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FREEMAN

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"Why not let God run the world?"



ONLY GOD KNOWS

It is a common-place to say that we live in momentous times. Think of China, USSR, Poland, Hungary, Namibia, Middle East, SE Asia, the EEC.... It's as if history goes along for some time in a slow evolution of known patterns, then suddenly all the cards are thrown into the air and a new pattern gradually takes form.

Almost wherever you look, situations that were as if cased in concrete, have become fluid. People have allowed themselves thoughts that would have been unthinkable just a few years before.

Many of us of the post-war generations, have not experienced fluidity to this extent in national or international affairs. So, on the whole, for anyone who has embraced, however inadequately, the task of participating in God's 'remaking the world', it is encouraging to see that such movement is possible.

We might dare to assume that years of work by our elders put into apparently immobile situations can contribute to the shape of the new pattern when movement finally comes. And in some situations, we can be more confident in our claim to have made a contribution.

Moral Re-Armament affirms that *people* are at the heart of affairs; that history is *not* moved by impersonal forces, but that *individuals*, their characters and choices are at the heart of it. As we have access to more and more sources of information, the simple truth bears in on us, that the affairs of men are too complex for us. Only God knows all the elements. Only people in obedience to Him can work towards his solutions.

And this is what connects all the elements in this issue of Freeway - from Karen Dansie's obedience to return to the school that she hated, and Loudon Hamilton's basics of leading others to obedience - to Rex Dilly's account of post-war Japan's apologies, and the bridge-building visit of British and French students to Jordan.

THE EDITORS

IDEAS FLOOD IN

by Karen Dansie, UK

I HAVE ALWAYS HAD a strong desire to be a teacher. There was never any doubt. My first teaching post, however, called everything into doubt.

I arrived in Hastings full of enthusiasm and excitement, fresh out of college. I was met by a situation that I had not expected.

Hastings has many social problems. Social services are very undermanned and there is a large number of unstable people living in the area, who have found it difficult for one reason or another, to integrate into the life of a community. There is also an unusually high level of child abuse, so social services really have their work cut out.

Feeling uneasy

All of this contributes to the strange, not hostile, but rather unhappy feel of Hastings and St Leonards. It left me feeling very uneasy.

The school that I worked in was situated in the middle of a large council estate, where quite a number of the residents had once been Londoners. I was stunned to find that there seemed to be a high level of alcohol abuse amongst the parents, a high level of child abuse of all kinds, and a high percentage of family break-ups. All these things I had no experience of and was totally unprepared for.

These social problems manifested themselves in various and sometimes acute behavioural problems in school.

Deserted by his mother

For example, one of the most difficult boys in my class had been deserted by his mother when he was 3 years old, (he was now 8), because she got fed up with the beatings she received from her husband. He now lived with his father, the girlfriend of the moment, and two brothers by different relationships. At the time when he was in my class this boy went through a phase of collapsing onto the classroom floor, sobbing hysterically.

A girl in my class had been abused by her 15-year-old brother. She was attending a support group, but had a terror of boys when she came to me, and would burst into tears if she had to sit by one. Her younger brother is the most disturbed child I have ever known. At

the age of 6 he was capable of messing in his sister's bed, slashing the walls of his home with a carving knife, and breaking the legs of a kitten.

Lack of experience

In addition to a difficult classroom situation, made all the more difficult I am sure, by my total lack of experience, I felt very alone and received little support. The headmaster was a man with many problems, one of them being an inability to identify with or cope with his staff. This produced a highly charged atmosphere, and resulted in a disenchantment with both the school and 'the system'.

Through this period I tried hard to refer to God and to draw on the strength that He could give me. Thinking back, I realise how many ideas and thoughts of how to draw the staff together or how to reach various members of my class really worked, and I can see God's hand. But at the time it isn't so easy. I gradually lost direction, became totally disillusioned and decided to leave as soon as I could.

I wanted to run away

I spent that summer in Caux, and became increasingly aware of a feeling that was growing inside, a feeling that I should return to Hastings. I didn't want the feeling and rejected it. But somehow life became more and more uncomfortable, and I knew that, although I desperately wanted to run away, I was being asked to return. As soon as I had accepted and welcomed this feeling inside, ideas flooded in and new enthusiasms welled up.

I did return to Hastings, but shortly after the beginning of term, I had a strong feeling that I should hand in my resignation. I was astounded and wondered how I could feel compelled to do one thing and then have an equally strong compulsion to do the opposite.

But then an idea struck me. I had wanted to leave for the wrong reasons - hurt pride and selfishness. There was truly nothing of me in this new decision.

No cross, no crown." (William Penn)

WHEN WE WERE VERY YOUNG

by Daniel Puig, Brazil

WHEN I WAS YOUNGER we lived in an MRA centre which my parents looked after. For us it was wonderful, all the nature and places to play and run; we loved everything there.

There were many friends around. Many of them we used to call "aunt" or "uncle" - as is a custom in our land. Nowadays they want us to use their first names, because they say we are 'grown-ups' already.

Like a prison

When we were very young, our parents started to tell us about four moral standards and how they could help us to know the difference between good and bad. We didn't understand them. We were - and are - trying to be free, and in our minds these standards showed themselves to us like a prison of rules and habits. So we rebelled against the church, friends, MRA and our parents.

I didn't want to wage the necessary war inside myself; I wanted to be free, but I was imprisoning myself in my selfishness.

At Caux last winter a friend asked: "Is there a link between the way I treat my father in Heaven and the way I treat my father on Earth?" I couldn't escape from the fact that God is also my father on Earth and that there is not really a division between the two. So it was clear to me that if I wanted to be free from my bad habits and from the rules in me that moved me away from others, I had to clear up the relationship with my parents.

They spoke about their mistakes

The first step was to recognise that I had a bitterness against my parents. After this I decided to have a talk with them about this article and my bitterness. To my surprise, they spoke about their mistakes when we were smaller and their ambitions, the things they found difficult to give to us and the things they found difficult to destroy in themselves. It was a very good talk.

My bitterness was something that had its cause in myself. My selfishness was ruling my life.

Now I started to fight with myself for a new relationship with my parents and all other people that I meet. It's a great struggle to be prepared and open. And to love others in everything, but not to connive in their mistakes.

The real mistake lies in me

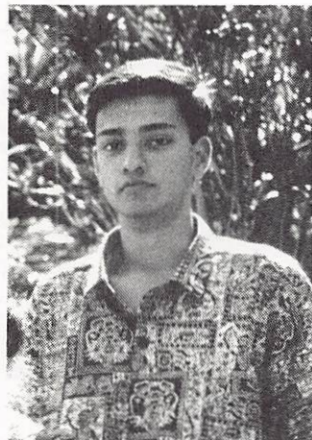
The great thing was to experience that, although everything made by human nature has mistakes, the real mistake lies in me.

It's time to build new things, I realized. To discover my own nature. Who am I? What do my actions and thoughts hide behind them? I rediscovered what MRA tries to teach. Something that was given to us in many forms, including the ways of Jesus, Buddha, Krishna, Mohammed and many others. Am I ready not only to accept, but also to live knowing that God is everywhere and that He doesn't exclude anybody from His love? Am I really "grown up"?

BEYOND COINCIDENCE

by Karan
Kapadia

India



I WAS RETURNING HOME from college, when a car pulled up beside me. A man in his late 50's got out, looked at me with great thought and said, "Oh! I'm sorry. I thought you were someone else."

Thinking it to be a genuine mistake on his part, I told him that it was perfectly alright and that such mistakes happen. However he insisted that I looked like a person he knew in his younger days. Out of sheer curiosity, I asked him the name of the person I resembled. To my total surprise, that person was my father. I did not know my father, for he passed away when I was a year old. My mother had told me a lot about him and I had seen photographs of him. This man, a total stranger to me, told me how humble, caring and generous my father was. He stood up for the right and never kept quiet when injustice was being done.

This incident challenged me to live for what my father stood for. This episode could not be a coincidence. Somewhere I was led to meet this man and I believe that I was fortunate to have met him.

ART AND A BROKEN DREAM

by Doe
Kingwill

South Africa



'TRUTH IS BEAUTY, and beauty is truth. That is all man knows and all man needs to know'. So writes Keats in 'Ode to a Grecian Urn'.

Disillusionment and frustration have become a trait of contemporary art. This is of course a reflection of today's society.

These have been my discoveries as I have walked the streets and art galleries of the bustling metropolis of London.

Everybody in this crowded and 'civilized' world seems to be desperately screaming a silent plea for attention.

Scrambling madly

Originality draws crowds, and so many artists are scrambling madly to be the most original and noticeable one, at the top of the pile.

Many artists feel that the perfection of beautiful art was reached long ago by the Renaissance painters. Modern art movements, since the beginning of the century, have been experimenting in the simplification of expression through aspects of line, form, and colour. Already people are wondering if art has exhausted all its forms; and some artists have come to the awful conclusion that this is so.

Take for example the Russian painter, Kazimir Malevich, whose simple designs have inspired the colourful layouts we see every day in advertising, magazine layouts and record covers. He spent his life working towards the ultimate simplification of colour, form and line, and he thought he had found it in his last painting: a square canvas, painted black. Next to it he placed a note of explanation. It read, 'The contents of this painting are a secret, known only to the artist'.

It was, as one critic said, 'Imageless painting: art emptying itself of its divine powers.'

To most people the black square would mean nothing. But to the artist it was the end of the line, a broken dream, a horrible discovery that there was nothing less to be discovered. It had all

been done before. The freedom of creativity had been used up like the last drop of water in a reservoir, and if you have ever been to Africa you will know what that means.

Malevich ordered the black square to be displayed on his tombstone, and committed suicide.

Creative tools of truth

I believe that originality should not be the aim for any art, but the by-product. Artists, should instead be searching for ways to portray truth and beauty. I feel that truth would be found if artists were true to themselves, and not influenced by the commercial trends propagated by the mass media. They may find this easier if they humbled themselves and realized that they are the special, sensitive and creative tools of truth, created in the image of a much higher Being, and that the Higher Being is the source of overall truth and the original reason for light, beauty and hope.

When the artist realizes all this, and begins to accept and love his creator, the artist will find he can create works of art which are beautiful and true, and reflect the light of the Higher Being working through the artist. The works would consequently be an inspiration of truth, light and beauty for anyone who looks upon them, hoping to find these things.

There's no future
In being dominated
By the past.
For the past will last for ever.

If you let the past run your life
You will never be free
To make the present shine
And the future, all down the line,
Will be dull.

(Janet Mace)

If you run from repentance
Where can you go?
If you flee from forgiveness
How can you know
The Power which makes things new?

If you hide from the Cross
Where can you live?
If you shrink from redemption
What can you give
to a world in need?

(Janet Mace)

END TO BARRENNESS

by Chitra Balakrishnan
India

AFTER GRADUATING IN HISTORY 2½ years ago, I decided to spend a year working with Moral Re-Armament. At the end of that year, I had an unexpected thought about the kind of training I should take up, quite contrary to my earlier notions about becoming a journalist. This was to train to be a community worker in rural areas.

Believing it to be part of a Divine Plan, I applied to one of the leading schools of social work in India. I did not get selected and then came a difficult phase of doubt and uncertainty. After a month and a half, I joined another institution which trained community workers on the lines of Gandhian thought. Looking back, I realize that it was the best place to have trained.

When the time came for me to decide where I would work, friends at Asia Plateau (the MRA centre) asked me to consider basing there, and to help in motivating the nearby villages to help green the countryside.

Filled with trees

Last year an Australian friend had expressed a vision that the barren countryside between Panchgani and Wai (a town about 15 kms away) would be filled with trees before the end of the century.

I decided to turn down two job-offers and to help take on this task along with others, in the firm conviction that God wanted it to become a reality.

These last months have been a challenge in many ways. I have grown to realize that in this kind of work one cannot expect to see quick and tangible results, but that it may mean a slow, long drawn out, often painful process. Also, that the basic issue which requires tackling is human nature, over and above material needs, important as these are.

I'm also learning that I must adjust myself to the easy pace of the villagers and their life-style and be patient. For the moment I become impatient, I begin to judge, and then I cannot find love for them.



New Zealanders and Pacific Islanders plant trees in India.

For example, in January this year, along with 38 others from New Zealand and other Pacific Islands, and the villagers, we helped to create a 10-foot-wide fire barrier along about 1½ km of the hillside. This is the initial step of protection against accidental and sometimes deliberate fires which ravage the hillsides each year.

We discovered a month later, to our horror, that the area to the left of the fire barrier had been burnt off, but amazingly, the area we had worked on had been saved!

Since then our efforts to get the villagers to work with us and complete the fire barrier properly have not yielded results. Their convenient reply every time they are approached is: "Oh, we'll do it in a week's time"!

And yet, through all this I do feel God's hand in everything and look forward tremendously to the adventures He has in store in the months ahead.

I stand on the plain and look at the mountain trails,
Saluting inwardly those who dare to climb,
At the thought of scrambling up myself my heart fails
And I say, "Perhaps another day, another time."

But the time is now, now is the time to start,
That voice that bids me wait must not be heeded,
When the feet are set on the upward path, the heart
Is given the strength and courage that are needed.

(Janet Mace)

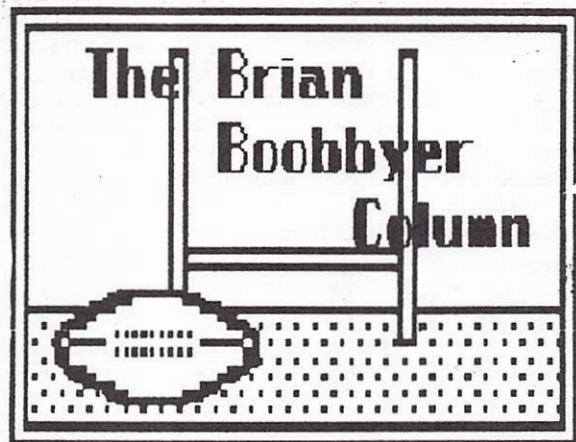
A WORLD TO DISCOVER AND RENEW

MAY 25th. I went this morning to the woods at 3.30. It was a morning after heavy rain yesterday and everything was dripping and sparkling. Through the mist came a half-moon looking like an orange. The skylark sang at 3.50, and then came the cuckoo, followed by the robin, blackbird, and song thrush. There was a feast of bird song by 4.30. There were deer and foxes and rabbits. The smell was divine. A few late bluebells were in flower, and plenty of red campions. When the sun came through the mist I felt heaven was not far away.

I did not meet anyone. Here was a chance to wonder and pray and think. I was thinking of my mother who would have been 91 today.

There is something magical and perfect about the early morning in the woods.

It says in Psalm 24, 'The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof'. It is always waiting to be discovered and rediscovered.



There is another side to this. We have to live unselfishly enough for the world to remain perfect.

Listen to this remarkable word from Archbishop Kyrill of Smolensk speaking at the European Ecumenical Assembly in Basel in May.

"Secularisation has engulfed not only men and society, but also nature, which in the minds of people began to exist independently, without any link with God. So nature became an object of study and exploitation. Misuse of creation occurs when man rejects the order of existence determined by God, violates God's will and replaces God by himself.

"People must change inwardly, beginning with repentance. Repentance wakes the conscience. It is the starting point for changing the individual and the world.

"With God-centred absolute standards, nature ceases to be just an object used by mankind for its purpose. But these standards are religious and may be unacceptable for non-religious people. This calls for wisdom and careful choice of language. The only possible consensus is the moral one based on absolute moral values belonging to the whole human race.

"Modern men and women must understand the direct relationship between morality and survival.

"The moral renewal of a person and society must become the work for all, the great common goal and main task of humanity entering the 21st century."

Room for the world to enter

The question is how to find room in our hearts for the whole world to enter. Television screens expose the world to us, but they may just hurt and harden us, and it is easy to close up.

In a 19th century book, 'Ecce Homo', John Seeley writes, "Middle life tends continually to routine...a man finds or fancies that the care of his own family is as much as he can undertake, and excuses himself from most of his duties to humanity"

And not just middle life.

I suggest that we limit ourselves because we are so securely in the centre of our lives. Therefore we only take on what we can manage.

In his autobiography, written in 1925, Gandhi wrote, "He who would be friends with God must remain alone or make the whole world his friend...To see the universal and all-pervading spirit of truth face to face, one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. Identification with everything that lives is impossible without self-purification. I must reduce myself to zero".

Leaving home

One day Christ tells his mother that he must leave. It breaks his heart to do so, but he has to leave home. He is a lonely man now. 30 years old, and with no security. He belongs to nobody, no family, no village. In fact he belongs to all, the poor, the blind, the rich, the outcasts - and that means he is lonely. It is the loneliness of belonging to everybody.

It is not the loneliness of being without friends. It is the loneliness of standing alone with God. It is the total emptiness that God alone can fill.

And there is room within for the world too. The heart is like a room with no walls.

It makes us always vulnerable. An open flower can be easily crushed.

But it is the secret of unselfish leadership. People grow to their best around us.

In this way we can allow God to do what the Psalmist says in Psalm 104, 'Renew the face of the earth'.

Peter Riddell writes: Loudon Hamilton was one of the first people to work with Frank Buchman in Oxford, though I only knew him as an old man. I was about to start at university, and had a chat with him about it. Shortly afterwards, I was amazed to receive a 13-page letter, written in his own hand, from which I have extracted the following passages. They are about life at university, and how God can use us to help other people.

Dear Peter



FIRST LET ME THANK YOU for adding your signature to my 74th birthday card. Much appreciated. This must sound like Methusaleh to you. The story goes that on Methusaleh's 700th birthday one of his friends congratulated him: 'Why, you don't look a day over 500!'

Soon you'll move into a new and larger world. Whether you live in a college or in a student hall, you meet any of the same people every day. You have a wide choice, and some friends at university become friends for life.

I think a purpose is the most important thing to have when you're a student or at any other time! Otherwise you waste time and get drawn off into such futile things (at least I did). By purpose, I mean a purpose for your life.

I had a hope when I went up to Oxford, but no real purpose. I entered wholeheartedly into all the fun and games and had a whale of a time doing it - had heaps of friends - or so I would have said; but in my heart I knew I had no real friends. I was too scared someone would find out what I was really like underneath. So I set out to be popular and so on, but it was all bluff. The set I moved in were all much the same as I. So much was just 'posing'.

Plain bored

I also found that a lot of fellows were plain bored - bored with their surroundings, with their studies, with college meals, with the daily routine of life. So they have to blow off steam somehow - sometimes by 'ragging'; then by violence or street fights or college vs college: sometimes raiding rooms, smashing windows etc.

When you're bored and purposeless, your standards (if any) go and you 'fall for anything' as the saying goes. Pretty dirty stuff, sometimes, and you excuse it by saying, 'It doesn't matter' or 'Other fellows do it, so why not I?' Then of course you have the reaction of feeling worse than ever.

If you have a purpose, you're a marked man - people may say nothing, but they watch you. In a closed community like a university not much stays hidden. Some will laugh at you - at first - and try to get you down to their level. But you can sit easy to all that, and not fuss about it. After all, you're having a better time than they are. You can afford to laugh.

Wanting to be popular is one of the biggest snags in university life. So you go with the popular set (if they'll have you), do the things they do, talk the way they do and generally behave that way. You have to stifle your conscience to do it. You take refuge in cynicism, hoping to excuse everything. But it doesn't quite work. You conform but you still don't quite know where you are or where you're going. All you know is perhaps you've got mixed up with a lot of things you wouldn't tell your parents, for instance.

There is a saying about conformity: 'Any old dead fish can float downstream: it takes a live sucker to swim up against it.' If you start swimming up against it, it's amazing how many other fish change direction and decide to swim upstream with you! At least that was what I found. Some of 'em really surprise you.

Soon you have a force with a purpose. The fur may fly, but it's a lot of fun. You're never bored. You do three hours' work in two and you've always got time to listen to the fellow who comes to talk to you - rather shyly perhaps at first, but gradually he opens up. Then he's ready to answer direct personal questions - these are probably the real things on his heart he's never told anybody.

I used to be afraid a fellow would be angry if you asked him certain questions. I find they're not. In fact, often they're glad you did, they'd been too shy or afraid to say it themselves, but hope you will.

It pays to be bold

I find it pays to be bold. You've got to forget yourself and your 'reserve'. Mind you, there are two kinds of reserve, a true reserve and a false reserve, where you hide something. I find I'll ask a fellow, 'Do you live a pure life?' There was a time I would

never have dared to ask anyone a personal question like that. But it pays off. Even if he hadn't expected it, he usually tells you the truth. You can tell how you found victory. Don't talk too long about yourself - just enough so he sees you understand and that there is an answer. So many just expect defeat and stop fighting, and drift along.

Be natural with people. You don't have to pretend to be what you're not. Don't try to look too good or talk too wise. Don't be afraid of people either. I always was, but it was my 'ego'.

Take nothing for granted. You can get guidance [from God] as the two of you talk. I once had guidance to ask a very senior schoolmaster - he'd invited me to tea - if he would give his life to God. I told God, 'Don't be crazy'. The thought persisted. Still I couldn't get the conversation off the weather, varsity cricket, Henley etc. Finally I cleared my throat. 'By the way, would you like to give your life to God?' To my surprise and relief, he said, 'As a matter of fact, I would.' And we got down on our knees by his desk and he prayed. From that day, he never turned back. So if you have guidance to do some original or daring thing, don't hesitate if it's something the other fellow needs.

Don't be discouraged if you fall into impurity. That statement can be misunderstood. It doesn't mean that to fall into impurity doesn't matter or is 'natural'. No fighting man (and every real Christian is a fighting man) will agree the enemy must win, that sin is inevitable, or that one form of sin is not so bad as some other kind, or that sin is not sin - a very popular argument. Sin is the disease - Christ is the cure - the result is a miracle.

Language of pride

Discouragement is the language of pride, because we want to think of ourselves as a success, till something happens which shows us we are not. God does not mean we are to achieve something to inflate our ego. What He asks is our obedience. Fellows say, 'Oh, I could never live the four standards' [honesty, purity, unselfishness, and love]. How do they know? Have they ever tried? In any case, living the standards is the fruit of something else and they are not ends in themselves for your own glory.

The answer to sex temptations I find is two-fold: (1) Your life, purpose, will are wholly given to Christ. So often impurity comes when you're frustrated. There is something you want and can't get. So you take what you can get (alas, all too easily). You try to compensate and find satisfaction or yourself. But of course it doesn't work. Sin never satisfies. It only leaves you wanting more.



(2) The devil wants you to fight the wrong battle (usually by an effort of repression which doesn't work). So many things, like impure thoughts, for instance, will go if you ignore them and let 'em go. It's not always easy - the look, the thought, the fascination and the fall. The break must come somewhere, say, between the thought and the fascination: otherwise the snake paralyses the rabbit. If evil thoughts do assail us (which of us young or old don't have them at times?), understand that God may have allowed the temptation in order to prepare you for someone you'll meet that day who is defeated by impure habits and desperately needs your help. Use your temptations, make them assets instead of liabilities.

The snake paralyses the rabbit

Be on the attack - be moving so fast that the dirt doesn't stick. Then you won't have much trouble with sex.

As regards girls, St Paul says to the young men, 'Treat the younger women as sisters, with perfect propriety'. They are fellow fighters in the battle with you. Keep your relationships on that level and see that the men round you do the same. No private relationships where you use each other.

When we started in Oxford, a few of us met daily at 7.30 to read the Bible, share and pray on our knees - breakfast 8.15 am. This was basic. Soon other groups in other colleges were doing the same. Soon the university magazine got the news and had satirical editorials. This helped greatly and people's curiosity was aroused and we became better known. The battle so heated up, that the London Times printed a letter from nine senior Oxford men (including three heads of colleges) in our support. You can imagine what that did, and not just in Oxford!

All the time men were coming for personal interviews to get cleaned up and find a real purpose in their lives. Henry Drummond, [former] Professor at Edinburgh University, whose books you may know, [used to be] sought in interview privately by scores of men.

Drummond said to a friend: 'I have been listening to stories of ill-living so vile and loathsome, I felt I wanted to change my very clothes. But to such I gladly gave the garments of righteousness and the robes of salvation.'

Do this, Peter, and God will do the rest.

Thanks for your patience.

Sincerely yours
Houdon Hamilton

DEAR PRIME MINISTER

A group of young French recently wrote a letter to their Prime Minister. We print extracts.

Dear Prime Minister,

We, the signatories of this letter, feel the need of a vision which goes beyond our daily lives.

We don't want the economic law to be the only perspective which is offered us. We want France to have another image, rather than that of a country preoccupied with defending its own interests and well-being. When we asked ourselves 'Do we have a great aim?' we realised that individually, each carried some concern which they were trying to deal with in their own way.

One helps look after down-and-outs, and wants to do some prison-visiting. For several of us, France's responsibility towards the francophone countries is the main concern. One for example, is establishing contacts with young French of immigrant parents and with fellow students from the Arab countries. On the other hand, he is studying particle physics out of a desire to contribute to the preservation of creation.

Another is at a business school where much time is spent working out fiddles that bring in the most money without actually being against the law. She wants to see this cease to be the norm. It's here that the seeds of such as the

Pechiney scandal might grow or die.

Another wants to oppose the spirit of revenge which so often characterizes our society, by cultivating in himself a spirit of service and generosity.

These concerns may or may not stay with us for the rest of our lives. For the moment though, they do allow us to believe in the possibility of a broader change and to guard against pious talk which no one takes seriously.

We don't accept the easily disillusioned attitude of some of our compatriots with regard to politicians. We believe that you have an essential role to play which goes far beyond the mere management of our country. At a time when everyone wants to run his life as he wishes, isn't it possible to link individual and responsibility? Shouldn't each of us be invited to consider his personal responsibility as regards such questions as we raise above?

Together we wanted to encourage you to express your vision for France and show by your quality of life that it is possible for our country to have a great aim.

Emmanuelle Bastien, Jeanne Bastien, Frédéric and Nathalie Chavanne, Cheikh Cissé, Philippe Darantière, Marie-Hélène Fayet, Virginie Mjchrzak, Isabelle Mazur, Philippe Odier, François Vial.

AIMLESS AIMING

WHEN WE SPEAK OF A DESTINATION, it's important to distinguish between the point we are aiming at, and the fruits, the results, the out-come of the journey. The temptation always is to want to make the fruits, the aim.

There is a truth that Zen Buddhism teaches in this respect, drawn from the language of archery: they call it 'aimless aiming'. If you concentrate too much on the results, you are sure to miss it. The true aim, the Buddhists tell us, is to have a balanced approach to life, and then you will hit the target.

Interestingly, Christian imagery also turns to the language of archery. The word for 'sin' in Greek, was the word that archers used for 'a miss'. Sin is what prevents us from hitting the target.

Thus it is essential constantly to re-express for yourself the destination that you have chosen. This is to be sure that there isn't anything that may stop us from hitting the target, but also to ascertain that results and fruits have not become our target.

There follow three quotations which describe the target, the first two by Jesus.

'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' Matt 6 v 33. We want the world to change, we want to be happy, we want to have enough food, clothes and friends, but 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' That's aiming without aiming.

'My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to finish the work that he has given me to do.' Not only Jesus's aim and task, but also his nourishment.

That is interesting when you think that the psychoanalyst, C G Jung said, 'Neurosis is the suffering of a soul that has lost its meaning.' The spirit becomes starved when it has no aim. 'My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to finish the work that he has given me to do.'

The last quotation is from Henry Drummond. 'The aim of life is simply to do the will of God...'

Jean-Marc Duckert

CHOOSING CHEESE

by Michel Sentis

ONE OF FRANCE'S LEADING EXPERTS in the art of cuisine, Brillat-Savarin, wrote that a meal without cheese was like "une belle à laquelle il manque un oeil" - (a pretty girl with an eye missing).

You cannot understand France if you do not understand cheese. I do not mean cheddar, because there is nothing to understand about cheddar. But I will use stilton as a comparison, because it is one of the rare instances where, as a Frenchman, I recognize my tradition and my culture when I am in England.

Massacred by some barbarian

It is probably only in some London clubs that Britishers know really how to eat stilton. Watch the butler pouring the port over it; watch the delicate way he cuts it horizontally in order to produce a cut in the shape of a saucer to receive the next amount of port. Understand his care and see the difference between a stilton which has been well cared for and one which has been massacred by some barbarian epicure. If you have experienced that, then you are a long way to understanding France.

France is a country with more than 600 cheeses. Think of the amount of shades in taste that this implies. Each one needs a particular care.

There is an art in choosing a promising cheese. Watch a Frenchwoman choosing her camembert. She has ten varieties of camembert offered to her, and she does not choose according to the price, but an intuition which in French people is localized in their fingertips. She hesitates, goes to another, comes back to the previous one, looks for a third, with the same care that an English lady will choose her hat for a wedding. Yet she makes that choice several times a week.

Cheese nursing

But choosing a promising cheese is only a beginning. She knows the place where to put it for maturing, on a shelf with the right temperature, sometimes under a 'cloche' (bell), an essential instrument of cheese nursing. She might eventually add a little bit of moisture, or water to get the most out of it, like a specialist of orchids looking after his plants.

And cheese matures when it decides to do so. So you do not serve the cheese when you want it. You have to leave the initiative to it. It will decide for you whether it will be at its best tonight



or tomorrow at lunch. If you are impatient, you better not try cheese. And abandon understanding France, because French cheeses are like people: if you give them your best, they will give you their best.

I believe that if the whole of Europe will understand cheese, all the European problems would be solved. Who is going to teach that art to Mrs Thatcher?

NETTLES

Lord, help me grasp the nettles
That grow along my way.
They cannot be avoided,
Dislike them as I may.
Please help me grasp them quickly
Not stand about for hours
Looking at them gloomily
Wishing they were flowers.

Lord, help me grasp the nettles
Before they all grow higher.
Give me the commonsense to see
That fear of them's a liar.
Please help me grasp them cheerfully
Without a moan or groan,
And give me guts, if no-one's there,
To grasp them on my own.

(Janet Mace)

STOPPED AT THE RIVER JORDAN

At Easter six students (five British - Richard Brown, Richard Hill, Henry Morshead, Patrick Spooner and Gordon Wise; one French - Philippe Odier) spent two weeks in Jordan as part of an exchange programme, now in its third year, with the Jordan University of Science & Technology (JUST). The following are extracts from Gordon Wise's report.

IN THE FAR NORTH OF JORDAN lies Um Quais. There we looked out from the ruined forum of the Roman city of Gadara, over the cliff where Christ cast down the Gadarene swine, to the Sea of Galilee and the sweep of the Golan Heights, occupied by Israel since the October 1973 war. Behind us lay the remains of the Byzantine city which had succeeded the Roman, goats grazing in a ruined mosque, and we had passed the new town recently built by the government.

Call to prayer

From having little direct contact with the Muslim life, we were thrown into it with the call to prayer from the nearby minaret of the university mosque in the early hours of our first morning! We were assured, by officials and Christians themselves, that the 10% Christian minority and the Muslim majority happily co-exist. But we found religion to be so integral to society that a growing understanding of Islam, through personal conversations and a visit to Yarmouk University's mosque and Islamic studies centre, was crucial to understanding Jordan.

Seeing the bullet holes in a mosque wall in the Jordan valley brought home the reality of the strain in Jordan due to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Armed soldiers camped by the roadside stopped us from approaching the Jordan River. We felt very much Jordan's central position in the question, and her ability to act as a bridge in the situation, led by King Hussein. Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Saudi Arabia all converge at the Gulf of Aqaba, Iraq forms the eastern frontier and Beirut is six hours drive through Syria from Irbid, so the tenor of Jordanian policy has implications for the whole region.

Cups of Arab coffee, tumblers of sweet tea, freshly baked bread, welcomes in the homes of both refugees in a refugee camp and affluent businessmen, priority treatment on arrival at the airport and the programme itself all showed us the best of the Bedouin tradition of hospitality. What we valued most through it all was personal contact. On all our excursions, we were accompanied by at least two students, and our conversations passed quickly beyond the superficial. Besides learning from them and being open to frank discussions on the past, religion, and the current



After lunch with the British Ambassador in Jordan, Mr Tony Reeve (3rd from left)

situation, we were able to share our experiences and tell them of our part of the world from our perspective. But whether at a university seminar for 'mutual understanding on current issues' or a 'mensaf' (chicken feast dish) dinner and evening with students, it remained important always to ensure we ended on a note of friendship however heated the discussion - an Arab custom the West could do well to learn.

Issues for our generation

While sitting watching the sunset at the Roman amphitheatre in Amman, two teenagers came and introduced themselves to us. Our spontaneous conversation, in Philippe's Arabic and their broken English, somehow symbolized much of what we had done in Jordan. Working on what we had in common and on what we learnt from each other - within the group as well as meeting with Jordanians - we found that we could think together on issues for our generation. For us, all we had seen made us re-examine some of the norms of Western life, and in the wake of the Salman Rushdie affair, the impact of exporting them. We had to adjust to a society, sure of itself, which had different notions of democracy, sexual equality and approaches to faith. Our observations were based on the experiences of a short visit, but we felt we had come to understand something of the background of Jordanian life.

For all of us, an interest has been opened up in this vital area, to which we would like to return. For Philippe, hoping to serve in North Africa where his country France has so many connections, it was a discovery of a new part of the Arab world. Richard found the exposure to Muslim life particularly helpful as he prepares to teach in Britain.

We came away with a sense of the fuller roles which our countries can help each other to realize.

JORDAN BROUGHT TO HOLLAND

by Jeroen Gunning

Two students who went on last year's visit to Jordan, have been using their experience.

IN THE FIRST WEEK OF April Philippe Odier came to Holland on his way back from Jordan. The idea was to share some of our experiences in the Arab World with Dutch students.

We started off by meeting some of my friends in Delft, in my student house, and in the Society (fraternity-like). I found it quite hard because many of my friends seemed to be closed to meeting a foreigner and didn't show a lot of interest. This was partly a result of the exam period that was on, partly of my not preparing them sufficiently. On the other hand some were very open-hearted and we had profound talks.

Out of the Morocco slides that Philippe had brought and my Jordanian slides, we made a strict selection for our show. In Wageningen we tried it out on Arjen and Marina Schots, a Kenyan friend of theirs, Rutger Burger and Jan-Willem Scheijgrond, a varied audience. In Amsterdam we had our first proper show for a group of students, friends of a cousin of mine. We tried to avoid politics as much as possible and talked mainly about things that had touched us deeply; the Arab hospitality, the potential of Muslims and Christians

working together, our arrogance towards different ways of thinking and how we tried to overcome that, and the strong friendships that still exist. Afterwards there was a good discussion especially when the informal part started. Some people went away saying they had not contributed a lot to the discussion but they had a lot to think about.

The discussion was stiff

In Delft we had our second performance and the contrast between Humanities (Amsterdam) and Engineering (Delft) students emerged sharply. The discussion was stiff and not too inspiring though some left saying they, too, had much to ponder. Actually I felt quite miserable about the whole thing. Yet Philippe said he had felt that he had talked from heart to heart and that people's minds were open to new ideas. This taught me to look for more positive things and not to judge the outcome of obedience to God. The thought was to organise this evening, the results are in His hands.

Apart from the interesting actions, we were grateful to have the opportunity to work together, fighting for God's spirit in other countries as part of the fight for a better understanding between the two worlds.

CAPE CAPERS

by
Barbara
Gray



I HAVE JUST RETURNED from spending four weeks in the Cape, in the noted university town of Stellenbosch. It is the second oldest town in South Africa, where several Prime Ministers have received their education. I found it overflowing with history and culture.

My hosts were Mike and Marguerite Horn, a couple in their seventies who moved to Stellenbosch a few years ago with the specific aim of caring for university students. Many of us are hesitant to care for people who are much older or younger than we are, and the Horns show that age is no barrier. Throughout my stay, students and older friends were constantly calling in to see us. One day Mike came back from a meeting and said he had invited one or two people back for tea - and in walked 13 students!

I met a variety of people in nearby Cape Town as well. One interesting encounter was with an organisation which had been impressed by the videos, 'Promise of the Veld' and 'Clashpoint',

and had used the latter with school children in the Cape. I was asked to speak to a meeting in Paarl of citizens who are trying to bring about trust and understanding between the races and churches. My theme was "Race relations in Britain, and my impressions of South Africa". As a result of that time I was asked to speak to about 40 Stellenbosch students of different races. Many said they longed for change to come about in South Africa but were not sure how to go about it. At the moment feelings are running high on the campus on the issue of whether or not the hostels should become multi-racial.

The editor of the student Christian newspaper in Stellenbosch asked me to write an article. This was the result of having shared with her how I had felt a clear calling from God to come to South Africa, and what I had learnt about my own country in the field of community relations, having lived last year in Liverpool.

Some Stellenbosch students plan to attend a week-long young people's conference we are having in the Transvaal in December. This conference will be attended by people from neighbouring countries as well as by South Africans.

The time in Stellenbosch confirmed for me that honesty about one's country's faults, as well as telling of lessons being learnt, opens other people's hearts more than being on the defensive.

The Story of MRA - 14 by Rex Dilly

NOT LEFT, NOT RIGHT, BUT STRAIGHT

JAPAN'S FINANCE MINISTER Ichimada was worried. He was concerned, as Chairman of the four-million-strong youth organization, the Seinendan, that a bid was being made by the communists to take over the leadership. He urged people in MRA to get to know the leaders.

In 1956, a group of their national executive committee joined a delegation from Japan for the MRA assembly at Caux. From then on, a firm link was established with people of the Seinendan. Its president, Sontoku Ninomya, was a constant visitor to the MRA house in Tokyo.

Indoctrinate the members

One day in early spring 1957, he came to say that Moscow had just issued an invitation to the Seinendan to send 500 delegates to the international Youth Festival that summer. The communists on the executive were keen to use this opportunity to indoctrinate the members. Ninomya wanted to know whether MRA could issue an alternative proposal. He was encouraged to write to Dr Buchman at the MRA World Conference in Mackinac in America, proposing that 100 leaders be invited. Buchman responded and after a hot debate in the National Executive, the invitation was accepted and 104 members set off for Mackinac.



At the same time in Washington, President Eisenhower was entertaining the Japanese Prime Minister Kishi. Some of the Seinendan went to Washington to meet Mr Kishi and report what was taking place at Mackinac. Kishi regretted that his tight schedule prevented him from going to Mackinac, but suggested a telephone call with Dr Buchman. Next morning his long telephone call with Buchman was amplified in the Great Hall in Mackinac. Kishi asked Buchman what he was doing with the young Japanese. "We

are teaching them not to go to the right, not to go to the left, but straight" replied Buchman. On learning that the Seinendan were hearing his voice, Kishi said to them, "I hope that you are fully understanding MRA and will get its spirit in your whole being and take it back to Japan".

'Road to Tomorrow'

Shortly after, the Seinendan fascinated the conference with an evening of songs and sketches. This presentation developed into a moving play, 'The Road to Tomorrow', which they showed in a number of cities in America before their return. In Japan it became the centre piece of the MRA programme.

In the autumn of that year, Prime Minister Kishi was planning a visit to neighbouring countries to normalise relations and open up the way for trade.

Learning of this, an Opposition Senator, Mrs Shidzu Kato and Mrs Yukika Sohma, felt strongly that, without apologizing for Japan's war-time actions towards these countries, the mission would be a failure. They found a way of communicating this thought to the Prime Minister, who accepted it.

Stunned the Congress

In Manila, the first stop in his tour, he stunned the Congress by apologizing for Japan's treatment of the Philippines in the war. The day before he arrived in Australia, the press had carried a sharp attack on the Government by the War Veterans' Association for inviting a 'war criminal' to the country. After his humble apology in the Australian Parliament, the attitude of the press changed overnight to cordiality.

The impact of Kishi's visit to Asian and Pacific countries was reported around the world. The *Washington Evening Star* in an editorial on his tour, wrote, 'Premier Kishi is now back in Tokyo after having completed one of the most unusual missions ever undertaken by a statesman of his rank. Over the past three weeks he has visited no fewer than nine nations that Japan occupied or threatened with conquest and in each of these lands he publicly apologized for his country's actions during the war'.

Kishi summed up his action when he said, "We need the statesmanship of the humble heart". This laid the foundation for Japan's relationships in the Pacific, a crucial area in the modern world.

WORK WEEK

by Nicki Homann. Germany

IT WAS A WONDERFUL, EXCITING time at Tirley Garth at Easter. I learned a lot of things. Besides building fences against rabbits, brambling, painting gates, and so on, there were other important things. For example the number of people I got to know. Isn't it crazy? I feel that I could tell them my problems and speak about things which I could only do with my best friend here. And though I only knew these girls and boys for one week.

Another thing is music. Before the three weeks at Tirley I thought that music is just something nice. But now I feel it can be more - a real language. You can show a lot of your feelings with music.

When I came home my father was at the airport. Later in the evening he said that I had changed. He couldn't tell me exactly in which way, but I was free and happy, he said. And I am!!

THE FIGHTERS

A fighting animal is man,
Woman too,
Since history began
That has been true.

That fighting powers are there
Can't be denied,
But how those powers are used
We must decide.

If we don't wage great battles
Clean and straight,
Continual minor fights will
Be our fate.

(Janet Mace)

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