing at her extreme patience and at the man's change of attitude.

'We want to raise the difficulties that exist around the groups that are oppressed,' says O'Leary. 'I have to confess that I hate to go to the theatre and see things that I don't believe. It is liberating to see things that are true.' One can see that raising awareness about homelessness makes O'Leary feel satisfied. 'We are working to improve the rights of the homeless. All we ask is little bites.'

At the end of the interview she tells me that she has a pet rabbit, and I ask her why she chose to have an animal that is practically impossible to domesticate. 'I like wild things,' is her answer.

Andrea Cabrera Luna

www.cardboardcitizens.org.uk



Top left: Terry O'Leary
Top right: Forum Theatre in action
Above: Terry O'Leary in rehearsal

Cards for an eco-friendly Christmas



Watabaran employees producing handmade Christmas cards

WATABARAN, which means environmental sustainability in Nepali, is a fair-trade company established by Nepalese and Swedish youth. When its founder, Bjorn Soderberg, first arrived in Nepal in 2001, the environmental state of the capital city, Katmandu, disturbed him immensely.

The streets of Katmandu were drowned in scrap and litter, rotting dead animals, plastics, batteries and food. Though Soderberg had come to work as a volunteer teacher he couldn't help worrying about the city's condition. 'I saw the magnificent Nepali ecosystem decaying in mountains of garbage and clouds of exhaust fumes,' he says.

One day, he had to carry banana peel all the way home, since he was unable to find a wastebin in the streets. This incident inspired him to take a serious initiative. 'I couldn't just observe this passively. I gathered my friends and started doing something about it,' says Soderberg.

Watabaran recycles city wastes to produce paper products such as handmade Christmas cards, calendars, notebooks, paper bags and gift boxes.

Nepal is a difficult place to earn a living, not just because of political unrest but other social conflicts. When Watabaran started

four years ago, it only had three members of staff, but it has grown over the years. Today it employs eight men and eight women who are able to help their families. Some of the women used to work at home and some of the men had little chance of getting a job because they had not developed any skills at school.

The company follows a fair-trade policy, which means it gives a good salary to its employees along with such other facilities as paid maternity leave, union rights and medical insurance.

Kundra, an artist who works at Watabaran says, 'I would like to run my own company in the future, in order to give others the same opportunity that I myself got in Watabaran.'

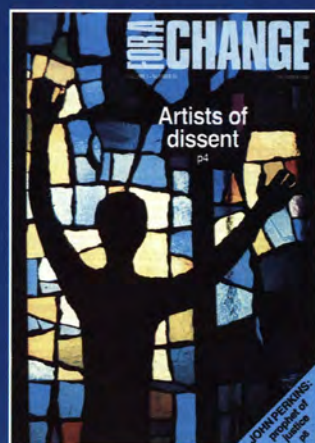
The joint-stock company exports its products to different organisations and companies all over the world. The profits are divided between the staff and reinvestment. Presently, it is training two street children to make paper handicrafts.

Beena Shrestha

www.watabaran.org

Hope for a change

Stan Hazell looks back over the years since the magazine was launched.



WHEN *For A Change* was launched 19 years ago the magazine team set out to feed you, the readers, with a diet of hope. They said they wanted to create something different from other publications by focusing on what was going right in the world as well as what was going wrong. 'We also wanted to support those we were writing about—people who were taking creative steps to bring change in their communities and countries,' says Kenneth Noble, one of the editors.

It's a policy that would raise eyebrows in other newsrooms which must work to wider agendas. But the editors discovered there was a real hunger for good news. One reader said that he kept the magazine by his bed to cheer him up. Another wrote: 'In my home I am Christian, my son is atheist and my daughter-in-law is Hindu. We all love *For A Change*.'

The first issue came out in September 1987. The lead article, written by the magazine's first editor, Australian John Williams, set the tone for what was to follow. Entitled *What kind of change, then?*, it laid out the challenges facing the world—among them the environment, AIDS, the stirrings which were to lead to the fall of the Iron Curtain, racism, the search for faith. It ended by saying: 'With real transformation in attitudes, aims and relationships, we can confidently plan to deal with the deadlock between East and West, the chasm between North and South, the deadly threat to the environment. Without this element we cannot realistically expect much at all.' Succeeding issues took up this theme.

For instance, an issue on Australia in 1998 came out as plans were developing for National Sorry Day—a move to express regret for the removal of Aboriginal children from their families over a 150-year period up to the early 1970s. The magazine quoted eminent Australians on the need for national repentance, and phrases from its pages kept

turning up in the Australian media. One in particular was 'a nation in search of its soul'—the theme of the issue.

The magazine was among the first to report movement in some of the world's most perplexing stalemates. A feature in 1989 focused on 'the other Afrikaners', whose stand against apartheid paved the way for the end of the system. An article in 1996 reported the fledgling Jubilee 2000 campaign for international debt remission.

In *Ireland and the English question* (April 1991), an English doctor, John Lester, examined his own attitudes to Northern Ireland and challenged the 'it's not our problem' approach of many of his country people. The issue before, the work of Egyptian artist Ahmed Moustafa was featured in one of many articles over the years which offered a deeper understanding of Islam. The problem of climate change was examined in 1990, while another lead story, in 2002, highlighted the plight of Belarusian children affected by the toxic legacy of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

Some of the people featured in the magazine were inspired to take on new challenges. An early issue told the story of Bridge Park, a community centre in a notorious area of North London, which was set up by a group of young people who had turned their lives around after having been in trouble with the police. One of those interviewed was Lawrence Fearon. He says, 'For me, *For A Change* has been a means of outreach, a reliable medium for telling your story as well as hearing from people who have made changes in their own lives and put their faith into action. It has been a catalyst for me to discover a global family of agents for change.' Fearon now works to create dialogues between people on opposite sides of social and racial divides.

A regular feature, launched in 1992, was *Turning Point*—a column about decisive moments in people's lives, edited by Paul Williams. 'It has been an amazing privilege because it has meant gaining some insight into the inner journeys and motivations of a fascinating variety of people,' says Williams.

Among the turning points were a Canadian civil servant's decision to get off the fast track of a blossoming career and devote his best years to the welfare of the Aboriginal people of Canada. A Russian novelist and poet, whose parents were dedicated communists, described how she found a faith. A young Ghanaian talked about the changes in his own life which enabled him to make peace with the father who had abandoned him.

When the magazine was launched in 1987 there were high hopes of a circulation of 100,000. This proved over-optimistic. Sales never exceeded 10,000. Eleven 16-page issues a year eventually became six 24-page issues, allowing the small team to concentrate their efforts. But the modest circulation did not stop the magazine getting a profile far beyond the limits of the copies produced. Regular subscribers often passed the magazine on to others. And articles were picked up and used by national newspapers and magazines.

An article on Islam and the West by one of the editors was reprinted in *The Guardian* in 1998 with the introduction: 'In the aftermath of the US bombing of alleged terrorist bases, anti-Islam feelings are running even higher than usual. But Michael Smith sees initiatives in Britain that are good news for hopes of harmony—even if they are doomed never to make the headlines.' *The Pioneer* newspaper in New Delhi also ran the article.

An item on Transparency International as part of a 'beating corruption' theme was picked up by the *New York World Press Review*. In response to an article on the Tata

companies in Jamshedpur, India, Britain's *Financial Times* commissioned a piece on Telco's in-house training on human relations at work. An article about the Reconciliation Walk—carried out by Christians as a way of apologising for the Crusades—was reported in *The Muslim World*, Karachi.

For A Change also got a wider readership as schools and other institutions placed the magazine in their libraries. It was officially recognised for use in libraries in Belarus. Supporters of the magazine raised money to send it to developing countries. An Australian reader donated £900 to cover 50 subscriptions. A Canadian sent three editions to every member of the Canadian Parliament.

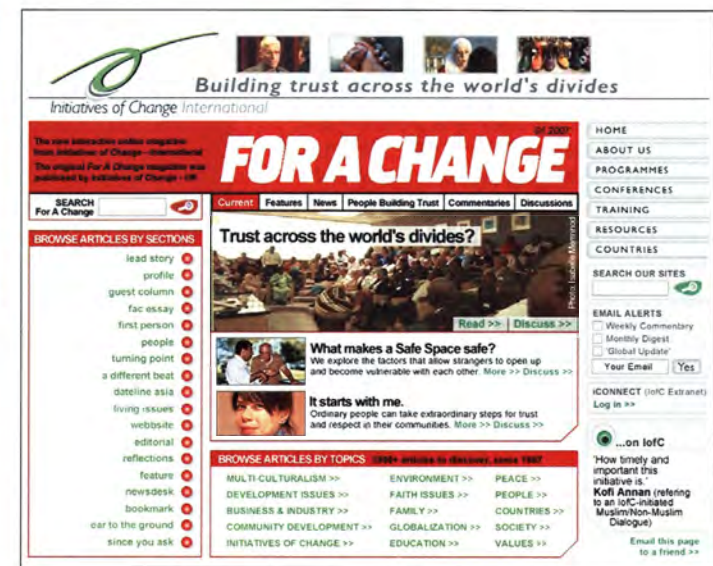
A succession of interns joined *For A Change* over the years from Mexico, the United States, India, Russia and Nigeria, bringing fresh perspectives from their own cultures. They gained from the experience too. Choice Okoro, from Nigeria, wrote: 'My experience with *For A Change* continues, 11 years later, to be the foundation on which I build my career commitments and values.'

With such a history the decision to cease publication was never going to be easy. But some of the long-serving editorial team had already moved on and others felt called to do so. Unsuccessful attempts were made to find fresh editorial blood. There was a lot of heart searching. Even a few tears. But, after long discussions and a search for alternative ways of keeping the magazine alive, there was a strong sense that, after 19 years, the time had come to cease publication. Current editor Mary Lean describes it as 'coming to one of those natural endings, a change of season'.

But this is not the end of the story. It's a new beginning. As explained on this page, the *For A Change* brand will continue in an electronic guise. The means of communication changes but the message remains the same. ■

For A Change Online

Mike Lowe is at the hub of a team shaping a metamorphosis for the magazine.



An early draft of 'For a Change Online', due to go online early next year

IT'S TIME for a change at *For A Change*. From early 2007 an enthusiastic new team will begin to chart a course for the next phase of the magazine's development. *For A Change Online* will appear at www.forachange.net and the site will also still be available at www.forachange.co.uk

Regular new articles will continue to appear, themed around the current focus of Initiatives of Change: 'Building trust across the world's divides'. This builds on the magazine's existing masthead: 'Healing History, Transforming Relationships, Building Community'. There will be news stories and profiles of people working to build trust and integrity as well as various special features and opinion pieces.

For A Change Online will also have an expanded searchable archive of back-issues—over 1000 articles going back to the magazine's launch in 1987.

From time to time (frequency still to be determined) a print version of *For A Change Online* will be produced carrying highlights of what has been published on the web.

Further down the track, a newly-formed global creative team has lots of ideas of how to make the most of the interactivity that the Internet offers. From being an online version of a print magazine we hope to become more of a community engaged in a series of conversations. Through discussion forums, blogs and profiles we want to give you the chance to have your say, as well as commenting on what we say. Everyone has a different story to tell and a unique part to play in building trust across the world's divides. *For A Change Online* wants to be a place where we can share these stories and visions with each other.

Even as this new venture takes shape, we welcome your ideas on what you look for in *For A Change* and how you would like to see it evolve in cyberspace. Email us at editors@forachange.net. ■

Seeing the world through new eyes

José Carlos León Vargas looks back on nine months in Asia with an unusual training programme.

IF GLOBALISATION had a positive face, it would look like the Action for Life (AfL) leadership training programme, with its 45 participants from 27 countries and different cultures and religions, living and learning together.

From November 2005 until August 2006, I took part in the third AfL, beginning in India and ending in Indonesia. As a graduate of International Relations, AfL allowed me to see the world through the eyes of local activists, housewives, rural students, change-makers, village children and human rights defenders.

My journey started well before reaching India. I was reluctant to join AfL because one of the ground-rules was to refrain from having exclusive relationships during the programme. I used to find it extremely difficult to have friendly, honest conversations with girls because I normally had a hidden agenda.

My experience with AfL began the day I acknowledged I had a problem with relationships—and that it would be a shame to allow it to stop me taking this fabulous opportunity to learn from other cultures. When I submitted my application and accepted the terms of the programme a sense of liberation filled me with joy. It was like being someone different.

The most important part of the AfL process was to become myself an agent of change: 'as I am so is my nation'. This may sound simple, but it requires a great deal of courage, at least for me. For instance, being honest with the funds I received during my stay in Asia and spending them properly was not easy. I

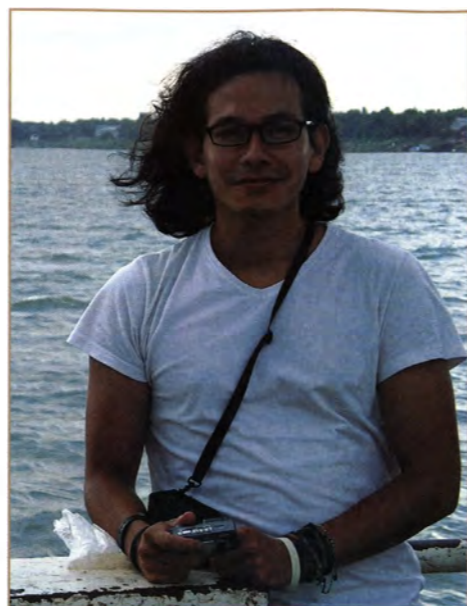
often found myself having to choose between using the money given by my sponsors to buy personal souvenirs or spending it on food for the team. It was in simple, everyday dilemmas like these that my honesty and principles were tested.

My first five months in India exposed me to the challenges faced every day by a country of 1.1 billion people. Spending weeks in areas where transport, food, healthcare and employment were almost non-existent helped me to discover realities first hand which I had only heard about at university. But these weeks also showed me that the greatest care and friendship often come from those who have least.

We spent some days in the village of Ballia, Uttar Pradesh. The local people offered us the rice and vegetables they had cultivated with great effort. It was a lesson in humility for someone like me who had always cared about having the best diploma, a good salary and social recognition.

My three-month visit to the regions that surround the Mekong River in South East Asia left an indelible mark. My eyes couldn't believe that such beautiful countries had witnessed so much violence and suffering. Cambodia's heat brought many memories of my home country, Mexico, but these countries also reminded me that inequalities and hatred can lead to genocide or the brutalities of war.

It was often hard to cope with the realities we saw. At these moments, we drew hope and encouragement from the people we met. In Bangkok, Sulak Sivaraksa (nominated twice



for the Nobel Peace Prize) received us in his home. 'A real leader,' he told us, 'is the one who listens and is ready to serve others, unravelling from the idea of popularity and material success.' His words were confirmed by all the projects, organisations and people we visited that are transforming the wounds of the region into fertile soil for development and social growth.

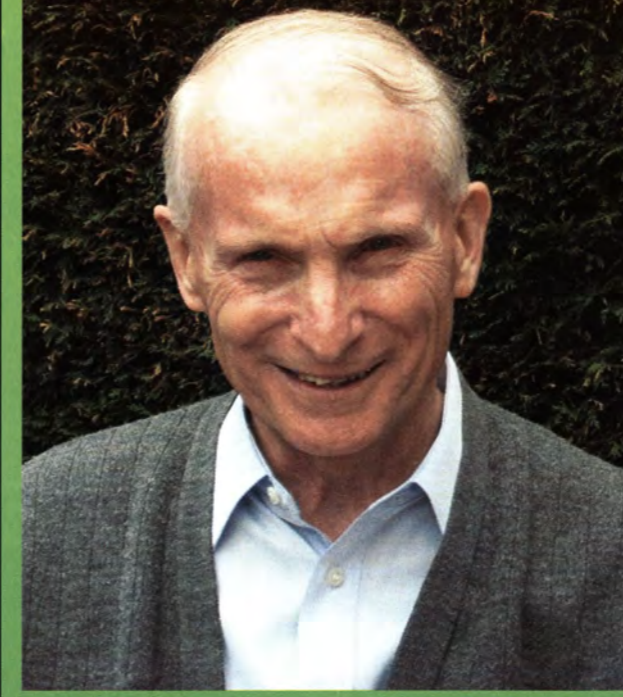
Malaysia and Indonesia gave me a new view of Islam and modernity. With their rapidly growing economies, young populations and ethnic divisions, these two countries face the challenge of maintaining social cohesion.

The Muslim participants in AfL also opened my heart and mind as an agnostic. As I saw them praying five times a day and heard them talking about the Qur'an and their religion, I began to appreciate the immense value of spirituality. Each day, as a group, we spent time in silence, and then shared our thoughts. Through this, I have regained a spiritual and ethical awareness that my rational and materialistic world did not allow me to explore.

The Philippines is the only Catholic country in Asia and, like Mexico, has a history of Spanish colonisation. The streets of Manila reminded me of Mexico City: in both cities people struggle against overpopulation, corruption, pollution and inequality.

As we travelled we found that the problems in one country were replicated in another. But in every school we visited, in every town or city where we stayed, in every meeting with local leaders I also noticed an emerging globalisation of values and understanding. This trend is even more powerful than that of corruption or hatred, because its energy comes from men and women who have set aside the lethargy of indifference and passivity to work for fairer and more peaceful societies, starting with themselves. ■

turningpoint



Hooked for life

ELIZABETH WILLIAMS

Paul Williams has been editing *Turning Point* since it began in 1992. He tells **Laura Boobbyer** about some of the significant moments in his own life.

PAUL WILLIAMS can't remember the first major turning point in his life. He was an 11-month-old baby, curled up in a tight ball with a severe form of tubercular meningitis. The doctors tried flashing lights in his eyes and sticking pins in his body, but there was no reaction.

As his parents left him in hospital one Saturday evening, they were told there was no hope of recovery. 'On Sunday the congregation of the church where my father was minister, prayed earnestly for me.' On Monday morning, his parents were greeted by a still-incredulous consultant. 'We can't explain it, but he seems to have made a complete recovery!'

When he was old enough to be told about it, it didn't have a specially big impact on him. 'Yet somewhere at the back of my mind,' he reflects, 'was the knowledge that for some reason God had touched my young life.'

He says he was 14 when he made his first attempt to really take God seriously. During a Christian summer camp meeting, he felt an overwhelming tug to go forwards and surrender his life 'to a God who loved me so much'. It was an emotional experience, which left him feeling as if he had been wrapped in a bright cloud. Looking back on the

transaction he had made, however, he came to realise that, while genuine, it was devoid of any suggestion that a change of lifestyle on his part might be needed.

That challenge came just a year later. His father was part of a group which invited the Initiatives of Change (then MRA) play *The Forgotten Factor* to Rotherham, the Yorkshire steel town where they lived. It was a professionally staged drama about industrial dispute and class war and their impact on two families. God was the forgotten factor. Afterwards people from boardrooms and trade unions spoke from the stage, telling how steps of faith had brought significant changes in their own situations. 'It all took my breath away: I had never heard anything like it.'

Williams and his brother met the cast and stage crew. There were Americans, Canadians, Dutch and Swiss—all with stories to tell of real changes in their lives, with an honesty he had not encountered before. Hooked, the boys decided to look at their own lives. For Williams this meant an honesty session with his father—'after courage had been called up from somewhere to knock at the study door'. There were also things to be straightened out with his 11-month-old brother. He had often felt he was

living in his shadow and there was a below-the-surface jealousy that had long gone unacknowledged.

The second time he made a decision to give his life to God came between leaving school and starting military service. He was attending an Initiatives of Change conference in Caux, Switzerland. This time the transaction was much less emotional and far more considered. Friends helped him to be sure he went into it with his eyes open. 'Had I fully weighed up the implications and the cost? What would giving my life to God mean in terms of career ambitions, relationships and lifestyle?'

Going into the army was just the right moment to make such concrete decisions, he says. 'They helped me to hold firm and to keep the faith.' When the two years were over, he went to Oxford University eager to join a small group of friends who were working out the consequences of putting God first in their lives. One of many fascinating encounters involved raising a considerable fund to bring world student leaders to the Caux conference centre. This led to tea on the House of Commons terrace with the then Chancellor of the Exchequer—explaining what the fund was for!

On graduating with a degree in Modern History, he couldn't think of anything more relevant and satisfying than 'joining those committed to furthering God's kingdom amidst the chaos of the world'. So began 46 years (to date) of work with Initiatives of Change, firstly in India (for 8 years in total) and then in Wales.

Although Williams was born in London, both his parents were from Wales. 'From the start of my 31 years there I was acutely aware that such a small country had so many divisions—yet so much potential.' He decided to learn Welsh as one small step in bridge-building. Over the years he was able to organise a series of informal national dialogues, gathering people together to look at Wales' particular role and contribution.

It was during of one of these dialogues that the idea came that Wales might find a 'twin' to relate to in the Third World. 'In our minds we thought that working with another small country on the basis of friendship and understanding might be a way to rise above some of our own divisions,' he says. Lesotho was chosen, and in 1983 Dolen Cymru (the Wales-Lesotho Link) was born. Williams acted as National Secretary for its first 21 years. The Link (see FAC Aug/Sept 2006) is the world's first-ever country-country twinning and has grown to involve people, organisations and institutions throughout Wales. ■



JOSE CARLOS LEON VARGAS (2)

Something to sing about

IN MY last column I pay tribute to three American brothers whom I first met in a Hollywood theatre more than 50 years ago. Any history of Initiatives of Change might have one chapter headed 'the Colwell years'. Their contribution to this work for reconciliation is unknown to today's generation but they once played a vital, inspiring and often taken-for-granted role. It was a time when theatre and music was central to the way MRA, as it then was, communicated its message. They were star performers.

Theirs was much more than the fashionable celebrity role of today. They modelled a commitment and selflessness that comes to the fore in a fine new portrait of their lives by Frank McGee—*A Song for the World* (ISBN: 0-9787948-1-8): 'They literally walked away from their childhoods, comfort, careers and loved ones. They put it all on the line for something they believed.'

Even in their pre-teens in California, Paul, Ralph and Steve Colwell were skilled Western singers with guitars, banjo, mandolin and bass, and were probably the youngest-ever trio with a major label, Columbia Records. They were on their way to stardom with national radio audiences when in 1951 they attended a performance of MRA's *Jotham Valley*, a musical based on a true story about reconciliation in the Western United States. They were intrigued, Paul remembers, by the sense of purpose they met in the cast. 'Something in me responded to helping in a programme that was bigger than my small world,' says Steve.

Two years later they arrived at MRA's conference centre in Caux, Switzerland, and the rapturous response to their performances on Swiss national day proved their potential to inspire a universal response. It was also the beginning of a life-long collaboration with another American musical prodigy, Herbie Allen, also featured in the book.

The Colwell's first song in a language other than their own was written for the visit to Caux that summer of French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman. They would go on to sing in 37 languages. Their biographer writes, 'They made it look easy to write songs on the road, rehearse them on the fly, and sing them in dialects and languages they had barely heard before. They never complained, though it took sacrifice, determination, and, most of all, courage.' They overcame health problems, in Paul's case asthma.

Their lyrics were cheerful, humorous and often challenging: opening people's hearts to new perspectives on the world and to rethinking their own attitudes and behaviour. One song that comes to mind is their tongue-in-cheek *Isn't it terribly sad that I'm so good and the world's so bad*.

Frank Buchman, MRA's initiator, invited them to accompany him and a party through Asia where they sang to dignitaries ranging from the Governor General of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) to the King of the Maori people of New Zealand, from the Prime Ministers of Japan, Thailand, and Burma to the President of the Philippines. Chapters in the book include their hours with the Indian philosopher and land reformer, Vinoba Bhave, and the notable

part played in dangerous days in the Congo where they did more than 400 radio broadcasts and sang at the Independence celebrations in 1960.

After more than a decade singing in Asia and Africa they returned to the US in 1964. Here they were ready for another challenging development, the launching of *Up With People* which became one of the world's longest-running musical productions, giving thousands of young people an unforgettable grounding in life.

To learn more about them, about Herbie Allen, about their remarkable wives and faithful parents, you'll have to read the book: 'Through it all, the Colwell Brothers and Herb Allen relentlessly pursued the purpose of humanity. Their dedication and dreams touched the heart of a planet, set it beating to the rhythm of their music, and started its people marching to a greater vision of possibility. Such is the power of their music.'

Indian academic Rajmohan Gandhi writes, 'When inspired genius is willing to renounce ease and glory for the sake of something greater, the impact is huge. This is the lesson of the incredible Colwell/Allen story. I thank God for them, and I thank them for adding memorably to my stock of faith and hope.'

Michael Henderson is the author of *Forgiveness: breaking the chain of hate*, Grosvenor Books, 2002, ISBN 1-85239-031-X

www.michaelhenderson.org.uk



DAVID CHANNER

A, be, see

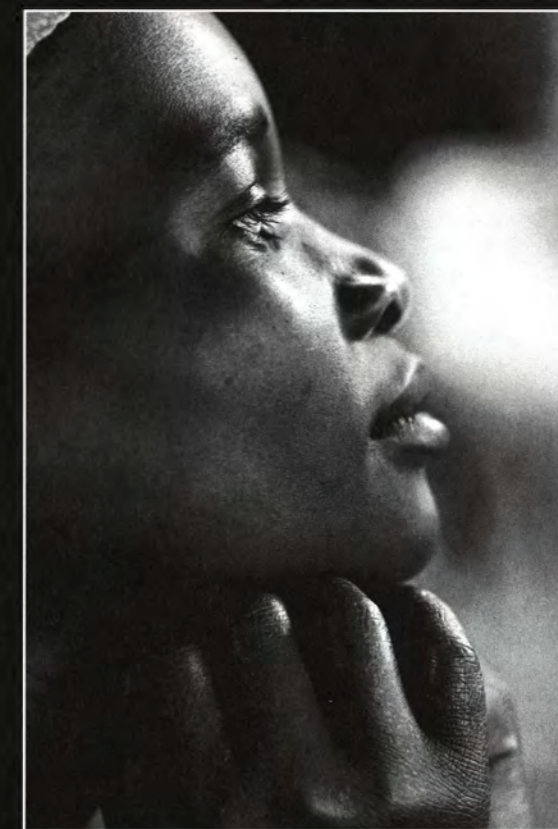
'THERE IS no way to peace,' Mahatma Gandhi declared. 'Peace is the way.' More enigmatically, English poet TS Eliot wrote, 'In order to arrive at what you are not, you must go through the way in which you are not!'

In Australia, social activist and Christian writer Dave Andrews has started a web-based campaign called 'Wecan.be', urging people to sign up to 'be the change you want to see in the world', to again quote Gandhi. 'Plan A,' says Andrews, 'has been to treat others like they treat us.... Forget plan A, try plan Be'. Plan Be, says Andrews, takes seriously the 'Be-attitudes of Christ'. The message of the Golden Rule—treat others as we would like to be treated—is found in the teachings of all religious traditions and in the secular tradition as well. It has been around for ever, so why do we not hear it?

There is a story of a man who met someone with a banana in his ear. 'Excuse me,' he said kindly, 'you have a banana in your ear.' 'What did you say?' responded the other. The man repeated, 'You have a banana in your ear.' 'Sorry, I'm afraid I still didn't get you,' replied the other. Rather embarrassed now, the man shouted, 'You have a banana in your ear.' With a deep sigh the other said apologetically, 'It's no use. I cannot hear you. You see, I have a banana in my ear.'

Possibly Jesus would have commented, 'Take the watermelon out of your own ear before trying to remove the banana from someone else's.' So are we just not listening or can we not hear? Deafness is often associated with the boring predictability of what is being said! The Latin word for deaf is 'surdus', and if you are very deaf you are 'absurdus'. An absurd life is where you are not listening or hearing any more.

The liberation theologian Ivan Illych reckoned that change in society would only come through 'the telling of a new story'. The new story is all around us, can we hear it? It is the story of people who are already 'being the change'. I was recently at a gathering in the north east of India. There were Bodos and Santhals, Nagas and Kukis, Khasis and Assamese. They were talking of taking responsibility for their lives and communities rather than pointing the finger of blame. They were asking one another for forgiveness for past conflict and current hate. They were reconciling with parents and spouses.



JEAN BROWN

It was not a huge gathering, but in that space and moment they were daring to tell a new story, a story of transformation and hope. And that corner of the world is every bit as real as the corridors of Washington or the bloodstained alleys of Iraq.

In October, in the last week of Ramadan, the month of fasting for Muslims, my husband and I were privileged to be staying with an Indonesian family in Jakarta, sharing in the fast with them. They spoke of the last day of the fast as a day of asking for forgiveness from friends and relatives before the joy of the feast of Eid. An old story, but new to me. A story of hope. We met with an Islamic scholar in her home where we sat together, in silence, to listen to that deep source of truth, the inner voice that speaks in and to every heart. She said, 'First we must listen and then we will see.'

'Be the change you want to see.' From Plan Be to Plan See via listening. Fictional hero Don Quixote summed it up: 'Madness lies in seeing the world only as it is and not as it could be.' The A, Be, See of the answer.

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