



# NEW WORLD NEWS

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## Present untense

The writer is head of the English department in a London comprehensive school.

SPECIAL ISSUE

## LIVING UNDER PRESSURE

**JAMES DYCE** practised for forty years as a dentist in Harley Street, and has done extensive research into the subject of stress in professional life.

OVER A PERIOD of some months I awakened each morning with a sick headache. My wife said I looked pea-green. Having swallowed a codeine or two and a little dry toast, I got vertical and moved shakily off to work. We had not been married long and my wife assumed that it must be her cooking which was upsetting me.

Our doctor said to my wife, 'Have you ever noticed if the headaches follow a period of stress? What has he on his mind?' I had a lot on my mind. The job was very exacting. The standards set by my seniors were the highest attainable. The patients expected the perfection for which they had come from across the globe. To impress them I had to do painless work. We tried to pack more into each 45-minute appointment than the one before. Exhaustion each evening was the by-product. A test of our sharpness, we considered, was the number of balls we could keep in the air—clinical research, lectures and so forth. Fast decision-making was fundamental.

Decision-making is based on know-how—what we learn at school, college, university; what we learn by working under men of experience; what we learn by doing the job ourselves. But there is also a more potent ingredient than 'know-how'. It is 'motive'. Why am I doing what I am doing? In the academic world we are not taught to examine this ingredient. So it runs wild.

Of course we can give 105 good reasons for our programme. But somewhere along the line I had arrived at a life-stopping sick headache. And my wife is a star cook.

Looking at my targets a little closer, I found they all involved my personal success. Each heap of decisions criss-crossed each other in competition for my attention: unexamined were my motives.

When I looked at these I was faced with two alternatives. I could bury myself in my clinical practice and seek name, fame and fortune, or start to think what the world

was needing, and how I could play a part. But if I undertook the latter, would my patients then get my second-best thinking? I looked upon myself as a front-runner in my field and wanted to stay there. It was a difficult decision.

When I decided to think beyond my own success, two things happened—the strain went out of practice and my clinical decision became less complicated. My concern became to study how the patient could proceed to health, rather than just mending what had gone wrong. I have not had a sick headache in the 20 years since.

### Unscrambling

People like me often shut ourselves off in the specialised world that we understand, because we do not know what we can do about the 'aggro' in the world at large. I began to realise that the men who came as patients had a similar problem to me—how to live in a world full of the dilemmas which surround success. Here was common ground.

As I began to think for what they were facing, I got ideas on how to help them. For example, one of my patients was a British Cabinet Minister during the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya. I showed him the MRA film *Freedom*, written by Africans, which dealt with the underlying feelings of people in a similar situation and showed the change in attitudes that can bring healing. The Minister used the film in his work.

Stress is not a disease. It is a normal process which can become disordered. It means, 'the action our body's defences take against the assaults we meet daily'.

The response to physical, chemical and microbiological stressors has been tackled scientifically. But much study needs to be done of the response to emotional stressors. At the heart of this process lies the unscrambling of motives.

**PRESSURE contd p4**

THREE WEEKS of almost uninterrupted solitude, surrounded by water, trees and ripening cornfields: a rare experience which chanced to me last August after a particularly gruelling period at work.

In the house, I found Janet Whitney's biography of Elizabeth Fry. She comments on Elizabeth Fry's early decision, after her conversion, to adopt strict Quaker dress—'her idea was the concentration and simplification of life. For one thing it reduced the number of decisions to be made...' She did not lose her charm or love of adventure in consequence—she married for love, raised 11 children and initiated great prison reforms! Through those weeks, I found myself constantly remembering a sentence of Cardinal Basil Hume's: 'The present moment is the only reality' and the phrase, 'to be—not to do'.

Two thousand girls; 120 staff; battles with the local council; new syllabuses; naughty 12-year-olds, some with crushing personal problems; university entrants; noise, bustle, and crisis: these typify the normal pressures of my job.

Carrying that summer's experience with me, I see the value of simplifying in reducing pressure: not drinking or smoking simplifies; so do more profound choices like consciously putting people before organisation or one's own preoccupations, or, in our flat of three or four, having enough trust in each other not to have rotas and duties. Living fully in the present moment simplifies also.

Making time for quiet, listening prayer every morning, and to talk and pray with friends; may cut down sleep but for me provides two essential antidotes to pressure: creative solitude and trusting companionship. They make it possible to perceive—and undertake—the new things that God asks of me.

Wordsworth is a poet I seldom read, but as for him and his daffodils, so for me and that summer and its thoughts: long after, still

They flash upon that inward eye Which is the bliss of solitude; And then my heart with pleasure fills And dances with the daffodils.



Unesco

## Roots of distress

THE TELEPHONE RANG in my London flat. It was my sister, 400 miles away. 'I think you'd better come north.' She sounded quietly desperate. 'Mother and I are no longer on speaking terms.'

Mother was 93 years of age, dominating the family unto the third generation and still resentful towards her father, who had been an evangelist, and whom she considered to have been too strict with his children.

Rather than live with us, she had chosen to go into an old people's home, but had become so disruptive there that she had been asked to leave. This was upsetting my sister, who was almost suicidal with depression. Nevertheless it was she who gave Mother a home when the authorities expelled her.

Once they were under the same roof, however, the situation became worse. 'If only Mother would let God run her life,' I thought. But her attitude had always been, 'If you had experienced what I have, you wouldn't believe in God either.'

A few days later I travelled north to be with them. I knew that only the Almighty could deal with the situation, and that, no

matter what happened, I must listen to God's voice in my heart telling me what to do. But I laughed when the thought came, 'Start to make a family tree'. Mother has an excellent memory and there would be no lack of information. But I was unprepared for her reaction to my proposal, 'Well,' she said, 'if you're going to start that, there's something I must tell you.' And out of the cupboard came the first skeleton.

With the sharing of this life-long secret she found release and her journey to freedom had begun. For us it meant an understanding of her situation.

My innocent questions, like, 'Where was Uncle James buried? I can find no trace of him,' brought forth unbelievable stories, and memories so painful that she had sleepless nights for a week. But in the end a milestone was reached on the road to freedom.

Then one day the miracle happened. She said she would like to pray. She hadn't prayed aloud since her father led family worship many years before. But her voice was strong and clear as she said, 'Please, Father, forgive me for being such a poor mother.'

The family tree is far from complete but my sister looks radiant these days.

## I want to stop

**JIM WINGATE** has been touring with the play 'Columba'.

DEAR LORD, please let me stop half-way. I'm tired. You disturb my rest. You keep asking me to change, to do things, to challenge people I meet with your word. Can't you see I'm exhausted?

You don't seem to realise I've quite enough to think about and do in the day without including you. Why, there's the travelling, setting up, meeting new people, the rehearsals, meetings, meals, not to mention the performances. Then, on top of it all you want me to pray?

I don't know how you expect me to cope. Isn't it enough that I do the show and you

speak through it?

Now you're asking me to give up all my little secret beliefs in things like astrology. Yes, I can see they let the devil in, but they're very interesting, you can't deny that... What's that? 'Obedience'? Well if I don't listen, there's nothing to obey, is there?... No need to shout, I heard you. All right, You tell me how I can get 48 hours out of the day... Ah, now don't bother with any miracles for me. I'm quite happy with my sleep and rest, I just can't take all these demands, that's all.

'Strength'? It's all very well for you, you've got all the power there is. I'm only a... What? You want to give it to me? That's very kind, but really I'd rather just... All right, if you'll promise to leave me alone to get on with... God, you really are impossible! How can I lead a normal life when you keep giving me things like strength and joy?

## Burdens of empire

**Peter Rundell**  
statistician, London

I AM ONLY OVER-BUSY when I do not take on enough. If my goal is to complete everything that is thrust at me in the office, finish my doctoral thesis, run my flat, meet my social commitments, do my Labour Party work and my territorial army training... I can't cope. When my goals grow beyond what I am doing, and start to concern the needs of others, my priorities become clear. In the office, I like to build my empire of skills and tasks, and thus become indispensable. But if I include others, I do not need to do everything myself. It means forgoing the power that comes from some jobs—or the prestige of being busy.

Recently I passed on to another person a major task. A short time later I was asked to participate in two other fascinating investigations which, had I been doing the first, I would not have been able to undertake. When I stop empire-building, it frees me to do what I should be doing.

I feel called to remake the world, principally through the field of world development. To be true to my calling may mean deciding not to go the fastest way up the career ladder. I realised this afresh when I recently read the Bible passage, 'Take no thought for the morrow, saying what shall we eat or what shall we drink or what shall we wear.'

I realised that I was sliding into adopting the desires of a self-indulgent culture. I dreamt of a nice house, a secure financial base, success and recognition. I gave the dreams to God, and resolved again to live in practice by the priorities I accept in principle. This freed me to see which occupations really matter.

**THE PIANO** in your sitting room could be a lethal weapon. Its strings are at a total tension of 32 tons; if the frame were suddenly broken, the instrument would explode like shrapnel.

But there would be no melody without the tension in the strings.

## Mother's marbles



**Dron Hore-Ruthven**  
London

WHAT MOTHER does not develop the art of the brain cut in two—one part hopefully listening to the erudite conversation of grown-ups, the other accepting endless 'cups of tea' or long, detailed descriptions of the day's game of marbles. It is particularly true during a telephone conversation; trying to catch the message dictated for your husband, while using one hand to do up a shoe lace.

As you may guess, I have two young children and sometimes wonder if I will ever again be capable of holding a sustained conversation. That is only one part of the pressures on a mother: the children's constant demands and their boundless energy;

to be channelled into worthwhile goals. Then there are the things to be done in the home, for the school, and, not least, with one's husband.

My life can so easily become a despairing struggle against a mountain that never diminishes. What do I do then?

I have three reactions. The first is very often a burst of bad temper, which leaves me feeling greatly ashamed and worse than ever. The second is to resign myself to never having a life of my own and become a rather unpleasant martyr. The third is to stop and think what to do now, and better still also to think, for instance, what I can use the week to do. Then there is time for the children, for other people, as well as for things. God does provide the answers when I provide the time to put aside the pressure and let Him tell me.

## Only disease that can be cured

**Frances McAll**  
a doctor in the South of England

LIFE PRESENTS us with a series of challenges, which, if they are resisted, lead to stress. If they are accepted, they result in growth.

Many of these challenges lie in the field of personal relationships. It is stress-induced illness resulting from these that produces a large proportion of every doctor's work.

A husband and wife came to me suffering from symptoms of gastric ulcer. They asked 'Could it be nerves?' Questioning revealed the problem of an aggressive, abusive son to whom they 'had given everything'. In the same week a lady rather surprisingly asked the same question with reference to her arthritic knee. Her son's wife had left him, she said. She was filled with an intense desire to kick her daughter-in-law where it would hurt most.

A broken relationship always implies that the other person is wrong and that I am, at least mostly, right. Thus a canteen manager-

ess came to me with a recurring irritant skin rash—and full of complaints about her incompetent staff. When I asked a man suffering from depression, headaches and lethargy about his work, he said, 'The manager is the cause of all the trouble in the works: I hate him.'

### Fits

We live in an atmosphere of self-excusing, avoidance of blame and denial of responsibility. This is reflected, in society at large, in the high divorce rate, in industrial deadlock, the quick resort to drugs or alcohol. In the Abortion Law debate we see even the law being manipulated to accommodate our unwillingness to take responsibility for the results of what we do.

When people try to avoid blame, it can have serious effects on others. An eight-year-old had suffered since early childhood from severe, violent fits. She was diagnosed as 'epileptic' although tests did not confirm this nor did she respond to the usual treatment. Her parents brought her to see my husband, who is a psychiatrist. During the interview she suddenly accused her mother of having 'thrown the baby in the fire', and

with great embarrassment they admitted to a closely guarded secret—they had had a baby aborted before this one. Their admission of guilt and prayer for forgiveness not only stopped the impending fit but there have been no fits since that time.

The notion that it is dangerous to induce a sense of guilt is totally false. Acceptance of blame and responsibility can be the first step to full restoration of health—certainly emotional and frequently physical. The laws of God are no whim of a dubious deity, but the fundamental rules of health which are the right of every individual. The person who has nothing to hide, who is not ruled by his appetites, who takes no thought for his own happiness but is totally concerned for the well-being of others will not suffer stress because challenge will be met with positive action. This can be everybody's goal.

The almost forgotten word 'sin' simply describes a state of rebellion against these laws. It should have a prominent place in every medical textbook. It is unique in being the one disease that can actually be cured; others may only be alleviated or controlled. To accept that 'sin' is the disease and Jesus Christ is the cure' is to be on the true pathway to health.



Finnish Tourist Board

# UNFINISHED SYMPHONY

From 'More than Coincidence' by former Australian Navy Minister Malcolm Mackay, who is now working with the Church of Scotland

WHEN THE TELEPHONE RANG at my home in the Blue Mountains on that day in December 1972, my first reaction was one of annoyance. It was 9.30 on Christmas night. The telephone number was not listed, and I was not in the best of moods. A few weeks before I had been a Minister of State, and very few people other than my immediate colleagues would have disturbed me at such a time. Now here was this almost unknown Englishman with his Oxford accent, asking to meet me.

There was another reason for my hesitation. It went even deeper, to old hurts and resentments. For 18 years my wife and I had avoided contact with Moral Re-Armament, and I gathered this man was one of them.

On the other hand I must admit to being intrigued by what he had told me. He was alone in Katoomba, and it was Christmas Day!

My wife, Ruth, was also curious. We had been talking only shortly before about the necessity to remake our future, as defeat in the elections a few weeks earlier had brought my parliamentary career at least temporarily to an end. I was without any business associations from which to derive an income, and without a job. What was even more serious, although a Presbyterian minister, I was also pretty well without a faith. I had become increasingly cynical and sceptical about religion. I had had many differences with churchmen and with the pronouncements of ecumenical bodies and my personal faith was tattered and threadbare. I still used the words, but my performance often did not match my profession.

'Let's have him up for a meal, and see what goes,' I suggested to my wife. He came to dinner next night. There were no attempts at propaganda, no more than a friendly interest in how things were going with us since the elections. He got on famously with the children, with whom he played guessing games while I was busy just before dinner.

## Deputy God

Yes, I was intrigued, but very, very wary.

It was extremely hot at the time. Our house was a good deal higher than the village, and we had a cool guestroom available, so I asked Ruth what she would feel about offering him a bed for a few nights to save his cash from motel bills. A couple of days later he accepted and stayed for five days.

Looking back on this period there were two or three things which held me about Hicks. First there was his obvious freshness and openness, his personal dynamism and very evident commitment to his faith. When he said on one occasion, 'Jesus is my best friend', it was said so undramatically but

with his whole face alight that I knew it to be absolute fact.

Then there was his astonishing capacity to include us in with him, treating us in every way as his colleagues and comrades-in-arms in the greatest battle of all. Finally there was his refusal to be drawn into any kind of 'advice giving' or other roles of influencing our decisions or objectives. 'I've learnt the hard way,' he would say. 'One of the biggest lessons in my life is not to try to play the role of Deputy God.'

With such a man I felt I could at last begin to build a free yet close friendship. I felt I might even be able to discuss with him some of those areas of bitter experience in my own life where hurts and disillusionment had destroyed faith.

I realised, as I listened to my visitor, that the time was getting near when I had to be prepared to make a completely honest experiment.

## Shattering blow

The major problem for me centred around the ways by which man can distinguish and determine God's voice. I was dissatisfied with the prevailing attitude of many churchmen with regard to this aspect of the faith, for it seemed so often to be one of tacitly accepting the view that direct guidance and inspiration do happen but are characteristics of a past age. We begin our assemblies and synods with prayers for guidance, and then everyone sets to work to argue for his own view, to demolish other points of view and generally to look for the endorsement of numbers.

After six days Roger left us, planning to return for a much longer stay in about a fortnight. While he was away I felt that I really must make a wholly new attempt to overcome my mistrust of committing thoughts from times of quiet meditation to paper.

When I finally brought myself to an honest attempt at 'listening', I was more than a little surprised by the result. There were certainly some clear thoughts about things which I might do or not do, but the overwhelming sense which replaced my fears and misgivings was one which I summed up as follows: True communication with God will not be foreign transmissions on my passive receiver but a coming into resonance between my truest self and my Creator. If this is right, I will be more truly 'me' than at any other time. I can only report that this has continued to be the case.

One of the most astonishing things which has happened has been the way new and even radical thoughts have come (for example, about money and security generally)

which earlier I would have regarded with great distrust and even fear, and yet now they have been seen to be quite definitely not only my own deepest convictions but even areas of new adventure and expectancy. I have felt quite at peace with them.

Then came a shattering blow. At 9.30 one morning, less than a week later, I had a telephone call to tell me that Roger had died. He had had a massive heart attack. Only then did I discover that for some years, especially since his 65th birthday, he had known that he was living on borrowed time with a heart that could give up an unequal fight at any moment.

Almost at that moment the postman called, and there were two letters from Roger, one for my son Andrew—then 11 years of age, and the other for my wife.

After reading these letters I went off alone, and now there was no hesitation in the stream of thoughts which came pouring in upon me. I wrote them down as they flowed in, and it was as though I were receiving a commission. Roger had had so much on his mind and heart which remained as 'unfinished business'. I was sure that many of these tasks were now mine.

A university lecturer and minister of religion recently wrote to Dr Mackay, 'Your book has given me the impetus to make the experiment you made and—what was even more difficult—tell my wife about it. I realise now that for almost 20 years I have tried to put my faith away. I am rediscovering that again now.'

'More than Coincidence?' by Malcolm Mackay, St Andrews Press, available from Grosvenor Books, 54 Lyford Road, London SW18 3JJ, £6.95 post free.

## PRESSURE contd from p1

If there is a cross-current of motive the organs of the body receive confused signals. This results in a cross-current of body-chemistry. The organ becomes disorganised, at least temporarily. It is in a state of 'stress-disorder'—pouring digestive juices into the stomach, for example, when there is nothing there to digest; or remaining awake all night worrying. An early sign of emotional stress-disorder is a loss of sense of humour.

If we can face up to our motives, we will find that stress is not the embarrassing handicap which too many assume it to be. Properly understood, it leads to the fulfilment of professional life.

Dr Dyce's booklet, 'Stress: an ABC' is available from Optimus Books, 27 Warwick St, Worthing, Sussex BN11 3DQ, price £1.00.