



GUEST COLUMN JOHN BATTLE MP

Meet the neighbours

NEAR WHERE I live there's a monastery called Kirkstall Abbey built by the Cistercian monks in 1172. For 400 years monks meditated on the Psalms whilst laying the economic foundation for the area through farming, education, and healthcare. Their primary aim, however, was contemplative prayer—relating to God on behalf of humanity.

Today from the abbey grounds you can see Armley Prison. Inside are 1,274 young men, 20 per cent of whom are functionally literate. As I see it, the prison is the key point for transformation in my constituency, Leeds West. If we can't enable them to change and to change us, we might as well give up on regenerating the inner cities. My question is: how does the monastery challenge the prison, how does the prison challenge the monastery? Is there any intrinsic connection between the world of contemplation and the maelstrom of modern action?

Minarets

Four years ago a young man wrote to me from Armley Prison. Unlike those who ask me to get them out, he said he was frightened of coming out because he had nowhere to go. Who could help? A solution came from the prison chaplains and now a massive project is underway. They enlist volunteers in their faith communities (Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Jew, Buddhist) to befriend the prisoners and help them find housing and training as they come back into the community.

Every faith tradition is represented in my constituency. Unemployment is down to five per cent (it was 18 per cent in 1987) but the classic inner-city tensions, stresses and strains are still there. In a climate of cynicism, how do we work together to develop the conditions for hope?

As a Roman Catholic, the words of

the late Father Pierre Claverie resonate with me. He wrote, 'I have come to the personal conviction that humanity is only plural. As soon as we start claiming to possess the truth or to speak in the name of humanity, we fall into totalitarianism. No-one possesses the truth, each of us is searching for it.'

Recently I visited a local mosque, converted out of a school's kitchens. I was challenged directly: 'We want a minaret and the call to prayer to sound out in the neighbourhood.' We took the issue to a public meeting where one man said, 'Tell these Muslims that by law this is a Christian country and we want neither minarets nor 'muzzi-muzzins' round here.'

Feeling nervous, I asked a young Muslim man to explain the *muezzin* and the call to prayer. Following the best explanation of prayer I have ever heard, the man who had declared Britain a Christian country rose up: 'Just because this is a Christian country doesn't mean we're into God and prayer and all that rubbish.' Where do you start with attitudes like that?

There's a ferocious privatisation of faith in the media which says to people: 'Keep it to yourself. For God's sake don't let it infect your daily life!' Why do they think it would be so dangerous to let these ideas out? The fact is, if all the faith communities decided to withdraw their social services—providing meals, caring for the elderly, visiting the sick—the government would be bankrupted overnight.

Evacuated

The faith communities have yet to discover their real strength. They need to find their unique contribution and ask: how do we relate to the public realm? The question for the state is: can it open up at every level and enter into dialogue with the faith communities?

It was in a house in my constituency that the July 7 suicide bombers made their bombs in a bath. After the bombings, I returned to Leeds to be told that 400 people had been evacuated from their homes around this house to a sports centre. I arrived at the sports centre only to find 49 people there. Where were the rest? They had all disappeared into each other's homes—black, white, Asian, Irish—supporting each other through the crisis. One man, Joe, of Irish descent, who normally never talked to his 'Paki' neighbours, was found in the home of the Indian family opposite merrily drinking tea.

Who lives next door?

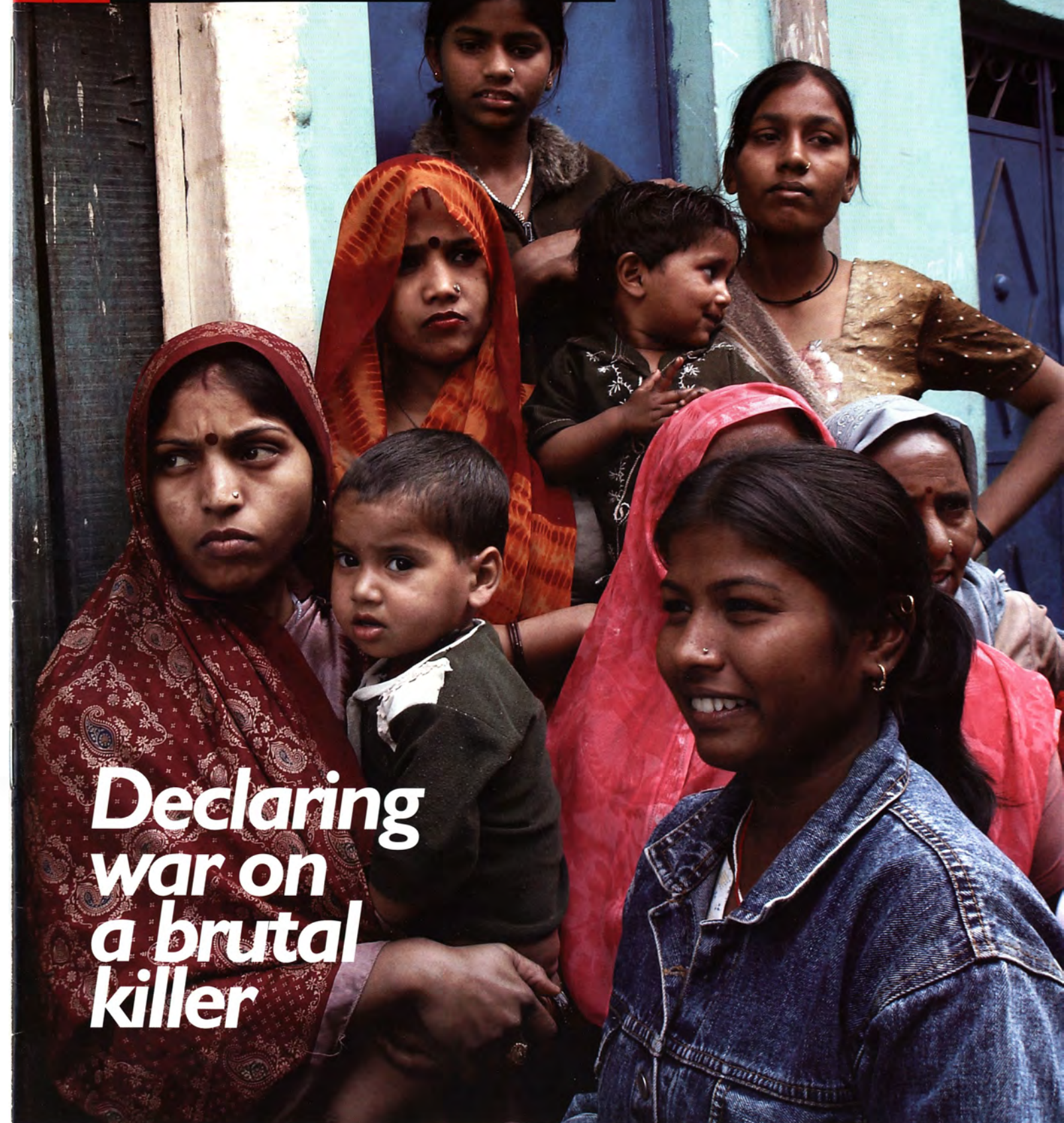
The problems and conflicts of the whole world—within states, between peoples, within religions—are in my neighbourhood. The global is local. Why do we expect the United Nations to sort it all out when so much can be done at street level?

I visited a school and joined a class of seven-year-olds doing English. When I wrote 'neighbours' on the blackboard hands shot up with news of what had happened in the latest episode of the Australian TV soap. 'Who lives next door to you?', I asked, and a girl said, 'What's that got to do with *Neighbours*?' There we have it. We can watch *Neighbours* on TV but we don't know who lives next door or above us in the flats.

There is still much to do to challenge a pervasive pessimism in our culture. We've got to inspire people to believe that their efforts at relationships locally can transform the world.

John Battle MP is advisor to British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, on interfaith matters. This article is based on his recent talk to a Greencoat Forum at the lofC centre in London.

FOR A CHANGE



Declaring war on a brutal killer

Next Issue

HEALING HISTORY: The Dresden Trust and its contribution to British-German reconciliation

FEATURE: How young Australian Aboriginals are helping angry peers in Wagga Wagga

EAR TO THE GROUND

FROM MARY LEAN IN SOUTH-EAST ENGLAND

Turn off the tap

During England's last 'great drought', in 1976, I was in Africa, where people tended to fall about at the suggestion that the UK might be short of rain.

Thirty years on, the drought threatening the south-east of England is serious stuff—caused by the driest 14 months for 80 years. Pictures of half-full reservoirs keep appearing in the media and hosepipe bans are being imposed. This means that householders can no longer use a hose to water their garden or wash their cars—although, for some reason, they can still hose down their patios and driveways.

Meanwhile, a huge amount of water leaks away through holes in water pipes: 3,608 million litres a day in the year up to March 2005. So, while we rush around our homes checking for dripping taps, the water companies also have some work to do, putting their own house in order.

Undervalued care

The care of the elderly is Britain's last taboo, maintains comedian and TV presenter, Tony Robinson. His moving

documentary for Channel 4, *Me and My Mum*, told the story of his mother's last months in residential care, suffering from dementia. When he started making the programme, he was astonished to discover how many of his acquaintances were going through similar experiences. 'People see having a parent dementing or in care as their own personal, isolated tragedy.'

As part of the documentary, Robinson visited someone who had made a different choice from his own, Italian Londoner Rosa Bellino. Bellino cares for her mother, who has Alzheimer's Disease, in a small council flat and has not had a night out for years. Reflecting on the interview afterwards, Robinson said that it had not turned out as he expected. Instead of revealing someone who was carrying an intolerable burden, it had been infused with love.

In an interview for BBC Radio 4's *Woman's Hour*, Robinson described Bellino's decision to give up her career to 'see her mum through the rest of her life' as 'quite wonderful'. It is shocking, he pointed out,

that carers like her receive only £45 a week in state support. Foster parents, by contrast, can receive up to £300.

No push-over

When four of us from a charity which helps detained asylum seekers offered to talk to eight different classes of 16-year-olds about refugees, it seemed a daunting task. And, indeed, the young people were no push-over.

At the end of each talk, we handed out evaluation forms asking the students whether their attitudes had changed at all, and why? More than one said that the talk had had no effect whatsoever on their negative view of asylum seekers, 'because I don't want to change my views.'

Other responses were more encouraging. 'I always thought there was an asylum problem in this country,' wrote one, 'but now I think that the problem of asylum is not with the seekers but with us.'

Moth alert

Last year I donned my boots and took part in a national survey into the

health of our most common wild plants. I was allocated a kilometre square of the Ordnance Survey map of my locality and told to find out what was growing at its exact centre. This turned out to be in somebody's garden. Fortunately they were welcoming, their garden was large and my patch was wild: but I only managed four or five of the species listed.

The people who took part in a survey of garden birds over the last weekend in January seem to have had more fun. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds reported that 'a staggering 8.1 million birds' were counted, by 'a record-breaking number of participants'.

Meanwhile quieter, and more nocturnal, souls have been counting moths. Alarmingly, this survey has found that numbers have crashed by a third in the last 40 years, with some 200 species showing a decline. This is bad news for the birds and bats who feed on them; and a clear sign that Britain's biodiversity as a whole is in a bad way.

Moths aren't everyone's favourite insects. But they enchanted the Victorians who gave them such romantic names as Maiden's Blush, Merveille du Jour and Kentish Glory. Reason enough to mourn their passing.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Change for a change



When we chose the name *For A Change*, nearly 20 years ago, we were pleased with the pun. It expressed our aim, and subject matter, but also the fact that we were offering our readers something different – a bit of hope.

From the outset we decided to focus as much on what was going right in the world as on what was going wrong – an approach valued by the long-standing reader who tells me that he keeps the magazine by his bed to cheer him up.

As an editor since the beginning, I am passionate about what *For A Change* stands for. It's been a privilege and challenge to write about people of faith and courage in all corners of the world: pioneers of change in South Africa, taxi-drivers fighting corruption in Brazil, community-builders in Britain's inner cities, peace-workers in conflicts around the globe, artists, dissidents and statesmen from many countries. And it's been a joy to hear from readers who have found these stories an inspiration in their own lives.

And so it's sad to announce that we will be closing at the end of 2006 – and a surprise, for me anyway, to feel so at peace about it. There is a sense, with different staff members moving on to new things, that we have come to one of those natural ending times, a change of season.

Over the last 19 years, the world of publishing has changed. In 1987, we didn't even have a fax machine, and I remember one of my colleagues spending a day struggling to establish electronic contact with Canada. Articles, and photographs, arrived by post. Our early issues were designed on paper, rather than a computer screen. Today the IT revolution has speeded everything up, and opened new editorial and production possibilities. As we close, an international group is coming together around the concept of a new publication which will appear in both electronic and print form, for launch during 2007. We hope to give you more information about this in our final issue, dateline December/January 2007.

Meanwhile, we have three more issues to go. We hope to make them the best yet.

Mary Lean

MARY LEAN

FOR A CHANGE

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

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



Initiatives of Change

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

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

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



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Chris Breitenberg
Anti-corruption
activist Santosh
(right) with
women in Delhi

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FOR A CHANGE

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Declaring war on a brutal killer

*Corruption and world poverty are inextricably linked. **Mike Brown** and **Chris Breitenberg** discover how Indian bureaucrats and industrialists are cutting the knot.*

INDIA'S 'GOLDEN Quadrilateral Highway' project—a 5,846 kilometre loop linking New Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore and Kolkata—is a symbol of national pride in this emerging economic power. Clogged pot-holed roads are being replaced by fast-moving corridors, estimated ultimately to save the economy US\$2 billion a year.

But one man's tragedy has made the Golden Quadrilateral a symbol for something darker. Satyendra Dubey, a 31-year-old civil engineer, repeatedly complained to his superiors about the 'loot of public money' he saw on his part of the project in Jharkand. Finally, in November 2002, he wrote to the Prime Minister, detailing the corruption and naming names. He pleaded that his name be kept secret. A year later, after his letter had made its way down the bureaucratic chain and the Central Bureau of Investigation was involved, Dubey was shot.

His murder, along with the deaths of other whistle-blowers, is shifting something in India. 'The world starts praising,

posthumously,' said his brother, Dhananjay Dubey, at a forum conducted by the *Indian Express* in Delhi last December. 'But who works to eradicate that brutal murderer, corruption? We hear of scams, the indispensable bribe at each stage of government machinery, the nexus between politicians and criminals, the corrupt bureaucracy. It's high time we introspect on the depth to which corruption has seeped into our system, weakening its very roots.'

Confronted by Dubey's stark challenge, the President of India, Abdul Kalam, responded: 'When such a sacrifice takes place, we *have* to change. We can't let the problem become our master. Transparency has to become a way of life.'

Many NGOs and networks have taken up the cause. Among those campaigning, interestingly, are some from the group that is often blamed for the malaise of corruption: government bureaucrats.

In January 2003, a number of them visited Asia Plateau, the Initiatives of Change (IofC) centre in the small town of Panchgani in the Western Ghats, for a

conference on the opportunities and threats of globalisation for India. There serving politicians, members of the Planning Commission, senior bureaucrats, business leaders, academics and journalists got down to some of that honest 'introspection' which Dubey is calling for.

One of those challenged was Prabhat Kumar who, as Cabinet Secretary under three prime ministers, had reached the zenith of India's civil service. Soon after the conference, speaking to colleagues in the elite Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Kumar spoke of India's half century since independence as a period of 'shame for higher bureaucracy'. In the ten years up to 2002 India had enjoyed a 6.5 per cent growth rate, but the number of the poorest had grown by 6 million. 'The Supreme Court has reiterated the constitutional right of every citizen to live in dignity. There are 250 million people living in absolute poverty in this country who have been deprived of dignity in every sense.' Much blame lay with political leaders. But, concluded Kumar, 'I and my ilk are also

responsible for this pitiable situation.'

Kumar and colleagues from the IAS held a series of brainstorming meetings with business leaders around India. They identified two broad priorities: 'improving governance' and 'creating ethical leadership'. They approached 96 carefully selected public figures, who became the founding members of the 'IC Centre for Governance'. It was officially launched in Delhi during December 2003 by Justice M N Venkatachaliah, former Chief Justice of India.

Today the Centre for Governance has 300 founding members—including serving and retired judges, state governors, members of parliament, top civil servants, academics, industrialists, economists, civil society activists and media personalities. Justice Venkatachaliah and Shri Abid Hussain, former Indian Ambassador to the USA, co-chair its 27-member governing council.

In parallel, a group of business leaders, led by Sarosh Ghandy, former Executive Director of Tata Motors, invited IofC's Caux Initiatives for Business to hold an international conference on governance at Asia Plateau in 2004. There company directors proud of their endeavours for corporate social responsibility found themselves interacting with grassroots community activists.

Three months later, in Bangalore, the Centre for Ethical Leadership (CENTREL) was inaugurated by R Gopalakrishnan, Executive Director of Tata Sons, at the prestigious Indian Institute of Management. Like its counterpart in Delhi, the Centre will operate under the umbrella of Initiatives of Change. In May 2005, B Muthuraman, the Managing Director of Tata Steel, announced his company would build a Tata Centre for Ethics in the eastern industrial city of Jamshedpur, and asked CENTREL to run it.

Back in 2004, at the launch of CENTREL, Sarosh Ghandy spelled out its approach: 'Ethical leadership cannot be taught; it has to be experienced. And it is here where we feel CENTREL will be different from the scores of other training programmes on ethical leadership. We hope to demonstrate that the individual is the most powerful



Chief Election Commissioner, T S Krishna Murthy

agent of change and can bring about change by applying moral standards in his or her organisation or institution, making it competitive and efficient.'

That approach was put to the test with 25 training programmes at Asia Plateau in the following 12 months, coordinated by CENTREL—for everyone from batches of postgraduate MBA business students to shop-floor factory workers and their wives, from mid-level company executives to municipal sweepers and rubbish collectors. 'This is the first time in 23 years of service I have been

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME IN 23 YEARS OF SERVICE I HAVE BEEN TREATED AS A HUMAN BEING

treated as a human being,' said one sweeper.

Around the country, CENTREL also began convening 'round table' programmes for lawyers and judges, police officers and medical practitioners, each to work on applied ethics in their own professions. Last September, 30 officers took the first CENTREL programme for the Customs, Excise and Narcotics Department.

Last October, in something of a breakthrough for CENTREL, serving IAS officers—commissioners, collectors, departmental secretaries, election commissioners—came to Asia Plateau for a programme on 'Ethics in Public Governance, drawing from inner strength'.

'This is the only training programme I've

attended where people have not bunked sessions,' said one bureaucrat. 'I have attended dozens of courses and have left with piles of material which I never read,' said another. 'But I go from this one with real learning, a new awareness that I have taken people so much for granted.'

The programme was opened by Prabhat Kumar and another retired cabinet secretary. 'It is your responsibility to make the public service honest, accountable and apolitical,' said B G Deshmukh, who also served as Mumbai's Police Commissioner. 'Control and enforced compliance have to give way to motivation and guidance.' And Kumar challenged them to use recently enacted national Right To Information (RTI) legislation to change the 'culture of secrecy' within government.

That legislation is among the strongest of any in the world, claims Arvind Kejriwal, who, in his thirties, quit his secure government job as an assistant collector of income taxes in Delhi to devote himself to assisting urban poor to get the government services due to them (see box). Kejriwal has signed a

'memorandum of understanding' with the Centre for Governance and the national Zee television network to promote awareness of the Right To Information.

Meanwhile Prabhat Kumar and core group members of the Centre for Governance are working in the area they know best: the public service. Meeting weekly in their rented office in New Delhi, they push forward one initiative after another. They started in November 2004 with a monthly lecture series on 'transparency and accountability', using their founding members as speakers.

Then, in January 2005, they collaborated with then Chief Election Commissioner, T S Krishna Murthy, to run a workshop on electoral reforms. In the last elections to the Lok Sabha (Lower House of Parliament), Indian-made electronic voting machines, costing about US\$300 each, were used by 600 million voters, saving tons of paper and minimising manipulation. But in some state elections the 'nexus between criminals and political leaders' lies behind 'a reign of terror' which costs lives, said the Commissioner. Similarly, the 'bureaucracy is becoming increasingly politicised at the middle and lower levels'. The Centre for Governance convened a national convention on electoral reform in January 2005.

Three months later, in association with the All India Management Association and the Institute for Integrated Learning in Management, they ran another 'national convention', this time on public governance. That October a third convention bit the bullet of judicial reform. 'The most important

thing is punctuality, promptitude, speed and awareness of the inconvenience caused to the litigant by thoughtless adjournments,' said former Chief Justice Venkatachaliah. Since the convention a group has been working on identifying rules and laws that need to be amended, if justice is to be available to ordinary people at the least expense and in the shortest time.

Currently the Centre's core group members, backed with promises of help from industry, are working on ambitious plans for 'rural transformation' through training village level *panchayat* leaders in sound governance. The focus is particularly on women.

'One million women are now elected [to local councils] every five years,' states Vasantha Bharucha, a senior government economist who is working with the Centre on this initiative. Equal representation of women in government is not only essential for upholding their human rights, she maintains, but also for poverty reduction. The Centre is conducting a national competition on 'Women and governance at the grassroots' to report on best practice and on the impact of women's entry into formal structures of government.

'We are seeing plenty of action,' confides one of the Centre's members, 'but how much it really impacts those in government is a question.' Private meetings take place; connections are made at every opportunity. Yet those who have been in seats of power and responsibility are real enough to see that shifting systemic corruption will not happen easily. Prabhat Kumar admits that he is always asked in these meetings why he did not implement more changes when he was Cabinet Secretary. 'I tried certain things,' he says, 'but I feel guilty that it wasn't enough. In government service, there were so many compulsions. Now that I can speak my mind openly, I feel I should use whatever time is left for me to do something to improve governance in India.'

Dr Arun Kumar, Professor of Economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University, estimates that 40 per cent of India's GDP is generated in the black economy. The annual loss of revenue (approx US\$100,000 million) could wipe out India's fiscal deficit two and a half times over. Most of the black economy is in the hands of the top three per cent of the population. So the burgeoning middle and upper classes are forced to be corrupt to survive.

This is where the Centre for Governance and CENTREL seek to make a difference. 'It would be presumptuous to think that we can bring about massive change,' says one of the Centre's core members, R D Mathur. 'The Centre can only be a catalyst and a coordinator for the efforts of many—networking with all the forces working in this direction so that snowflakes, one day, become an avalanche.'

In the heat of Delhi's political intrigues and power plays, that may seem an unlikely proposition. But Himalayan snow fields are also part of India's landscape.

Additional reporting by To Long Seng and Tatiana Minbaeva



Santosh (centre) with the women of Sundernagari

Scourge of Delhi's rations thieves

SANTOSH'S SMALL size is no indicator of her gutsy fight for justice. Nor of the mammoth task she's taken on in her resettlement colony in Delhi's north-east.

In theory the residents of Sundernagari have been moved out of appalling slums into planned and properly-serviced communities. In reality, most have been moved from one slum to another, well away from the capital's gracious architecture.

Based in a small godown (warehouse), a grassroots group called Parivartan (meaning 'change') is fighting for what is due to the people of this community. Their main weapon is India's tough 'Right to Information' (RTI) legislation. Parivartan's founder, Arvind Kejriwal explains that this gives every Indian five rights: to ask any question of government and get a reply; to inspect government documents; to receive photocopies for a nominal sum; to inspect government work and to take specimens of materials used. Penalties for non-compliance can lead to dismissals and loss of wages.

Sounds great in practice. How does it work on the ground in Sundernagari?

Ask 22-year-old Santosh. She's been working for three years with Parivartan. Parivartan mobilises residents to get copies of government contracts

and check what actually has been delivered—road works, water and drainage systems. One of their first campaigns was for electricity connections. Some had waited for two years. When RTI was used to ask the reasons for delays and the names of officers involved, 200 applications were cleared, each within 10 days.

Santosh began researching the food distribution system. Going door to door through a labyrinth of alleyways, she found most of the poorest women had got their ration cards, which entitle them to subsidised grains and groceries. But they complained that the 17 ration shops in Sundernagari were usually closed, or 'out of stocks'. In February 2003 Parivartan assisted one slum-dweller, Triveni, to lodge a RTI request for her records. Though she had not received rations for two years, Triveni's account showed thumbprints (not hers) in receipt of monthly supplies. When 20 others got their records, the pattern began to emerge: up to 90 per cent of recorded deliveries were never received by cardholders. Stolen food was being sold off in the open market by the ration shop owners.

Parivartan organised a community 'hearing'. Triveni was threatened to keep quiet. She didn't.

In three months Santosh lodged 109 RTI complaints for women from the community. Then Santosh was cornered in an alley and her neck was slashed.

She survived. But the brutal warning backfired. Angry women demonstrated, shouting, 'They won't get away with killing our Santosh.' Sundernagari residents boycotted all ration shops for a month; then checked to see how supplies were sold off anyway. Parivartan called a media conference, and started an awareness campaign through 15 slum clusters across Delhi. Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit intervened, threatening to revoke the licenses of ration shop owners who didn't comply with distribution procedures. Five were suspended. A food commissioner was transferred.

'Shops which had never opened for years suddenly started begging residents to come,' remembers Santosh. A year after Triveni's first complaint, the system was working. Now twice a month, records are available at each shop for inspection.

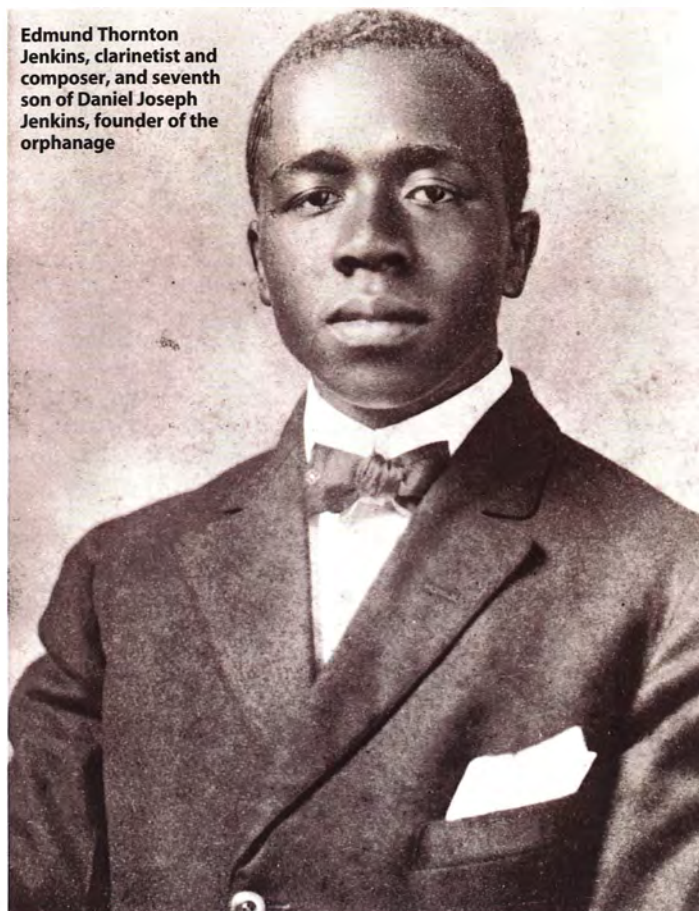
And Santosh? She admits than no man seems ready to marry such a fireball. But she's happy. 'A lot of people talk about ways to change the country but don't do much. I have decided we can at least change our neighborhood.'

Mike Brown



left: Vasantha Bharucha (right) with Long Seng To; above: Prabhat Kumar (left)

people making a difference



Edmund Thornton Jenkins, clarinetist and composer, and seventh son of Daniel Joseph Jenkins, founder of the orphanage

History and all that jazz

CHARLESTON, on the coast of South Carolina, USA, abounds with Southern charm. Pillared buildings sit in magnolia-filled gardens, visible from streets which date back to the 18th century. Two centuries of plantation economics have left behind shaded porches, steepled churches and cobbled streets.

History abounds in the city. As in every Southern town, there are numerous memorials to the Civil War (which started when the Confederates attacked Fort Sumter, which guards Charleston harbour). But although the city was once a major slave port and has a majority black population,

the black contribution is seldom mentioned other than to note that Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* was set here.

Two individuals, academic Karen Chandler and journalist Jack McCray, have recently sought to bring the city's black heritage to the attention of a wider audience and to document it through oral history, the commissioning of artistic creations, and archival work. Black Charleston can claim to be an essential part of the creation and development of an American art form that is truly global: jazz. Chandler and McCray

have called their project the Charleston Jazz Initiative.

The hero of their story is a late 19th century Baptist minister named Daniel Joseph Jenkins, whose Jenkins Orphanage provided musical tuition. He took in youngsters (mainly male), often in dire circumstances, in the decades when racist segregation severely restricted opportunities and the white-controlled city and state spent an absolute minimum on black people. Between 1890 and 1950 5,000 young people received their education at the orphan home.

They were trained in such skills as shoe repairing, printing, bread-making and music to enable them to survive what was a difficult life. Bands from the orphanage performed in the streets to publicise the enterprise, passing a hat to raise funds; bands toured the Northern states and, in 1895, Jenkins took a band to England.

Treading carefully in the minefield of local politics, where a false step could be fatal to both the orphanage and its personnel, Jenkins obtained some funds from patrician Southerners, as well as support from black churches. Black citizens bought from the orphanage's Poor Boy Bread Company or subscribed to the weekly *Charleston Messenger*, another inmate production.

The *Charleston Messenger* was printed for more than 40 years, but only a handful of copies have survived: an absence of documentation which assists the hiding of a people's history. A lone copy from 1898 has revealed that Jenkins negotiated sole import rights of musical instruments from a leading British manufacturer: a feat which few of his white neighbours could have achieved.

The orphanage set professional standards in music tuition, and its pupils went on to work in bands all over the United States. The jazz age of the 1920s and 1930s saw them play and record with leading black-led jazz bands—



Karen Chandler and Jack McCray



The Jenkins Orphanage Band in London in 1914

THE ORPHANAGE SET PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS, AND ITS PUPILS WENT ON TO WORK IN BANDS ALL OVER THE UNITED STATES

including those of Duke Ellington, Count Basie and Louis Armstrong (who had taken up the trumpet in a New Orleans orphanage).

In May-June 2005, members of the Jenkins family, historians and musicians gathered for the Charleston Jazz Initiative's first celebration.

There were meetings and discussions, live music by local performers and a children's party in the shadow of the old orphanage building. The tales of veterans, family memories, historical evidence, and a film clip from the late 1920s supported the underlying message of the Charleston Jazz Initiative.

Fortified by all this, the Initiative is on course to spread the word that Charleston's contribution to the jazz era was more than the title of a snappy dance-song. The black population of Charleston and of South Carolina's low country have a rich tradition, and their contribution to the history of the United States has been both sustained and substantial.

Sue Bolton and Jeff Green

www.charlestonjazz.net

Adopt a village

IMAGINE YOURSELF in a small village in the Gambia where the sun shines over a landscape of big trees and colourful birds. The river Gambia, which is the biggest in Africa, meanders serenely around the villiage, producing a soft breeze. Imagine that although the river has a great variety of fish you are hungry. You feel thirsty but clean drinking water is out of reach. This sounds unlikely, but it is reality for the people living in Kossomer, a village located only 200 miles from Gambia's capital, Banjul.

After spending her holidays in Gambia in 2003, Judy Browne, a consultant from Leeds, came back to the UK with the whole village in her heart. She told the story to Denzil Nurse, whom she had met while working in community training development. They started thinking of possible solutions. Nurse decided to visit Kossomer with Browne. 'We felt moved to see a village could be so poor,' he says. 'There is no electricity, no telephone, no running water. While technology advances more and more in the world, this village doesn't have the basic tools of survival.'

Originally from Barbados, Nurse came to live in the UK more than 30 years ago. He worked as a nurse in a psychiatric hospital for 19 years and then

he started helping people set up small organisations. He realised he could use his skills to help the village. 'Because of the state of poverty in which they live, their focus is naturally on their next meal. We have supported their thinking so that their focus can be within their future, not just within their present,' he says.

On this first visit they took with them sewing machines, books and toys. Later, they decided to adopt the village and they created the Beryl Browne Foundation, in memory of Browne's great-grandmother. Their aim was to create self-sufficiency within the village. 'I pledged to the people in Kossomer that I would make the village sustainable,' says Nurse.

His best tool working in community development training is imagination. When he visited Kossomer, several ideas started boiling in his head. 'There were four projects that seemed possible to develop: fishing, candle-making, soap-making and bread-making,' he says. Following the village's protocol, Browne and Nurse approached the Alkali, or village chief, who was enthusiastic about what they proposed.

On a second trip to Gambia, nets and bicycles were donated so that villagers could sell the fish to other villages. 'They could not exploit the river simply



Judy Browne (centre) at the water pump



Children in the village

THEY COULD NOT EXPLOIT THE RIVER SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY COULD NOT AFFORD TO BUY THE BASIC TOOLS

because they could not afford to buy the basic tools to fish,' he says. They had the knowledge to build boats, but they did not have money to buy the wood from another village. So, funds were raised for the materials.

Another project consisted of restoring an oven that had been in ruins for 30 years. The elderly people who had used it to make bread taught this underestimated skill to the new generation. Since then they have been selling it to other villages. 'The idea is to let other villages see Kossomer's process of transformation in order to do the same,' says Nurse.

The Foundation has supported 2,000 people with fresh clean drinking water for at least a year. It has also helped to repair the school library's roof. A donkey has joined the project too, helping the school kids to learn that agriculture need not be all hard work.

Nurse's garage is currently full of clothes, shoes and all sorts of items that he will send to Kossomer. 'Wherever I go I talk about this project. People are very supportive and they want to help,' he says.

Future plans include providing the equipment to irrigate the land, so that they can grow potatoes, and to generate electricity for the village.

There is no doubt that Kossomer will be very different in a couple of years.

Andrea Cabrera Luna

www.berylbrowne-foundation.org.uk



Denzil Nurse

INGRID CLIVON



MARC RAPHAËL GUEDJ

Tending the garden of hope

Andrew Stallybrass meets a man who is bringing rabbis and imams together to work for peace.

THERE ARE PARTS of the world—and of ourselves—that cultivate despair. So hope needs watering. Chief Rabbi Marc Raphaël Guedj is a gardener of hope, with a generous watering can—but with his feet firmly on the ground. Formerly Chief Rabbi of Geneva's traditional Jewish congregation, he now heads the aptly named Geneva-based foundation *Racines et Sources* (roots and well-springs).

When we meet in his flat, he's suffering from flu. If he's well enough, he'll fly off tomorrow to Kazan in Russia, where he's expected for a seminar organised by the Council of Europe. He phones to check that he can get a Kosher meal on the plane—a permanent battle for an Orthodox Jew.

He was born in Algeria just after World War II to a French family of *pied-noir* (black feet), the French North Africans. His father had fought with the Free French forces during the war and then worked in the French administration. Like tens of thousands of others, they had to leave for France just before independence.

Distance may idealise the 'good old days', but there seems to have been an amazing lost world of living together between faiths and cultures. At an interfaith Shabbat meal in Geneva some months ago, Guedj spoke of his North African childhood. The spokesman for the mosque—an Algerian—recalled to gales of laughter how he had earned his first pocket money turning out lights on the Sabbath for the Orthodox Jewish families.

After leaving Algeria, Guedj's family settled in Toulouse, France. They were not practising Jews, but wanted their son to acquire something of his people's culture and traditions, so he was sent to do his 'catechism'. It was as a teenager, at a weekend at a *yeshiva* (religious school) in Aix-en-Provence, that he experienced a spiritual event that changed the course of his life. At the start of the Sabbath, the rabbi leading the weekend sang a song, which conveyed something of the soul's thirst for God. 'That thirst bowled me over,' says Guedj. 'I've spent the rest of my life searching

for that melody.'

Years later, when he was Chief Rabbi of Metz, in Lorraine, he met the rabbi again. Neither of them could remember the song that had been sung all those years before. They agreed that there was something beyond the music, the search for which lasts more than a lifetime.

The young Guedj's spiritual journey influenced his parents, although he was studying far from home and rarely saw them. Little by little, they returned to their Jewish faith. Today they live in Israel.

Guedj has also lived in Israel. It was there, during his studies, that he met his wife, who is also French, and the first of their four daughters was born. But he felt cramped there. 'I needed to breathe some fresh air. There was something unreal about it.'

At a time of growing fundamentalism in most traditions, there have never before been so many efforts at dialogue, so many meetings, committees, encounters. We discuss this strange paradox. 'What's lacking,' he suggests, 'is dialogue with the fundamentalists.' For example, he feels that Israel will have to engage in dialogue with Hamas sooner or later. And more modestly, in Geneva, he tries to put this conviction into practice.

He quotes one Israeli leader as saying, 'I will not be the first leader to give up the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.' Guedj wonders whether such politicians ever consult the rabbis—this is a highly theological question, but the leader in question is a non-practising Jew. 'Our task is to remove the religious obstacles standing in the path of political solutions,' he says. 'All of us need to re-examine our own myths and traditions.'

'Inter-religious dialogue,' he says, 'touches on the meaning of life, the universals of mysticism, forgiveness and memory. But it's also vital because we have to tackle together the problems of our societies and build the peace together.' His foundation sets out to open up Jewish wisdom 'to Jews and to non-Jews'. 'Let us keep our religions to ourselves,' he says, provocatively, 'and let us share our wisdom.' He dreams of creating an international institute for training and research for rabbis in this spirit—'and why not for imams, priests and Protestant ministers too?'

'We Jews make fun of everything,' he says. 'We joke about God, which means that we don't shut up the Holy in an ideology.' We can't protect the Holy, he suggests. Real dialogue must include the possibility of disagreeing

deeply, and even having a slanging match.

He believes that too many political efforts for peace in the Middle East have wilfully neglected the heart of the problem: religious factors and the resurgence of hanging tightly to identity. 'We need to talk about where it hurts.'

In June 2003, Guedj attended a

Peace drew 70 rabbis and 70 Muslim representatives from 34 countries, along with experts, observers and the media. For some the meeting was 'nearly miraculous'; for others, it was 'close to a waste of time, because they have so little power'. But all were united against extremism and the misuse of religion to justify violence.

UN General Secretary Kofi Annan

WE JEWS JOKE ABOUT GOD. WE DON'T SHUT UP THE HOLY IN AN IDEOLOGY

conference organised by Alain Michel of *Hommes de Parole*, an NGO which works to establish dialogue between parties in conflict, at the Initiatives of Change (IofC) conference centre in Caux, Switzerland. There he had the idea of bringing together imams and rabbis. All too often, he felt, religious leaders only add to the divisions. In January 2005, after many difficulties, his dream came to reality when 150 rabbis and imams met in Brussels, prompting 60,000 articles in the media.

A follow-up meeting took place this March in Seville, Spain, site of a remarkable living together of cultures in the Middle Ages. This Second World Congress of Imams and Rabbis for

sent a message of support. André Azoulay, senior advisor to the King of Morocco, set the scene by stating, 'Religion has been misused by the fundamentalists, who have taken over religion and made us hostages. They could do so because we were silent.'

When the conference split up into working groups some headway was made on delicate issues such as the role of education in creating and combating stereotypes, and joint groups to oversee each other's sacred sites. 'Seen at a distance, this congress might leave room for scepticism,' said an Iraqi imam. 'However if the contacts are sincere and sustained one might be wrong in underestimating its

relevance.' A European rabbi said that he would invite his city's imam to his synagogue. 'My folk may make faces for a while... It will take courage.'

In their final statement, the delegates pledged to 'continue to seek out one another to build bridges of respect, hope and friendship, to combat incitement and hostility, to overcome all barriers and obstacles, to reinforce mutual trust, serving the noble goal of universal peace especially in the land that is holy to us all'.

'If we can be sensitive to the other's values and traditions, then multiplicity can lead to unity,' Guedj said at a second conference in Caux in 2003, organised by IofC and the World Conference on Religion and Peace. 'It's like an artist who belongs to one school of painting nevertheless being able to appreciate the work of a colleague from another school.'

A Geneva newspaper recounted a telling anecdote about Guedj from the Seville meeting. When one imam stormed out of the meeting after a public quarrel with another imam, it was Guedj who persuaded him to return. ■

www.racinesetsources.ch



Brainstorming session at the Second World Congress of Imams and Rabbis for Peace



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Hope for the children of Palmarejo

Pedro Aybar (text) and Ingrid Guyon (photos) visit a small school with a big mission.

This year is the tenth anniversary of La Escuelita (the little school) in the shanty town of Palmarejo, in the capital of the Dominican Republic. It provides education for children of Haitian descent who are often refused admission to state or private schools because they lack birth certificates or other documents. It started out with 50 pre-school children and now teaches 383 pupils through to the last year of primary school.

For decades, Haitians have crossed the Dominican border, fleeing repression and insecurity in their own country or searching for work. They are often recruited by agents of the agricultural and construction industries. The immigration authorities regard them as perpetually 'in-transit'. Haitian migrants and their descendants are unable to register the births of their children, to gain access to health and education, or to enjoy many of the rights stipulated in Dominican law.

After a dangerous journey (25 Haitians suffocated earlier this year in the back of an overcrowded truck), the migrants are settled in *bateyes*, purpose-built plantation villages, such as Palmarejo. These communities are barely reached by the rule of law and lack such basic services as running water, sanitary facilities or electricity. They provide the backdrop for appalling abuse: labourers work 11 hours a day, six days a week, earning scarcely enough to survive.

Over the last two years a series of

mass deportations have increased Haitians' vulnerability. People are arbitrarily rounded up in the streets or fields, or even hospitals, loaded into trucks and dumped at isolated border posts. Families may be separated for ever. Meanwhile, ultra-nationalist groups have been fuelling anti-Haitian sentiments among the local population, and violent attacks on Haitians have increased.

La Escuelita celebrates its first decade in this context of increased violence and xenophobia. It was founded by the Movement of Haitian-Dominican Women (MUDHA) to apply holistic solutions to the needs of Palmarejo's children. As well as teaching the children, it attempts to regularise the status of those with no legal documents, educates parents about the issues faced by their families, and provides health care, daily meals and legal advice to the community. 'People need to recognise their rights in order to begin the process of change,' says Solange Pierre from MUDHA. 'Although international NGO aid from outside is very important, we don't want to live forever depending on outside aid. We need training to be able to ensure future self-sufficiency.'

Because of her work for the Haitian community, Pierre and her two children have frequently received death threats. Last October, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ordered the Dominican Government to provide protection for her.



Top left: Haitian children benefiting from MUDHA education programme; top right: La Escuelita; bottom left: Maciel, a Haitian living in Santo Domingo; bottom middle: typical living quarters in the sugar-growing areas; bottom right: sugar-cane cutters



Love Triangle

John Lester gives a Christian perspective on marriage.

AS A DOCTOR I have the privilege of getting to know families from a wide variety of backgrounds and I am offered a window onto their lives.

There are couples among them who choose not to get married, or never seem to get round to it, yet remain faithful to each other and bring up their children with a great deal of love. There are some who are happily married with the commitment it symbolises and the security it affords. And there are those whose relationships break down for one reason or another and who invariably suffer great pain whether married or not.

This era of personal choice has encouraged a great many relationships which do not last. In my work I experience the fall-out of such sadness, particularly as it affects the children.

This has led me to reflect—not primarily on the difference between being married or unmarried but on the difference between a

secular union and a faith-based one, and I have chosen to look specifically at what the Christian faith brings to the question of living together.

In the secular world relationships are seen as a partnership. Partnerships of any description are based on mutual self-interest. If there is no longer benefit to both parties then partnerships can be ended. A secular marriage, however committed, unselfish and loving, remains a bond agreed solely between two people.

A faith-based marriage is more than that. It is a covenant—which is a relationship entered into by, and with, God. God's part of the covenant is that he enters into the relationship. If we break the relationship with each other it affects our relationship with him.

The Church regards marriage as a sacrament, which means an action in which it is understood that the Holy Spirit will

undoubtedly be present.

The difficulty today is that so many of us have lost any feeling for religion and so the words do not resonate as they once did. Fortunately the Gospel writers wrote simple narrative stories which are easy to visualise and which illustrate such words.

In one of them Jesus is at a wedding feast in Cana. The wine runs out. Mary, Jesus' mother, suggests to the stewards that they do anything he asks. He requests them to fill the water pots with water and to ladle it out to the guests. The guests then bombard their host with questions as to why he kept the best wine until last.

A generation reared on science may find it hard to accept such an outcome, but may none-the-less understand the point it illustrates: that if God really is present the result is likely to be totally unexpected.

And this can be the reality of marriage undertaken in that spirit of obedience and expectancy. There is a prayer I have often sung: 'Spirit of the living God fall afresh on us. Break us, melt us, mould us, fill us'.

I like the picture it portrays. We come—in this case to marriage—with all our angles, our set ways of doing things, and we say 'melt us', allow all the stresses, the jagged edges, to

IF GOD REALLY IS PRESENT THE RESULT IS LIKELY TO BE TOTALLY UNEXPECTED

be melted away. 'Mould us'—form us into the people you want us to be.

The water pots in Cana, each holding 30 gallons, will have been moulded on a potter's wheel. And in Christian marriage the analogy can be taken a little further. We can recognise that God will take the clay of two people and mould it into one water pot. He will fill that pot with 'living' water which represents the joy which is there to give to everyone and which refills whenever it is given away. But the pot will only continue to hold that gift if no cracks are allowed to develop between the two. This pictorialises the truth that in Christian marriage two become irrevocably one, and Jesus becomes the third person in the marriage.

One of the difficulties of a non-religious age is that many people who have never understood religious thought and experience

say, in effect, 'all that is not for me, let us stick to what we all know'. That attitude, which is so understandable, makes new realities so difficult to access. But the fruit of such experience—which can be observed—is a deeper level of relationship, which so many of us do crave.

That relationship contains within it the following characteristics. The first is that it is based on cherishing not on using; the decision to stop thinking of oneself, and to think instead of the other, to look at the other, to tenderly care for the other.

Next is that it is based on intimacy. That is, after all, the setting in which a marriage becomes fruitful, and in which children may be given. But there is a further dimension to intimacy and that is spiritual intimacy. The tendency today is for people to seek more and more of the physical because they have no spiritual intimacy. An over-enthusiasm for physical intimacy does not compensate for an absence of spiritual awareness. That is one of the great errors of our time, the belief that sex can replace the lack of spiritual content in our lives.

Spiritual intimacy is the sharing of our inner lives together; sharing the dreams we may have, the lessons we learn, the mistakes we make, our hopes and fears, our insights and our longings. It is a wonderful enrichment but it requires nurturing.

Such a relationship is a listening one—listening to one another, giving each other the space which allows the half-formed thought, the hesitant thought to emerge. And in a faith-based marriage it involves taking time to listen to God; to hear his whispers; to share together the precious jewels he reveals. It is a praying one. It is difficult to pray meaningfully if there is something that divides us from the one we love. So it involves never letting the sun go down on anger or hurt. At the heart of such a relationship is our need at times for both repentance and forgiveness.

Breathing through all this is the great word 'love'. Love invokes feeling. It involves commitment. It produces care. It is beyond us and bigger than us. It is the gift from God of himself.

At some weddings these important words of St Paul are read: 'Glory be to him whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine.'

Each individual and every generation has to choose whether to take a secular path or the path St Paul so vividly outlines. Every marriage which chooses for God becomes not only one more likely to last but a living expression of the words I began with—covenant and sacrament—which so many pass by without understanding. Such marriages become candles lit in the darkness to reveal the promises of God's ways for us all. They point the way for all human relationships. They are a template for a renewed world. ■



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Changing the country one vote at a time

In the run-up to the Solomon Islands' April elections, Mary-Louise O'Callaghan met a group of young people fighting corruption, starting with themselves.

● THEY WERE SMALL slips of paper, and yet what they represented may be the most powerful force to hit the Solomon Islands in the South Pacific since a 3,000-strong military intervention force landed nearly three years ago.

Distributed by a group known as Winds of Change, these bits of paper were voters' pledges. Each one held the promise of an individual not to engage in corrupt practices during the general elections, in April this year.

This Clean Election Campaign is the first major initiative of Winds of Change, which grew out of a conference of the same name held in June 2004. With the help of Initiatives of Change Australia,

the conference gathered young and old for a week to hear from people such as Joseph Karanja, a young lawyer who launched a Clean Election Campaign in his country, Kenya.

Before the arrival of Australian-led intervention forces, known as the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), in July 2003, there was near national collapse. The Winds of Change conference was an opportunity for Solomon Islanders to explore ways of healing their nation, and to restore personal and public integrity after years of ethnic conflict.

A week before the April polls young men and women occupy four rooms of a converted shop on Honiara's grubby seafront—

Winds of Change's humble headquarters. Chatting and laughing, they fold thousands of colourful brochures, enjoying that most soothing of Solomon Island pastimes, 'storying'.

These brochures, for distribution through the country's 50 constituencies, use words and pictures to explain to 400,000 mostly pre-literate voters how they can make the national election clean.

In one of the smaller rooms others are carefully filling out the cash-reconciliation forms to account for the money they used during their awareness-raising tours. Funded both locally and by donors such as the Australian and British Governments' aid agencies—as well as Initiatives

of Change in Australia and the UK—the volunteers are required to handle money in an organised, open and transparent way.

Suddenly there is a buzz of activity as a group of hot, sweaty and satisfied people—just off the boat from the Russell Islands in the outgoing prime minister's constituency—arrive in the door. They excitedly report that over 200 people have signed the Clean Election pledge.

In the background passionate pleas pour forth from the loudspeaker of 19-year-old Jamie Rex. On the footpath outside he is encouraging passers-by to post their pledges in a giant white Clean Election ballot box.

A few years ago Rex was living a dramatically different life. At 14, as a result of the country's unrest, he found himself as a cook for the self-styled Malaita Eagle Force, a semi-criminal militia which in June 2000 staged a coup with some of the police.

'I got involved in smoking and drinking all kinds of no-good things,' says Rex. Things went downhill ending in a police case against him for S\$21,000 damages to a bus. But while RAMSI arrived in 2003 to restore law to his nation, it is Winds of Change which has brought order to Rex's life.

'I heard how the Winds of Change workshops really helped people to change their lives, so I decided to attend,' he says. These workshops have been run since last year to train volunteers for the Clean Election Campaign. Those taking part were asked if they wanted to change the nation, and if so how they might start with their own lives.

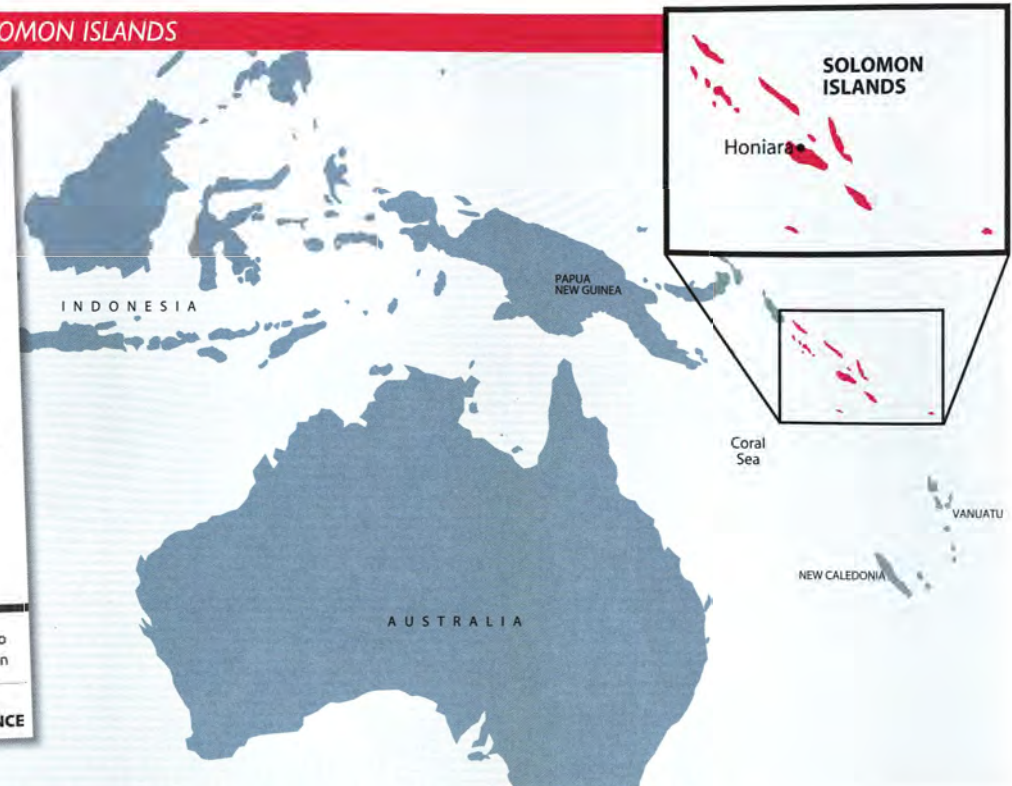
For Carol Bulu, a student at Honiara High, it was a chance to break away from a rather selfish approach to life that in reality was making her unhappy. 'I am a first-born. For 12 years I didn't have a brother and sister so I found it difficult to let my sister borrow my clothes,' she says, with a fierce look as she remembers how cross this used to make her. 'Now even my dad has noticed that I don't worry about those things any more.'

The second stage of the volunteers' commitment involves accepting absolute standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and

Jamie Rex pictured in a campaign advertisement



SOLOMON ISLANDS



love. At this point, quite a few decided that this approach was not for them. But for others, like Rex, these goals became a starting point for a whole new life. 'It was here that I really found myself,' he says. Back living with his family and working long hours with the Campaign, life is full of promise once again.

The co-ordinator of the Clean Election Campaign, 26-year-old Eric Houma, hopes that it will lead to the election of a government that has a 'heart for the people'. 'I hope things can improve for our people,' says the first-year marine science student. 'I experienced a little of their hardship when I went back to my village, Palasu'u, in Malaita during the tensions. The university was closed so I went home and made a garden.'

Winds of Change has changed the course of his life. 'I was the naughty one in the family, and I was leading my younger brothers the same way. Now if there are any family discussions, my uncles wait to hear what point I might make.' He has gained confidence and learnt practical skills such as writing project proposals and budgets which he hopes to pass on to others.

None of the volunteers receive any payment. Timothy Goulolo, the 25-year-old Winds of Change 'artist-in-residence', has spent hours designing the Clean Election Campaign cartoons, and Harry Maesua has written and

JAMIE ENCOURAGES PASSERS-BY TO POST THEIR PLEDGES IN THE CLEAN ELECTION BALLOT BOX

recorded the Campaign's popular anti-corruption song. But, for all of them, what feels so good is to be working for the good of the nation. ■

As we went to press Solomon Islanders were trying to make sense of the devastation caused by unexpected riots following the election of former Deputy Prime Minister, Snyder Rini, on 18 April. Honiara's Chinatown and

the main shopping district were razed to the ground, following claims that Rini had 'bought' MPs' votes, using money provided by local Chinese business people and Taiwan which is recognised by the Solomon Islands. Rini denies this. Winds of Change (whose office windows were smashed) are already planning how to respond to this setback and how to help the rioting youth find a better way forward.



Harry Maesua, who wrote and recorded the Campaign's anti-corruption song



Lebanese and Palestinian visitors with their hosts in Northern Ireland

Dispelling fear of the other

Mary Hatton describes a unique series of exchanges between Britain and the Arab world.

LAST AUGUST I found myself attempting—and failing—to steer an Oxford punt, much to the amusement of my passengers: a judge, a lawyer, a teacher and an IT professional, all from Lebanon. Such escapades are a feature of a British-Arab exchange. On a visit to Lebanon in 1997 I recall similar moments of hilarity when all barriers of cultural difference evaporated in laughter. I was also profoundly struck by a society where faith is truly a way of life.

British-Arab Exchanges (BAX), formerly the British-Arab University Association, has organised exchanges for young adults for over 30 years. Delegates participate in a two-week programme of meetings with religious, political and community leaders, facilitated by a team of volunteers from the host nation. Through a mix of formal and informal gatherings those involved discover much about themselves and each other. The programme enables participants to engage with, challenge and explore the histories and values

common to the Muslim and Christian traditions.

Reflections captured by the booklet *An Alternative Vision: 30 years of British-Arab exchanges*, show that many have been deeply affected, and inspired to share their experience with others. Former delegates have gone on to work in a wide range of political, religious, legal and social fields. For instance, Eman Akour—now a prominent TV personality in Jordan—says, ‘It was the cornerstone for many of my later perspectives and ways of understanding others.’ She was part of a Jordanian delegation to the UK in 1986.

All the British students who took part in the first visit to Egypt

in 1973 went on to be involved with development or human rights work in one way or another. Reflecting on a visit to Sudan in 1983 Peter Vickers, a company chairman, says, ‘I came back with a better understanding of Islam and of the heritage of faith which the Muslim people cherish.’

Last autumn, inspired by living and teaching in Palestinian refugee camps in the late 1990s, Ronnie Graham co-hosted a two-week visit to the UK by a group of Palestinian and Lebanese young professionals. The relationship between the Palestinians and Lebanese is a sensitive one as it was the presence of several hundred thousand displaced Palestinian

refugees which was one of the triggers for the 15-year-long war during which over 100,000 people lost their lives.

Whilst in London delegates gained an insight into the diversity of the British Muslim community through a meeting with Ahmed Versi, Editor of *Muslim News*. Versi spoke about the composition of the British Muslim community, and how his newspaper had become an instrument both for the cohesiveness of the community, and wider awareness of Muslim views. The group also had meetings with Tom Brake MP, Foreign Office officials, the Arab-British Chamber of Commerce, the Council for the Advancement

of Arab-British Understanding (CAABU) and BBC World.

A highlight was the group’s visit to Northern Ireland. Whilst in Derry, they had a tour of murals in the nationalist Bogside with artist Tom Kelly who described how he seeks to use public art to lift the spirit of his community. Nobel Peace laureate John Hume shared his experience of helping to bring about the Good Friday Agreement. The group was also received at the Town Hall by Sinn Féin Councillor Paul Fleming, and heard from Paddy Doherty—a leader of the ‘Free Derry’ campaign during the Troubles—about his work to reconstruct damaged buildings in the city. Whilst in Coleraine, they met with David McClarty, an Ulster Unionist Member of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Meeting people from all sides of the Northern Ireland conflict opened discussions about how a society can move beyond violence towards peace. For most of the visitors, it was their first experience of a conflict situation far removed from their own but with equivalent complexity. As they listened, a new commitment to those of other communities within Lebanon emerged. During a farewell reception, one of the Lebanese apologised for the hatred she had held towards the Palestinians. And we learnt that after returning to Lebanon, one of the Palestinians expressed his deep regret for what the Palestinians did in some phases of the war in Lebanon.

The original vision of creative partnership between Britain and the Arab World was initiated in the 1970s by Bill Conner (a veteran of the World War II battle at El-Alamein) and Egyptian friends. Whilst BAX is a small non-governmental organisation run by volunteers, its contribution in the wider context of Arab-British relations remains unique. As Dr Mahdi Hamad Buttran—a Sudanese on a UK visit in 1981—observed, ‘The exchanges are needed more than ever as the realisation dawns of the true implications of what alienation and segregation could do to the world.’

www.bax.org.uk



left: visiting BBC World; right: punting in Oxford

first person

Hands up for the big picture

Peter Everington returns to Sudan to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Independence.



Peter Everington (right) with Dr Mahmoud Abdulla, Dean of Students at Gezira University, in 1983

JANUARY 2005 saw the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of Sudan and the South Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) after 22 years of civil war. A year later thousands gathered in Juba, capital of the new regional Government of South Sudan, to celebrate the first anniversary. Among the guests of honour were the Vice-President of Uganda and the former President of Kenya. Many countries aided Sudan in the peace process. The outstanding individual was Kenya’s General Lazarus Sumbeiuo. For over two years he chaired the negotiations between the Sudan Government and the SPLM. He has no illusions about the long road that lies ahead, to satisfy the expectations raised by the peace.

As he rose to speak in Juba, a roar of applause came from the crowd. ‘You made the peace, I was just the midwife,’ he said. ‘Today I have just one request, that you choose the big picture, which will shield your peace. Please raise your hand to God now if you want the big picture, not the small one.’ As hands went up on all sides, he said, ‘Thank you. I pray the Almighty will grant your wish.’

It was a thrill for me to be there, as one who has known Sudan since 1958. In September that year, aged 23, I arrived with a five-year contract to teach English in boys’ secondary schools. I stayed a further three years as lecturer in a teacher training institute for men and women. Since then I have returned about 20 times, sometimes running student exchange programmes with UK (see opposite), and in recent years encouraging Sudan’s peacemakers in North and South.

People ask why I went to Sudan. In summer 1955, just before taking up a scholarship in Latin and Greek at Cambridge University, I was teaching at a school in Northern Ireland. An Irish teacher persuaded me to listen to God for guidance, then to measure my life against standards of absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love, and to write my findings. For a complacent Christian this was an uncomfortable process, but a liberating one too as I faced the truth and made apologies. That is how I discovered Initiatives of Change, or Moral Re-Armament (MRA) as it was then.

I was challenged by the idea, ‘As I am, so is my nation.’ Just as I as an individual had been domineering, so had Britain often been towards countries we ruled. We too could change and find a role of service to newly independent countries.

This new attitude brought me friendships at Cambridge with people from Africa and the Middle East, particularly Egypt. But when Britain invaded Egypt in the futile Suez War of 1956 my dreams of a new world fell apart. Doubts came about my career. Friends suggested I ask God what my part in his plan for the world could be. In a few minutes of listening for inner guidance, it came clear I should switch to Arabic for my last year at Cambridge, and be ready to go anywhere in that part of the world to help rebuild trust.

SUDAN GAVE ME AN APPRENTICESHIP IN ARAB, AFRICAN AND MUSLIM THINKING

I learned that people in Sudan’s Government had welcomed MRA’s approach to world needs. Through their ambassador in London I was taken on as a teacher. Over the next years Sudan gave me an apprenticeship in Arab, African and Muslim thinking and a range of friendships for which I shall always be grateful.

In January this year my wife and I were among 21 British invited to Sudan for the country’s celebration of 50 years of independence. The majority of the party were people, or relatives of people, who had served in Sudan before Independence. The oldest man had started in a town by the White Nile in 1940. Others were making their first return since 1955 to a country they loved and had thought they would never see again. Sudan had done something for their souls. Judging by the welcome they received this time from old friends (or the children of old friends) the feeling was reciprocal.

first person

Oil has recently brought some prosperity, but 22 years of war have left North Sudan poor and the South destitute. While the North-South peace has released foreign aid, the horrific Darfur crisis in the West has again provoked doubt as to whether Sudan can put all its energies into civic development.

The former head of the South Sudan People's Liberation Movement is now the First Vice-President of the country. And the Sudan Government is a 'unity' government that includes several Southern ministers. If it fully implements the North-South peace agreement, it will have the authority to bring solutions to Darfur. It will need to democratise further to unlock the talents of all its peoples.

My wife and I were taken to Khartoum Boys Secondary School where I taught from 1960-63. The school was paraded and I was required to address them in Arabic. One noticeable feature was how militarised they were in uniform and chanting. This was in preparation, until recently, for fighting in the South. Someone will have to school them in the culture of peace and help them to relate fully to South Sudanese as fellow citizens. Perhaps it will be the new foreign minister, a former pupil of the school, from the South.

The British who ruled Sudan maintained fairly good relations with both Arab Northerners and African Southerners. But, as in some other countries, at Independence we left both parties in deep suspicion of each other. That does not mean we are solely responsible for the civil wars that followed our departure. It does give us a moral obligation to support the peacemakers of both sides rather than just analyse and criticise from afar. We too need to raise our hands for 'the big picture' that will enable and protect the peace.

In imperial days Britain aimed to control the Nile Valley in rivalry with the French. In the Cold War the West and the Communist powers competed for influence across Africa and the Middle East. Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement has been aided by a healthy consensus of African, North American and European countries. That is the best side of globalisation.



Peter Everington with his pupils at Khartoum Boys Secondary School, 1961



Overcoming the stigma

Richard Shrubbs describes his battle with mental illness and public perceptions.

I AM RUNNING toward the end of a media course in Cornwall, England. My tenancy in my student house is coming to an end, but nothing to worry about since a top news organisation has shown great interest in taking me on. Life rocks and the music is getting louder.

I've been doing a large part of my thesis in a coffee shop in Falmouth. The day I get the dizzying news of acceptance at the news organisation, I tell the coffee shop owner that at last someone with paranoid schizophrenia has made it

into a position where he can publicly fight the stigma against mental illness. Rather than congratulations I am made to feel extremely unwelcome. In short order the news organisation finds out about my history and finds an excuse to renege on the offer.

Although by attaining my degree I have broken through the glass ceiling over Britain's untouchables, I gash my neck on the shards all too often.

I was in a stressful situation from about 1982 to my breakdown in 1996. I was eight when I started to commute to school in the UK from the US.

Dad left Mum and took a posting in the Falklands in '86. A year later he returned with the RAF doctor who would become his new wife. I started at a military school that I recall with jaundice, and returned to the States in '93 to misbehave for a year aboard a US sail-training ship. The only thing I didn't do out there was take drugs.

So, I took drugs at university in Southampton. Smoking and eating cannabis, taking LSD and psilocybin mushrooms. Having good trips—but also bad ones.

I completed my first degree in '97. I almost went to jail at the time of my finals, and moved to Bristol whilst facing weekly court adjournments in Southampton. In March '99 I was in my second bed-sit, and had found it impossible to get work for six months....

I told Dad that I had been running the air war over Serbia via my special radio set, which could broadcast across Europe. Two days later I had a longstanding appointment with

my GP—Dad managed to speak to her without me knowing. Consequently I thought she was sent by the government to offer me a career in the secret service!

She set up a meeting with two psychiatrists and a nurse—the quorum of professionals required. I was later to find out, to admit me into residential hospital under the Mental Health Act. I negotiated a compromise, and began seven months at a day hospital there, visiting five days a week and undergoing drug and talking therapy.

The mental health system looks after one's welfare too. A social worker helped me apply for halfway-house accommodation and I was put on disability benefits. For the first time since the age of 16 I started to put on weight from being relaxed and, though not happy, I was certainly on the up.

I moved into a shared house for psychiatric patients. The organisation that runs it is now one of the biggest social and sheltered housing providers in

I HAVE BROKEN THROUGH THE GLASS CEILING OVER BRITAIN'S UNTOUCHABLES

Bristol, Second Step. Though living independently, we had two hours of talking therapy a week with a Second Step employee. I had two hours a month with my psychiatric consultant, one hour a week with my community care worker and spent time at the NHS alcohol rehab unit.

Another organisation was a great help—Fairbridge (see FAC Apr/May 2006), which helps socially excluded young people. It taught me something fundamental—not to be afraid of obstacles.

Second Step and Fairbridge encouraged me to look for something that I could achieve. People told me I could write well. I drifted from a writing circle into an A level in journalism, and onto the MA at Falmouth.

I stopped drinking. I convinced my psychiatrist to take the risk and put me on disulfiram, a medication that makes you violently ill if you drink booze. The risk was its side effects—psychosis. I completed the MA with full-blown schizophrenia. Like all side effects this has worn off.

Mental illness, of which I have suffered most 'types' in my time—whether being happier than a lottery winner, suicidally low, hearing voices or having extreme paranoia (and thus delusional beliefs)—is extremely complex. Like most sufferers I could not say, 'It was cannabis'. Yes, it played a part and triggered a gene inherent in my family—but so did the stress in the years leading up to the psychosis. The stress of having never lived in a city before. The stress of that public school, which caused fits of vomiting for days before term started. My poor relationship with my military, nomadic family.

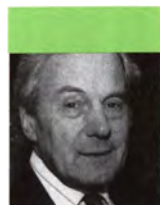
Attaining the position to be considered 'well' by society? I have some tips—listen to your professionals, do not refuse treatment. But also be determined

to get well. Initially, to my dismay, I was told recovery would be a three-year programme. It took seven. Schizophrenia, it was explained to my father on my diagnosis, affects one per cent of the world population irrespective of their genes, race or life experience. One in four will have depression.... The statistics are there, yet the press, ever desperate for bad news, always focuses on the dangers of people like me. I have considered suicide as a serious option more than 20 times. Of my friends, four have committed suicide—and in five years in the house for psychiatric patients I was attacked once. Surely this points to the fact that we are more dangerous to ourselves than others?

I am discovering that I can listen to the inner voice of reason and conscience, now things have quietened down enough for it to be audible. It's quite different from the voices heard in schizophrenia, and has become my best guidance.

I am now working in radio as a journalist. My friend who runs a community radio station did a deal with me—she accepts my illness, I work professionally. I teach radio to the mentally ill, so that they too may find their voice on this most public of spectrums. I am writing for a variety of publications, and am meeting new people through my trade union and other places in which I work. As a freelance writer I am able to work my own hours be they Sunday nights or Monday to Friday, as I feel. I am my own boss, and in charge of my own destiny. Mental health for me is a challenge, I am not challenged by mental health. ■

To listen to Richard Shrubbs' historical documentary on the treatment of the insane visit www.b200fm.com/Audio/Lunacy.mp3.



DAVID CHANNER

Travelling the good road together

IT WAS AN American clergyman who introduced me to the importance of valuing other faiths besides my own. He was ahead of his time in appreciating that you did not need to water down what you believed in order to find unity. He was never slow to share his own source of power, but as a Christian respected the way God's spirit could work through any other person.

I write of Frank Buchman, the initiator of Moral Re-Armament, now Initiatives of Change. 'Catholic, Jew and Protestant, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist and Confucianist,' he said in a speech in 1948, 'all find they can change where needed and travel along the good road together.' Interestingly, he also believed that the Muslim nations, stretching from Morocco to Indonesia, could be 'a girder of unity' for the world. He was sensitive, too, to those who rejected the idea of God. On one occasion, at a dinner he gave for an atheist, he dispensed with saying grace, asking all to sing, 'For he's a jolly good fellow'.

That broad attitude was a big development in the thinking of a small-town American brought up in a fundamental Christian faith. Over the years it often involved him in controversy as some Christians, and even some Christian bodies, felt that his approach was a watering-down of faith. In the same

way, I suppose, that Prince Charles gets attacked for describing himself as 'defender of faith' rather than 'defender of the faith'. Now this breadth of approach is becoming more accepted in British society. In fact, it is faith itself that is under attack, a development which underlines the increasing acceptance by people of faith that they need to work together.

In February 2006, for instance, the leaders of the different faith communities in Britain issued a joint statement with the Department for Education and Skills, establishing a National Framework for Religious Education. The Framework encourages pupils to 'learn from different religions, beliefs, values and traditions, while exploring their own beliefs and questions of meaning, and develop respect for and sensitivity to others, in particular those whose faith and beliefs are different from their own'.

'We believe,' say the signatories, who range from Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor of the Catholic Church to Sir Iqbal Sacranie of the Muslim Council of Britain, 'that schools with a religious designation should teach not only their own faith but also an awareness of the tenets of other faiths.'

Rabbi Marc Gellman and Monsignor Thomas Hartman, in their book *How Do You Spell God?* (HarperCollins 1995) write, 'We

have no problem with people who believe that their religion is right. We have no problem with folks who believe that their religion is more right than any other religion. We *do* have a problem with people who believe that they have the only right religion and then go out and hurt other people because of it.' They add, 'If you hurt people because of what you think your religion teaches, it just proves that you never learned what your religion *really* teaches.' They also were of the view that the way to show that your religion is true is not to yell and scream about it. 'The way to show that your religion is true is to live it.'

I am sure Buchman would have approved of that sentiment.

Muslim scholar Maulana Wahiduddin Khan tells the story of the Prophet standing in respect as a funeral procession passed through the streets of Medina. A companion remarked, 'Oh, Prophet, that was the funeral of a Jew, not a Muslim, and yet you stood up in respect.' The Prophet answered, 'Was he not a human being?'

We can take that to heart whatever our faith.

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

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What am I attached to?

ANTHONY DE MELLO tells the following story: The disciple went into the forest to meet the Master. 'Master', he said, 'I have come to you with nothing.' 'Then drop it, drop it at once,' said the Master. 'How can I drop it?' replied the disciple. 'It is nothing.' 'Well then,' responded the Master, 'You will just have to carry it around with you.'

One day Jesus met a wealthy young man, a leader in his community. He had done everything right, lived by the book, obeyed all the rules. The sort of loving son who had never upset his mother, genuinely loved God and wanted to be his best. He asked Jesus if he could become one of his followers. Absolutely, responded Jesus, who could see right through him: just one thing more would be needed to free him up. 'Sell all you have, give the money to the poor, and then come and join me,' he said. The young man shrank, and slunk away.

We can be as attached to our nothing as to our something.

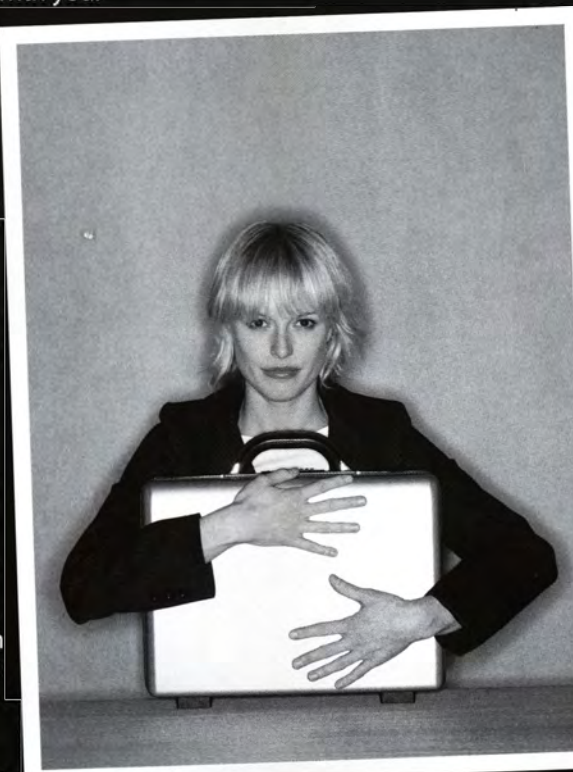
Some days my sense of nothingness and being a nobody is as addictive as my sense of really being something and somebody. I can get quite secure in feeling that I have nothing to give and nobody is interested in me, and it has proved to be a great excuse.

'Make poverty history' is a current cry. To do that we will have to make greed unacceptable. According to Dr Rama Mani, Director of the New Issues in Security Course at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, 'The forces of greed (in today's world) far, far outweigh the weight of human need.... Greed has been glorified. It has not only been sanitised, it has been legalised. It has been made necessary, the bedrock of our society'. The great god greed has got us in its grip.

This challenges me to look at the greed operating in my own life. For food certainly, for affirmation and recognition, for comfort and personal space, for novelty, for affection, for shoes... the list goes on. So where does my greed stem from? What is the insecurity, the indifference, the fear, the identity crisis that I attempt to stifle with my attachments?

We might all do well, in our consumer societies, to take a look at the real nature of our hunger. Henri Nouwen wrote in *Reaching Out*, 'Poverty makes a good host'. I have

seen the truth of this paradox in the generosity of people in Africa and India. But it is also true in a spiritual sense. Do we have space in our hearts and homes for each other, or are we too 'fully fed up', as one non-English-speaking, overzealous hostess said, as I declined yet another serving of her sumptuous banquet?



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