

## Publisher's preface

*As a believer in the power of the printed word to reach people and change them, I revere the work that Michael Henderson has done over the last half century.*

*So I asked him what his credo was, what drove him to write, to broadcast, give talks. He sent me a talk that he gave to a group of Christian writers in the United States, where he was living. It is, I believe, a great guide for all who are called to communicate the good news of God.*

John Munro

This talk by Michael Henderson was given to the Oregon Association of Christian Writers at Western Baptist College, Salem, January 28, 1984. It is, I believe, totally relevant to today.

*The Power  
of the  
Printed Word*

I WAS rather taken aback when I was asked to speak for an hour and a half about Christian writing. I have never spoken that long about anything. I was reminded of Adlai Stevenson's words, "I sometimes marvel at the extraordinary docility with which Americans submit to speeches." And of Abelard nine hundred years ago, "Against the disease of writing one must take special precautions, since it is a dangerous and contagious disease."

I fear that you have already contracted the disease or you wouldn't be here today and I am going to test your docility by also showing you a film, *One Word of Truth*.

I would like to start with two quotations and give you some work to do. Here is the first:

*"And they pray that the good seed sown may bring forth good harvest, that all things foul or hostile to peace may be banished hence and that the people inclining their ear to whatsoever things are lovely, and honest, whatsoever things are of good report, may tread the path of virtue*

*and of wisdom."*

You will recognize echoes of Philippians 4 verse 8. But let me ask you: On the walls of what institution will you find that carved in stone? I'll tell you. It is part of the dedication by the first governors of the British Broadcasting Corporation in 1931 and is carved on Broadcasting House, London.

Here's the second quotation:

*"It is not true that a newspaper should be only as advanced in its ethical atmosphere as it conceives the average of its readers to be. No man who is not in ethical advance of the average of his community should be in the profession of journalism."*

On what wall did I see that? I saw it in *The Oregonian* building. It is the last section of the Oregon Code of Ethics of Journalism.

I don't suppose either those at the BBC or the staff of *The Oregonian* lay much store by these sentiments. I doubt if most have even noticed them. They would not formulate their aims in such terms in 1984. But I think both quotations provide a perspective for our occasion today. For the first deals with the vision of the writer. As it says in Habakkuk, "Write the vision and make it plain upon tablets that he may run that readeth it". And the second speaks to the committed, disciplined life of a writer, particularly a Christian writer, that must undergird his or her writing and life. It's what

you don't want to leave home without!

I have a Norwegian artist friend, Victor Sparre, a committed Christian. He is renowned for his stained-glass windows. He says bluntly that there is no such thing as Christian art. His view is that if you live a Christian life and you aim for professionalism you are creating an art which has the mark of the eternal. You are linked up with the main source of inspiration, you strive for artistic perfection, and the spirit puts his own imprint on your work.

I would tend to share his view as it relates also to Christian writing. As I thought about today's talk I felt that the two elements I would like to accentuate are commitment and professionalism.

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An important part of Christian writing is writing for Christians using Christian vocabulary, feeding the faith of those who already acknowledge Christ as well as making a frontal appeal to those who don't. This applies equally to Christian broadcasting. But frankly most people in this world including millions in our own country cannot be reached by this approach. They switch off. I believe that part of my calling is to explore how to express the truths of my faith for largely secular audiences as well as for people of other faiths.

Some years ago, and as far as I know the same still holds, the aim of many working in

the BBC Religious Department was to produce programs of such universal quality that they would not be put into the religious slot, could not be typecast as religious programs. When I attended an annual American Religious Broadcasters conference in Washington DC, a group of Christian broadcasters from Britain was present. To them the whole setup here was different. In Britain there is no bought or sponsored time and religious broadcasting must reflect all forms of worship and not be used as a direct propaganda medium. The British broadcasters were invited to present some of their work and ideas. Some American broadcasters responded but others felt that their approach was a compromise of faith.

I had a letter afterwards from a British TV researcher. She wrote, "It was at times hard to get across the fact that we feel called as Christians to be involved in all areas of life, not boxing off religion into a corner or clique, and therefore we should be involved in secular areas, reaching the highest professional standards and being pioneers of creative thought and material."

She, like my Norwegian artist friend, sums up what I am interested in and what perhaps all of us who are Christian writers need to give more thought to, how to come to grips with the modern world and not be relegated to any religious ghetto. Indeed, I asked a Christian writer friend of mine in

Britain, one who knows America well having served in the US Army, what I should say to you. He replied, "I would advise them to get among the pagans. They may tend to move in Christian circles." He also made two other points: "Get them to help in healing America's millions of broken homes and to remind readers of America's original ideology that the Founding Fathers had, which is far superior to Marxism. But Marxists are often more dedicated than Christians."

**I** MIGHT at this stage tell you a little of how I came to my particular approach to writing which is an extension of my involvement with Moral Re-Armament. I always have to point out these days that Moral Re-Armament has nothing to do with the Moral Majority or with nuclear disarmament or, as I am occasionally introduced, with moral disarmament. The name stems from 1938. Just before World War 2 many were preoccupied with military rearmament. Frank Buchman, a Lutheran minister from Pennsylvania, called for moral and spiritual rearmament. It was an expression of his Christian commitment. "We are very ordinary people," he said, "but we want to put into modern language for modern man the message which turned the early Christians into revolutionaries."

Moral Re-Armament is a network of people all over the world who take serious-

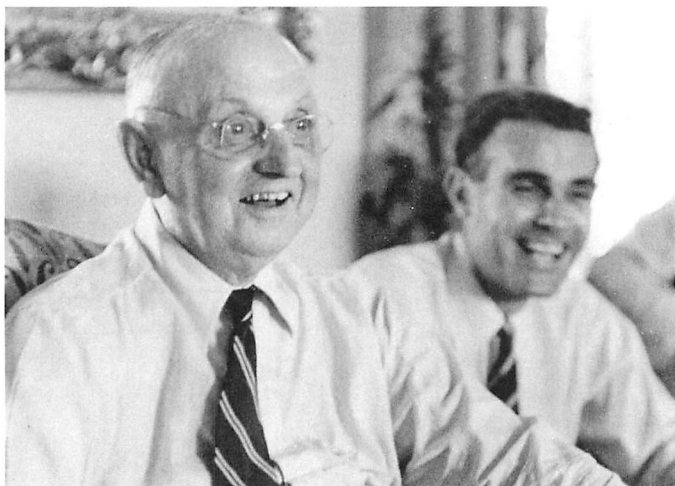
ly the words, "Thy will be done on earth." Buchman emphasized two vital elements of the Christian message which are sometimes glossed over, the need for absolute moral standards—of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love—as guidelines for private and public life, and the need to take time to listen for the guidance of God's Holy Spirit. Buchman felt strongly the importance of dealing with individuals. "You can't apply eye medicine from a second storey window," he once said. But he was also concerned about the masses: "I want to reach the millions with an answer." He wanted the good tidings published and the truth expressed simply. "Don't put the hay too high so the horses can't get at it," I often heard him say.

I had no ambition to be a writer, nor even to be a journalist for that matter. My entry into writing flowed naturally from the fact that I wanted to share with others the precious truths and experiences which have come to me and so many through Moral Re-Armament. That writing has been a varied and satisfying part of my life the last thirty years, sometimes central, sometimes peripheral. I have sent news stories from telegraph offices in Asia where the clerks spoke no English but transmitted them faultlessly tapping out the letters in Morse, and been places where I had to be escorted to the telegraph offices by armed guards. I ran a feature service in West Africa, covered

Commonwealth conferences for an Indian magazine, been a correspondent for the Religious News Service in New York. I've been a press officer and an editor for many years. I've trained people to appear on TV and now find myself doing it. I've been co-author of musical revues and had two books published on India. And if it is any encouragement I failed my English exam in high school and have not been to college. I've shared the temptations of being praised and written up and the disappointments of hundreds of rejection slips. A book I wrote to help end Mrs Gandhi's period of dictatorship in India was turned down by forty publishers before being taken on by India's leading house and there was a period when I couldn't face going into a bookshop because of all those unenlightened publishers. I am constantly amazed how God can renew daily my enthusiasm for the task in hand.

The man who taught me most about writing and about life had such an extraordinary life himself that had a novelist conceived the tale it would not have been thought credible. I want you to imagine an American journalist, perhaps the highest paid and most cynical, perhaps the one you most react to. Then add to that that he was born a cripple but went on to become an All-American at football. Then imagine that this particular person has such a dramatic conversion that he gives up his highly paid job and goes on to write some thirty books and plays that give faith to mil-





*Frank Buchman and Peter Howard*

lions and when he dies twenty heads of state pay tribute to his life.

That will give you some measure of Peter Howard. When he was born his ankle and knee were joined and had to be separated. All his life one leg was thin. Yet he became captain of the English rugby football team and world champion at bobsleigh. He married a Wimbledon tennis champion, Doë Metaxa. She's a delightful person and very blunt. A couple of years back when she heard I was to speak to Willamette Writers she suggested I started, "Far too many people nowadays want to be writers when it is not their destiny."

Peter got into newspapers by way of writing about sport, moved swiftly to politics and soon became the highest-paid political columnist in Britain. The book *Guilty Men* which he co-authored helped bring down Chamberlain and install



*Doë Howard (née Metaxa)*

Churchill as prime minister. However, when Peter's boss, Lord Beaverbrook, joined the government as Minister of Aircraft Production, Peter was forbidden to write about politics. He was furious and, short of politicians to skewer, he looked around for some other juicy targets. All sorts of stories were circulating about Moral Re-Armament so Peter thought this would be a good target. Fortunately, for all his cynicism he had great integrity and instead of writing the story he *became*, as he said, the story. There isn't time to go into the details now but one of our leading papers wrote, "There have been few more remarkable conversions since Saul of Tarsus set off on the road to Damascus". The first book he wrote on this new subject was *Innocent Men*. His first best-seller was *Ideas Have Legs*. Some of the plays

he wrote have been made into films.

I had the chance over a number of years to learn from him about writing. One of the things he used to stress most was the part played by hard work and application. He was often quoting variations on Arnold Bennett's recipe: Apply a pen to paper, your seat to a chair, and remain there until the results are obtained. He learned from Beaverbrook by doing things over and over again. Beaverbrook would look at one of his stories. "Did you write this, Peter?"

"Yes."

"All of it?"

"Yes."

"You wrote it completely unaided?"

"Yes."

"I can't believe it. It's so damn bad. Go and do it again."

He sometimes put me through the same treatment, which is a marvellous training providing you persevere no matter what you feel like. Peter didn't have much time for those who sulked.

My main message today is threefold - live the life, learn the ropes, and listen to the Holy Spirit. If I were to add a fourth commandment it would be: Thou shalt not be dull. If our living or writing is dull we cannot be in vital touch with the spirit of God.

I don't want to spend long on *living the life*. Obviously, if we do not do so we are

like a bald-headed man selling hair restorer. Not very convincing. At school I used to talk a lot about faith. I got the prize for reading from the Bible in the



*Graham Turner*

school chapel but I tended to put people off. I had the nickname "holy Jo." I needed a dose of honesty. In fact, a regular check-up against absolute moral standards is a good operating procedure for Christian writers.

Graham Turner, a much respected journalist in Britain, former economics correspondent of the BBC, wrote a book called *More Than Conquerors*. It is about modern disciples, people who have found what St Paul describes as overwhelming victory over the kinds of predicaments which would defeat many - drugs, a brutalizing childhood, a wrecked career, an incurable disease, grinding poverty, racial discrimination. He wrote the book, he says, to illustrate both the ways of God with man and the amazing variety of ways by which men and women find him. In the preface he reveals that the book started as a history of money but the subject changed along the way because he

had decided to try to live like a Christian again after having forsaken his faith in favor of making a name for himself in the world. He writes, "It is perhaps worth saying that my change of direction involved paying a visit to the tax man to admit that the way I had been filling in my tax returns hadn't been all that might be expected of a serious-faced young man who regularly appeared on television indicating that our economic masters were not behaving as they should!" I happen to know that this honesty, which was key to regaining his faith and effectiveness, included paying back not only a thousand pounds to the tax people but also a thousand pounds to the BBC for cheating on his expense account.

Turner found new motives as a writer. In the *Christian Writer* I came across a valuable check list on the subject. The author is John Boneck, president of Promise Publishers. He asks six testing questions:

Do you crave recognition too much?

Is your audience limited?

Are you on a spiritual ego trip?

Are you writing mainly to make money?

Are you a loner?

Has it all been said before?

Boneck hopes that his readers can all answer "no" to these questions. If not, he believes, they probably need some self-examination before they write their masterpiece. "If your motives are right," he states,

"you have a much greater chance of being published - and you have a much greater chance of ministering to others."

Garth Lean wrote me a challenging note on the subject when he heard I was speaking to you. He is the author of books like *The Cult of Softness*, *The New Morality* and *Christian Counterattack* which he wrote with Sir Arnold Lunn and which have had a powerful effect on British life. His latest book is *God's Politician*, the story of William Wilberforce. He says, "Question is: do we write for profit, to cash in on the often slushy revival in the States or to meet the country's and people's needs"

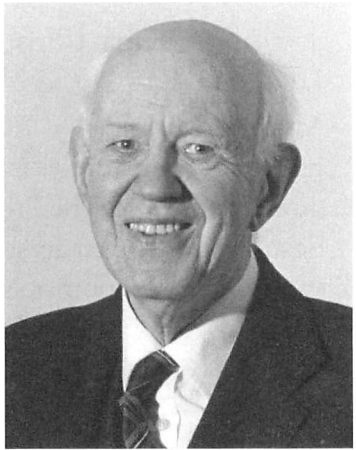
The Christian writers need to give an adequate challenge on two fronts:

- 1) Christianity has a moral backbone.
- 2) Christ answers both public and personal needs, if we let him".

He adds, "Also the Holy Spirit leads to battle. Not something to be wallowed in, although its presence is infinitely attractive and refreshing if sought with right motives and discipline. It enables us writers to get into the jet stream of people's and nation's needs - not the stream of unreal sentimentality."

My second point is to *learn the ropes*. In some ways we have got to be more professional or more skilled than the non-Christians. It is not difficult to write about what divides and titillates; it is compara-

tively easy to pander to the lower side of human nature, to get readers hooked on sex or violence or gossip. It takes far more work and imagination sometimes to make the positive, the constructive, the hope-giving gripping and readable.



*Garth Lean*

We have to know our craft. Like any profession, writing requires practice. Conversion is not a short cut to proficiency, although it may clear the mind. As Pope said many years ago, "True ease in writing comes from art, not chance, as those move easiest who have learned to dance."

We need to be simple in our expression. Peter Howard was a believer in short, Anglo-Saxon words both because they are often more forceful and also for the very practical reason that you can get more of them on a page. As Churchill said, "Broadly speaking, the short words are the best, and the old words best of all." Peter would cut out the adjectives, pointing to the Bible as an example of powerful news stories that didn't rely on them. On that score an English playwright, Alan Thornhill, who has produced

some outstanding Christian plays for the London stage, most recently, with Malcolm Muggeridge, *Sentenced to Life*, writes, "Christ himself in his parables is the supreme religious storyteller. The Prodigal Son has been described as the greatest short story in the world. The economy of language is amazing. All the writers and commentators in vast volumes have not said or really added anything."

We need to be up to date in our vocabulary and avoid clichés, those phrases that were once original and appropriate but have been so exposed that they now have no impact. As Christian writers we must particularly guard against jargon, the Christian in-house vocabulary that is as meaningless to the non-churched as computerese is to me.

Peter always told me, "Put the best goods in the shop window." This applied above all to news stories. "Catch them with the first sentence," he would say, "and make it unexpected." Here is how I started my Christmas talk this year:

*"This is the time of year when most Americans will sing at least once a carol about a man who has been dead more than nine hundred years, a man moreover who was murdered when he was only 22, a man they probably think exists only in legend. Can you guess who I am talking about? Likely not, as the picture most people have formed of him is of a benevolent old mon-*



*arch, not a vigorous young warrior. I refer to Good King Wenceslas who to this day remains an inspiration to the Slav people of Eastern Europe."*

One of the most helpful lessons I learned from Peter was to respect deadlines. Not only to know the deadlines of the dailies, weeklies, monthlies I might be writing for. That is important. But to set myself deadlines for completing work. Otherwise I find that tasks inevitably expand to fill every minute available. Parkinson's Law states: 'Work expands to fill the time available for its completion'.

There are also things like accuracy, punctuality, neatness, the qualities which might make a difference whether an editor wants a second article from you or not. Peter would invariably say to me if I showed him a story I had written, "Who is this for?" He meant who specifically had I in mind when I wrote it, not which paper or market. He believed that if you write with someone specifically in mind then others will get the point too.

Beaverbrook used to say to Peter, "Whatever you write, write with passion. I want in 40 years time in Australia to pick up a piece of copy unsigned and the moment I read it say, "Peter wrote that".'

For anyone who is unpublished and wants to start I would suggest that you don't overlook the opportunity of writing

letters to newspapers. It is more of an art than people realize and a very good training ground. Newspapers are proud of their letters columns. Editors value good letters. Letter writing of this kind teaches you to think out what you really want to say. For letters to be published they should as a rule be short, make only one point, add to the reader's knowledge and, if you can manage it, have a touch of wit or humor or a clever turn of phrase. Always put yourself in the shoes of an editor receiving your letter. Will he consider that it enhances his paper or are you coming across as a crank or as someone with an axe to grind?

My third point is: *listen to the Holy Spirit*. I have mentioned that I learned from Moral Re-Armament to take time daily to quest for God's guidance. I wake up an hour earlier each morning to do so. Buchman used to encourage us to write down the thoughts that come, often quoting an old Chinese proverb, "The strongest memory is weaker than the palest ink." Martin Luther once said, "Should the Holy Spirit begin speaking to your heart with enlightening thoughts, honor him by putting your own thoughts aside, be still and listen to what he says. Note it, write it down and you will experience miracles."

I find such quiet times the source of direction for a day, the time for focussing one's aim, for getting corrective on one's character. It is not being in a mindless

trance. It has indeed been said that the highest function of the human mind is to get guidance from God. Buchman used to talk about getting "disciplined direction". It is invaluable for living and it is the most important writing I do. Usually the thoughts one gets are commonplace but sometimes they are unexpected. Ideas may come for articles, for themes, memorable phrases, inspired sentences. Sometimes the ideas take time to germinate, to get polished, sometimes one is given a finished thought.

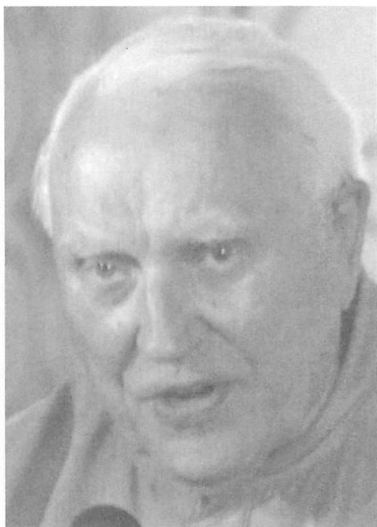
For instance, in one short early morning quiet time the words came that are on the jacket of a book which has sold over half a million copies. It was at the time of the publication of *The Little Red Schoolbook* which encouraged immorality and subversion:

*'The Black and White Book: A guide to the world we live in - and how to change it. A way beyond violence to an unselfish society. Sex, drugs, family life looked at from a revolutionary angle. Not a theory for a few but the experience of thousands. A challenge in black and white for everyone.'*

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The opportunity to tune in for God's direction can come, of course, at any time of day. I seek guidance, sometimes with my friends, before important decisions and lesser ones too. And I have compared notes with many writers who do the same. The

practice introduces a new dimension. Let me give an illustration from the experience of a Norwegian writer who was staying with me earlier this month. He is Leif Hovelsen, a friend of many East European dissidents. He



*Leif Hovelsen*

probably has a bond with them because as a teenager he was in a Gestapo condemned cell for his part in the underground resistance. In 1972 the President of Germany, Gustav Heineman, was due to pay a state visit to Norway, the first by a German president since the Kaiser. Demonstrations were planned by some against the visit.

Leif wondered what he could do to help prepare the country. He requested an interview with Heineman in Bonn. With friends he worked hard and assembled twelve good questions to ask. He got the appointment. But on the morning, out of the blue, in his time of quiet he had the thought, "Drop all the questions. Do not take a tape recorder. Tell him about the country, the people he'll meet, tell him about yourself and what it meant to go to Germany after the war (Leif

was one of those who helped restore links with the Germans). Give him some thoughts on what his visit could mean to both countries." When he went into the Chancellery, Leif felt nervous, he told me. He did not have the security of questions to fall back on. He had to go in faith, relying on the direction he had been given.

As he started to talk, he noticed that Heineman relaxed and then the President began to open up about himself and his experiences as a Christian during the war.

Heineman apologized to Leif for the way a man from his city had behaved as a Nazi in Norway. He expressed the hope that his visit could help restore for the wrongs of the past. At the end he told his aide to prepare for Leif a dossier of all the cuttings on his visit to Denmark and Sweden and asked Leif to come back for it in the afternoon. When Leif returned the aide said, "The President wants you to know how much it meant to meet a journalist who didn't ask questions, who didn't come to get but to give."

The interview Leif wrote was sent out nationally by the Norwegian news agency which was itself unusual as Leif had no official status. And it played an important part in preparing the visit that marked a turning point in the relationship between the two countries. "It showed me," Leif says, "what can be gained by reaching out for guidance and not stopping at the human level. I would never have thought of it. I didn't like it. But I

obeyed and somehow something deeper happened - God's dimension came in. That's what we as Christians are meant to do. I wrote that article as much on my knees as at my typewriter."

**G**OD'S GUIDANCE may also be able to give us the great themes which we may need to be addressing as Christian writers, the agenda on which we may need to be focussing the public's attention. Roland Wilson, author of *The Old Testament for Modern Explorers*, writes from Australia with ideas he feels Christian writers should be tackling, ranging from the issues of family life and the problems of the cities to wider economic issues. He says, for instance, "The wisdom of the Holy Spirit, working in bold and willing men and women, could explore how the surplus productive capacity in millions of men and machines can be brought to bear on the limitless want and need and poverty and homelessness of hundreds of millions. We need to state daringly that the Holy Spirit has his plan for this to happen. And none else has."

He adds that Christian writers will need to decide whether they want to bring God down to earth or lift human thinking into God's dimension. "We need not analysis, however discerning," he writes, "but the prophet note, not explainers but magnets. Miracles of God are meant to be the subject

matter of Christian writers. We write not to make faith reasonable but to lure the imagination, and stir men and women, and especially children, with the adventure of a world of thought and action waiting to be explored."

I am working mainly these days on my weekly radio commentaries for KBOO. I find this a valuable discipline and deadline. If I didn't have to do them I wouldn't and would never know what opportunity I had missed. I've done over a hundred talks now on subjects as varied as the fight of the Afghans and Poles for their freedom and the shortcomings of Western anti-Communism, the weaknesses within the peace movement and the challenge of Mahatma Gandhi, the status of democracy in South Africa and Zimbabwe, India and Japan, and the humorous differences between British and American life. KBOO is not a Christian station and therefore I seek how to get across spiritual truth in unusual garb. I also try to be as varied as possible as sometimes Christians can give the impression they can only talk about one thing. I have three aims.

Firstly, to enlarge people's horizons on the world. In this dangerous age we live in it is vital to be knowledgeable about other countries and what motivates their peoples. What is in the world interest is in our national interest, though we don't always realize it. It is so easy to fall into the prevailing mood about other countries, to judge

them superficially, to let media shorthand about them and their leaders condition our responses. Sometimes we think we are the center of the world. The English have this failing though for obvious reasons on a lesser scale than we used to. There was once a headline in an English paper, "Fog in the Channel, continent isolated."

**Secondly**, I would like to reduce polarization at home. I would like to work for a greater tolerance and understanding of those who differ from us. I would like in my writing to reduce the us and them syndrome and the element of blame. Arab and Jew, Catholic and Protestant, black and white, rich and poor, so many divisions have to be bridged, so many wrongs have to be righted. And there are not enough who recognize that when I point my finger at my neighbor there are three more pointing back at me.

**Thirdly**, I would like to encourage the thought that the individual can still affect events around him and let people know that there are many hope-giving events happening around the world they never see in the headlines. I fear that many are getting like the lady I sat next to in a plane recently. I said I was a journalist. She said, "I haven't subscribed to a newspaper in months and I feel so much better. It's like when I gave up smoking."

Over the past two years I have been able to talk about people who are an encouragement because they have demonstrated that



a different way is possible as you start with yourself. Like the Australian politician who gave up his self-centered ambition and has worked, in office and out, to enhance the dignity of the Aborigine people; the white Kenyan whose father was buried alive by the Mau Mau and, with an answer to bitterness, is a catalyst for unity on the continent; the Brazilian trade unionist who was reconciled with a rival who had vowed to kill him and helped end gangsterism in the port of Rio.

I like to write, as Peter Howard once said of his writing, "to encourage people to accept the growth in character that is essential if civilization is to survive."

Let me give you an example by reading my commentary of December 29, 1983.

**N**EW YEAR is approaching. It is a good excuse, if we are so inclined, to make a new beginning. One of the great truths in life is that there is always the next right step that an individual or nation can take. Somehow New Year is a watershed when, psychologically at least, we start with a clean slate. We need not be in the grip of faults from the past nor be paralyzed by fears for the future.

"I have been asked what I look forward to. Frankly, I am not a futurist. I'm a reporter. But if there is anything I would like to look for in 1984 it is that it be a year of faith, in contrast to

the last twelve months which one could call a year of fear. Deaths in Beirut and Grenada, the shooting down of the Korean airliner and the fallout from "The Day After" have fed fear. It is sad to read of children who fear for the future. They are victims of the lack of faith of their elders. We owe it to them in this International Youth Year, as it has been designated, to lay foundations for a better way.

"Someone said that all fears are liars and the worst form of guidance. I believe that is true. It is also written that perfect love casts out fear. Also true. Fear has to be replaced by faith and faith has to be sustained by love. Faith, a verse in the Bible tells us, can be defined as being sure of the things we hope for and certain of the things we cannot see.

"I hope for less partisanship in the peace movement and more sensitivity in the administration. The jumpiness in world affairs, a more likely source of war than any number of weapons, has been aggravated by both partisanship and insensitivity.

"The Dalai Lama, spiritual leader in exile from Tibet, said this summer that agreements on disarmament are more likely to follow the creation of trust between nations than precede it; just as Mahatma Gandhi said once that disarmament could not come unless the nations of the world ceased to exploit one another. The Dalai Lama, who was speaking at a Moral Re-Armament con-

ference, has suffered at the hands of the Chinese but he made the challenging assertion that one cannot learn tolerance and forgiveness from one's friends but rather from one's enemies. "Our enemy," he said, "is our ultimate teacher."

"I hope that we will refrain from putting labels on each other. Someone said to me the other day, "You're a liberal." He did not mean it as a compliment. The same day I was accused of being conservative in one of my radio talks. That was not meant as a compliment either. I don't happen to regard myself as either. I do not like being labelled and try not to label others. I would like to free myself and others of any kind of group think, not a bad aim come to think of it for 1984.

"Indeed, this reflects my purpose with these radio talks of which today's is the 100th. I want to enlarge people's horizons about the world, decrease polarization at home and encourage the hope that the individual can still affect events around him/her. And if there are people whose opinions may need moderating I would like to talk and live in a way that will help them to be different, not solidify them in their existing mindset.

"Of course 1983 has not been all fear. One marking event was the recognition of an individual who has made a difference. I refer to the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the leader of the now banned Solidarity movement in Poland, Lech Walesa. A man of faith, not fear, Walesa

said after receiving the prize, "I am not interested only in changing structures because structures can always be corrupted. So we must change human nature."

"A visitor to Poland was recently travelling in a train. He had with him a book about the Pope which served as a kind of introduction to other people in his compartment. He got talking with a young girl. "What can we do for you, for Poland?" he asked.

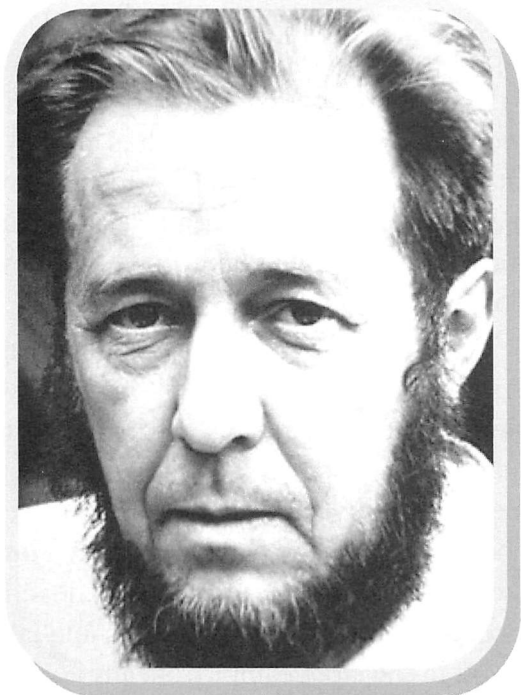
She replied, "You can do three things. You can pray. You can come to us so that we know that we are not totally isolated, and that you care for us. And thirdly, you must put your own house in order. Without that there will be no Solidarity and no freedom anywhere."

"Can we this New Year at least treat seriously the words of this Polish girl—to put our own house in order. Her challenge reminds me of some words spoken by another Pole this summer. "We need food parcels," he said, "and we are grateful for them. But whenever you in the West overcome selfishness and stop being prisoners of history, you create a new pattern of society that is a hope for us."

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The more of ourselves that can go into our writing, the more effective it will be.

You have to give your time. Victor Hugo said you have to give your skin. Alan Thorn



*Alexander Solzhenitsyn*

hill says, "It's deeper than that. For what I call real writing you must give your heart. There is a price to pay". Bernard Levin, one of our great columnists in Britain, writes for *The Times*. In his latest book, *Enthusiasm*, he says that until recently he would write about anything but himself as he truly was. He would never let his inner self be revealed in his writing. With the decision to do so comes a greater depth. The most important thing in our lives, he writes, cannot be something to be shut away in the attic.

"Well, the attic door has creaked open at last and no madman or bogeyman has come forth to harm me, and such pain as there has been – the rare, precious kind, accepted

gladly, that comes with healing.” One of the important qualities of enthusiasm, he says, is the desire to communicate it. “Indeed, it is a very good test of the strength of any enthusiasm,” he writes. “For who, enjoying in common measure something that is readily available, does not want others to enjoy it too?”

That is a dimension I need more of in my writing. One who has paid the price in every way, probably the greatest Christian writer today, is Alexander Solzhenitsyn. To me, one of the really faith-giving events in the modern world is the way a towering figure like him, so long removed from all the influences one associates with religion and faith, cut off in the labor camps from any contact with normal society and exposure to the world, has emerged as almost a prophet voice.

He is not always popular. He has been much misrepresented. Malcolm Muggeridge, himself an outstanding Christian writer and broadcaster, says, “What gave the media the feeling that he was not after all their particular hero was that from the beginning he has been insistent that what he is concerned about, much more than ideologies, is Christianity; and he has stated that the possible way in which Russia can find its way back to a real existence is through Christ - a statement that to me was flabbergasting. I was a journalist in Moscow in 1932 and 1933 and it would have seemed

utterly inconceivable then that a product of that regime could arrive at this conclusion."

Solzhenitsyn is not as forbidding as sometimes portrayed. Friends of mine with whom he recently travelled through Britain describe him as laughing a great deal and amazingly guileless. One who met him commented, "You immediately love him." He carries a notebook where he jots down descriptions, jokes, questions, names, a sentence from conversation.

It is true that he may criticize what he sees as weaknesses in America and the West. But he has also described America as the most generous country in the world, and expressed great admiration, too, for the founding fathers. He told one American audience, "The men who created your country never lost sight of their moral bearings. They did not laugh at the absolute nature of the concepts of 'good' and 'evil.' Their practical policies were checked against their moral compass."

Solzhenitsyn has emphasized the need for that moral clarity in our lives today. In an essay about Soviet reality which could equally apply to us, he writes, "There are no loopholes for anybody who wants to be honest. On any given day, any one of us will be confronted with one of the choices: either truth or falsehood; either a choice towards spiritual independence or a choice towards spiritual submission and servitude. On that choice," he maintains, "hangs the freedom of man."

The Nobel prize winner has said that the line dividing good and evil runs not between

countries, not between political parties, not between ideologies, but through the heart of every separate human being, and he has underlined the need for one scale of moral values to be applied worldwide. He sees the role of artists and writers to give that unifying scale to the world. In the appendix to *Cancer Ward* he writes, "It is not the task of the writer to defend or criticize one or another mode of distributing the social product, or to defend or criticize one or another form of government organization. The task of the writer is to select more universal and eternal questions, the secrets of the human heart and conscience, the confrontation of life with death, the triumph over spiritual sorrow, the laws of the history of mankind that were born in the depths of time immortal and that will cease to exist only when the sun ceases to shine."

\* \* \*

Solzhenitsyn first made public his commitment to the Christian faith in 1972. Professor Edward E. Ericson Jr. in his fine book *Solzhenitsyn - the Moral Vision* traces the influence of that faith on his writing. At one point Ericson writes of Solzhenitsyn, "It is his Christian vision of life and of the nature of man which always undergirds and provides the context for his moral judgments. To make a distinction between a primarily moral and religious writer and a primarily political writer is to make no mean, or false, distinction.



‘Certainly Solzhenitsyn sees a relationship between his religious view of life and the sphere of political action; properly a religious person sees a relationship between his religious view of life and every sphere of human activity. Solzhenitsyn writes, of course, of man in action in the cauldron of the 20th century world, a world on which politics impinges in an especially vital way, but always of moral man in action, always of man created in the image of God and thus endowed with moral responsibility towards others and for himself.”

That is surely a challenge to all of us Christian writers whom Solzhenitsyn describes as “common apprentices under God's heaven.” Let me conclude with a prayer by Alexander Solzhenitsyn:

*How easy it is to live with You, Lord.  
How easy to believe in You.  
When my spirit is overwhelmed within me,  
When even the keenest see no further than  
the night,  
And know not what to do tomorrow,  
You bestow on me the certitude  
That You exist and are mindful of me,  
That all the paths of righteousness are not  
barred.  
As I ascend into the hill of earthly glory,*

*I turn back and gaze, astonished, on the  
road*

*That led me here beyond despair,  
Where I, too, may reflect Your radiance  
upon mankind.*

*All that I may reflect, You shall accord me,  
And appoint others where I shall fail.*

## MICHAEL HENDERSON

English journalist, broadcaster and author of thirteen books has lived for more than 17 years in Westward Ho! North Devon; before that having been 21 years in Portland, Oregon, USA. He has been a member of the Chartered Institute of Journalists since 1963. He also has Irish citizenship.

He has addressed groups around the world as varied as the Rotary clubs of London, New Delhi and Rabaul, New Guinea; the English-Speaking Union branches of Moscow and St Petersburg, New York and Washington, DC, and London; the World Affairs Councils of San Antonio, Texas and Brattleboro, Vermont; the annual meeting of the Governors General of the Caribbean as well as in Parliament House, Canberra, and in the House of Commons. He has also spoken to dozens of audiences in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

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