

FOR A CHANGE

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Asia's millennial message to the world

Today we see a networking of humanity unprecedented in history. Our global megalopolis is linked by electronic communications and the global economic system, and shared values and lifestyles prevail. To its citizens, the dawn of the new Millennium was a landmark event. It provided an opportunity to reflect on what had come before and what is to come in the future. It was celebrated with joy and thanksgiving, and a lot of partying, in almost all parts of the world.

But it is also likely that for most of the people who inhabit this planet, and are not part of the global megalopolis, the stroke of midnight that ushered in the 21st century was simply another moment in time. This would have especially been the case in the Asian continent, teeming with half of humanity. Asia is not only the home of several ancient civilizations, but also has the most people living in conditions of absolute poverty.

Sri Lanka is a case in point. This pearl of the Indian Ocean, now better known perhaps as its tear-drop on account of years of bloody civil strife, possesses a relatively young civilization—by Asian standards. The civilizations of China and Sri Lanka's neighbour, India, stretch back several millennia more into antiquity. But Sri Lanka's present civilization dates back to nearly 1000 BC with its people having a direct link with that past. The country's historical records chronicle events that took place at the time that the Buddha was alive in India 2,544 years ago.

Little or nothing

To most people in Sri Lanka history began then and is a living reality today. To many Sri Lankans, the celebration came 544 years too late, or 456 years too early.

Most Sri Lankans confined their millennial celebrations, if any, to lighting fireworks at their homes. Only a tiny fraction could afford the luxury of lavish millennial celebrations in five star hotels. Not many more could go to clubs or parks, or even to places of religious worship in the middle of the night, as they lacked private transport. Besides, Sri Lankans prefer to spend their family time at home.

To large numbers of Sri Lankans living in rural villages without electricity or in refugee camps due to the ongoing civil war, the dawn of the new Millennium meant little or nothing. The first of January was just



By Jehan Perera

another day in which they had to find some way of feeding themselves and looking after their families, or keep out of the way of armed combatants on the prowl.

'To many Sri Lankans, the celebration came 544 years too late'

Yet even in these most difficult circumstances, there remain relationships of love, sharing and gratitude, that make life bearable and worth living another day.

One of the important messages that the continent of Asia has to give to the world in the new Millennium is the value of human relationships and family bondings. In most of Asia, and in Sri Lanka, the family remains a closely knit institution, frequently extended to include uncles, aunts and cousins. These bonds have endured through the growth in economic prosperity in many parts of Asia which have made it possible for individuals to break free of the family and survive. Child care crèches for toddlers and retirement

homes for the elderly are on the rise, but do not constitute the norm.

Right relationships between human beings, and the love, sharing and gratitude that derive from them, are as important to human wellbeing as economic prosperity. There is a strong temptation in individuals and societies to seek happiness by producing and consuming more of what is visible and tangible. The cost of this consumerism to others, and to the wider global society, is often disregarded.

Interconnectedness

Human beings are not only individual physical beings. They are also moral and spiritual beings who are in relationship with the universe. Therefore what cannot be perceived by the physical senses is at least as important as that which can be.

The Buddha, whose teachings are venerated in most of Asia, summarized one of his most important tenets in two lines. 'This arising, that arises; this ceasing to be, that ceases to be.' Through these words, the Buddha pointed out the interconnectedness and interdependence of all life and all events. The poverty and war in Sri Lanka and elsewhere in the world have their linkages to global processes. Enormous profits and prosperity in some parts of the world, in part generated by the lucrative arms trade, lead to losses and poverty in other parts of the world.

It is to be hoped that the third millennium will be one of spiritual progress. Can human beings who generated unprecedented material wealth in the second millennium finally recognize that happiness and fulfilment require sharing one's riches with others, and not discharging one's costs onto others? Then the whole of humanity will be recognized for what it truly is—one family.

Jehan Perera works with civic organizations and through the media in Sri Lanka to promote peace and human rights.

NEXT ISSUE

Lead story: As the Olympics approach, *For A Change* finds out what is going on in the host nation, Australia.

Guest column: the Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew of Constantinople.

- **Doing justice to the music**
- **A century for trees?**
- **Leaving drugs behind**
- **A Sri Lankan view of the Millennium**

The power of forgiveness

by Chris Mayor in Melbourne



Happy Anniversary!

What a party that was! Of course some of us will be celebrating the true start of the third millennium on day one of year 2001—1 January 2001. Try convincing the party-loving masses about that.

But what do I hear some readers say? Some cultures don't count by the Gregorian Calendar. Indeed, the Jewish calendar dates from 3761BC; the Buddhist calendar begins in the 6th century BC and the Muslim calendar from 622AD.

So maybe the start of a millennium is a more flexible date after all.

Down north

And here is another divergence of views. Most people live in the northern hemisphere and, as some of us think, have a rather curious view on the global village. Why should north always be up? Why not a world map showing 'down under' as 'up and over'?

Why should the 'north-south gap' describe rich and poor nations when many countries in the north are poor and many in the south are rich?

Those of us who live south of the equator look at the world from another perspective. Perhaps it encourages us to be more tolerant of views which we may be tempted to regard as quaint.

No to republic

Talking about things quaint, what about Australia's constitutional headaches?

We recently came through a national referendum on whether to remain a monarchy or become a republic.

An amendment must be carried by a national majority and by a majority of votes in a majority of the six states. The confused and confusing rhetoric in this campaign made sure it was not going to be an easy choice.

The conservative (timid?) Aussies voted against change by 54 to 46 per cent. Curiously the No vote relied on a large bloc of 'radical republicans' who preferred the status quo to the 'minimalist' republican model put forward.

How can we explain to our French, Indonesian, Egyptian and American friends that



though Australia is politically independent it is unable to choose one of its citizens as its head of state in place of Queen Elizabeth?

Helping neighbours

Indonesia is Australia's close neighbour. Its former province of East Timor is 550 kms away. An estimated 60,000 East Timorese lost their lives heroically supporting Australian troops during the jungle war against Japan over 50 years ago. Thousands of refugees have made their home in Australia since Indonesia took over the Portuguese colony in December 1975.

Perhaps a sense of obligation as well as sympathy ensured Australia's readiness to assist in organizing the referendum last year that produced an extraordinary 78 per cent support for independence.

But to play a major part in establishing and leading the UN force of peacekeepers raised domestic concerns. It is the first time since Australia's controversial involvement in the Vietnam War that a major military force has been sent abroad.

In order to fund the operation, expected to cost over US\$700 million, the Australian government recently raised a 12 month levy on income tax. Touched by the suffering and destruction caused by the post-election fighting and upheaval in the region, most Australians are happy to contribute.

Also 1,000 construction workers have volunteered to help rebuild the capital, Dili,

using kits donated by construction companies.

Olympic rings . . .

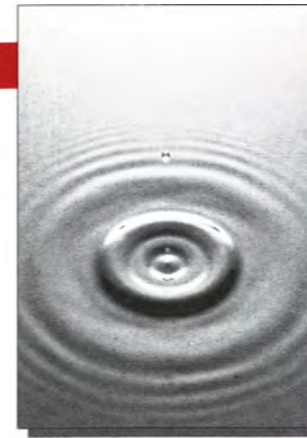
As the Olympic Games approach, Sydney is getting ready to welcome the athletes of the world. As well as 10,000 competitors and 5,000 officials there will be 17,000 media representatives. Perhaps this emphasizes what a commercial, media-oriented operation it has become. The cost is estimated at more than US\$1.7 billion.

Fast Australian designed and built catamaran ferries will shuttle visitors back and forth from downtown to the broad acres of the spectacular Olympic village, completed ahead of schedule on green fields beside the upper reaches of Sydney's magnificent harbour. Stadium Australia, the main arena, will seat 115,000 spectators and the whole complex will be one of the world's great sporting centres.

It was in Melbourne in 1956 that, for the first time, athletes were encouraged to break national ranks and intermingle during the closing ceremony of the 'friendly games'. We are hoping that Sydney will be an even friendlier experience.

. . . and magic rings

Olympic rings are not the only kind down under. Word is out that a film version of *Lord of the rings*, starring Australia's Cate Blanchett (of *Elizabeth* fame), is being made across the Tasman in New Zealand. I wonder whether New Zealand's orcs, ents and hobbits have rushed to audition. ■



Cover photo: Tony Stone Images

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Heroic tasks for a world fit to live in

Over the last months of the 20th century, this magazine reported and supported two grassroots campaigns, one global and the other British. Jubilee 2000 calls for the international debts of the poorest countries to be written off, removing a burden hanging over millions of people so that they can enter the new century with a clean slate. Using the same phrase, the Clean Slate Campaign encouraged individuals to take at least one practical step to wipe their personal slates clean in the run-up to the new Millennium.

Both campaigns have had a major impact. When a retired British diplomat and a lecturer in politics first met at a conference in Cheshire in 1993, both hoped but perhaps never quite believed that Jubilee 2000 would become a touchstone for the world's conscience. It has been supported by rock stars, the Vatican, the White House and millions around the world. The task is far from over and the campaign continues through this year.

When Edward Peters in Oxford apologized to work colleagues whom he had 'bad-mouthed', he had no idea that that act of personal reconciliation would lead to a campaign which would touch countless individuals and gain the support of national political and religious figures. The Clean Slate Campaign was reported around the world including to two million listeners of the BBC World Service.

There is a link between the two campaigns, beyond the use of the same phrase. The Bishop of London pointed out recently that when we make acts of personal apology and reconciliation a great spiritual energy is released. Such acts can also liberate the mind and imagination to think of the wider issues the world faces—and perhaps to take on heroic aims, as the two founders of Jubilee 2000 did. Christ put it this way: 'The kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing and forceful men lay hold on it.'

Wiping the personal slate clean is, of course, never a one-off experience but a continuing process, as fallible human nature causes us to fall short of the ideal. But the question remains, what new heroic tasks will individuals take on, liberated from the down-drag of personal preoccupations? There is no shortage of issues as we begin the new century. A fairer trading system and distribution of the world's wealth? The elimination of corruption or racial prejudice? The restoration of sound family life? Each person will have their own wish list for the new Millennium. But each heroic task, of whatever scale, may begin, or be given new impetus, through the small kernel of personal decisions.

Michael Smith

FOR A CHANGE

• closes the circle between faith and action, action and faith. It is for anyone, anywhere, who wants to make a difference to the world.

FOR A CHANGE believes

- that in a world torn by ancient hatreds, the wounds of history can be healed.
- that in the family and the workplace, relationships can be transformed.
- that in urban jungle or rural backwater, community can be built.
- that peace, justice and the survival of the planet depend on changes in attitudes as well as structures.

FOR A CHANGE

- draws its material from a wide range of sources and was born out of the experience of Moral Re-Armament.

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A NOTE ON MORAL RE-ARMAMENT

Moral Re-Armament was launched in 1938 when Europe was rearming. Frank Buchman, MRA's American initiator, called for a programme of 'moral and spiritual rearmament' to address the root causes of conflict, and work towards a 'hate-free, fear-free, greed-free world'. Since then people of all backgrounds and traditions have been active in this programme on every continent.

MRA is open to all. Its starting point is the readiness of each person to make real in their own life the changes they wish to see in society. A commitment to search for God's will in daily life forms the basis for creative initiative and common action. Absolute moral standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love help to focus the challenge of personal and global change.

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The power of forgiveness

Above: the Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph of the young Kim Phuc fleeing her village in Vietnam. Right: Kim Phuc today, set to become a missionary.

Could you forgive someone who destroyed your life or, even worse, killed your child? In these edited extracts from his new book, *Forgiveness: breaking the chain of hate*, Michael Henderson finds that the world has reason to be grateful to people who, against all the odds, have found a way to forgive.

Who can deny the hope given to the world when a person's suffering or hatred is turned to good effect, either through remorse and repentance or a courageous act of forgiving, or perhaps through a dramatic religious conversion? It encourages the belief that humankind can yet learn to do things differently.

A Vietnamese woman, Kim Phuc, now a Canadian citizen and a goodwill ambassador for UNESCO, is one example. In 1972 the Pulitzer Prize was awarded for a photo of her as a young girl, fleeing naked and screaming from her village, which had just been napalm-bombed by Americans; it is constantly reprinted. Now, after a miracle of survival, including 17 operations, a stint when she was paraded for Vietnamese propaganda purposes, a period of study in Moscow, and emigration to the West, she is set to become a missionary. The way she has overcome her painful past has been a source of inspiration to millions. Her biography, *The girl in the picture: the Kim Phuc*

story, was published in 1999.

Some have found a way to triumph over setbacks and a freedom in expressing this that almost defies understanding. Particularly those who have been hostages in the Middle East. Terry Waite writes in *Footfalls in memory—reflections from solitude*, 'My captivity was certainly a miserable experience which I would not wish to go through again. And yet, almost despite myself, something had come from it. I know that I was able to take the experience of captivity and turn it into something creative.'

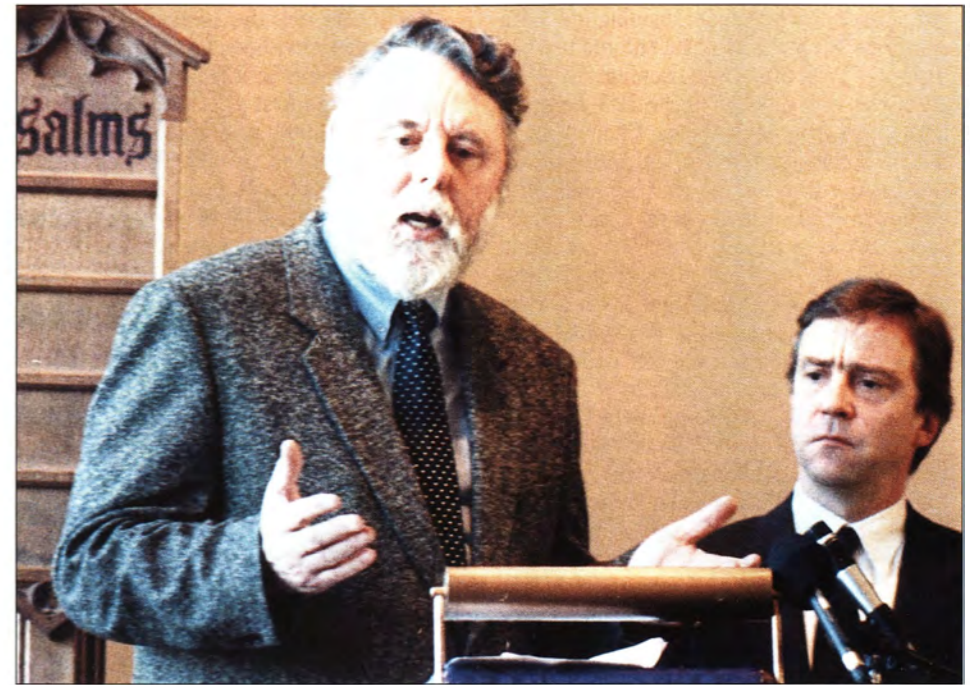
Simon Weston, the British soldier who suffered burns over 46 per cent of his body as the result of a bomb in the Falklands/Malvinas war, underwent 70 operations and will have to have more. He is badly disfigured, and can yet say, 'It might sound crass but I feel that being burnt and injured has been positive for me. I've been allowed to do so much. I've achieved a level of contentment that I might not have achieved otherwise.'



Dennis Cook/Associated Press



Nick Ulf/Associated Press



Terry Waite: 'I was able to take the experience of captivity and turn it into something creative.'

with three children, he is on a mission. Weston says, 'I don't have time to worry about what people think of me—even if I am walking along like a wrinkled chip!'

The most important thing if you become injured, he says, is how you cope. 'If you spend your life full of recriminations and bitterness, then you've failed yourself, failed the surgeons and nurses and everyone else, because you aren't giving anything back. Hatred can consume you and it's wasted emotion.' According to an article in the *London Daily Mail*, 'Wherever Simon goes, strangers come up to him and want to shake his hand. He cuts across all ages, creeds and social classes, and he seems to bring out the best in everyone.'

An author, a motivational speaker, a raiser of \$30 million for charities, a vice-president of two charities, happily married



Simon Weston: 'If you spend your life full of recriminations and bitterness, then you've failed yourself.'

Truck driver Reginald Denny had his skull crushed by a brick in April 1992, during the Los Angeles riots after four white police officers accused of beating black motorist Rodney King were acquitted. He has a forgiving spirit towards the six attackers who stomped and bashed him with a brick and a hammer. A writer in *People* magazine says, 'Even more remarkable than his physical recovery, however, is his lack of resentment toward his attackers.'

No one would want to underestimate the physical and psychological damage done by incarceration, often in solitary confinement, or the wounds of personal tragedy or loss that never entirely heal. But thousands of lives, beyond the individuals involved, have often benefited and been blessed by their willingness to forgive.

In 1993 two English children, Johnathan Ball, three, and Tim Parry, 12, were killed and 56 other people wounded when an IRA bomb went off in the centre of Warrington. The tragedy has now led on to myriad initiatives for reconciliation by local citizens. Tim's father, Colin Parry, says that it was the single-minded determination to make their son's life and death count for something that has kept him and his wife, Wendy, going.

The Warrington Project was the first of a series of initiatives, known collectively as Warrington Ireland Reconciliation Enterprise, WIRE, set up shortly after the Bridge Street bombing. Because of the youth of the two victims, the project concentrates on working with young people. In Britain its programme 'Ireland in Schools', worked out with the Institute of Irish Studies, seeks to develop an informed interest in Ireland's culture. In Ireland it supports programmes

that create better understanding. In both countries it encourages student and teacher exchanges and in-service training.

In the first days after the IRA bombing the Warrington Male Voice Choir, one of Britain's oldest and finest, assisted the victims of the tragedy and created links with groups in Ireland working for peace. Since then, they have given concerts for peace and reconciliation in Dublin, Drogheda, Belfast and Derry. In 1997, working with the Dublin Rotary Club and the Irish Peace Institute, the Choir was responsible for a Christmas Concert of Peace in Dublin's National Concert Hall. A 260-strong Youth Choir for Peace—children from North and South, Catholic and Protestant, was brought together, symbolizing hope and harmony.

On the second anniversary of the bombing an Irish Festival or *fleadh*, now an annual event, was held in Warrington. It was organized by The Bridge (named after Bridge Street), a project focusing on cultural exchanges, often with a community dimension, such as families hosting each other across the Irish Sea.

The Warrington Town Centre Clergy, made up of five denominations, have taken the lead in creating worship opportunities which explore the commemoration aspect of the event in terms of moving forward in understanding. Stephen Kingsnorth, a Methodist minister, writes, 'One role we value as clergy in Warrington, is to challenge those within and without the "peace movement" to explore new ideas, to listen to those whose views we find alien. If reconciliation is to come, it is through mutual understanding, and Warrington, as a "victim" community, is in a unique position to listen, without being accused of collaboration.'

Kingsnorth was invited to speak in Derry at the Bloody Sunday Rally in 1999. He said, 'Warrington's gift was in taking an isolated but shattering tragedy and a few deciding it would not make us the more firmly chained to our history. What happened in Bridge Street could form a bridge of learning to the histories of others.'

Each year on the anniversary of the bombing there has been a Community Peace Walk, sometimes in England, sometimes in Ireland. On the first walk participants were greeted by 2,000 people at St Michael's Church in Dun Laoghaire in the Republic. In 1997 a River of Life pedestrian mall was opened with the release of doves by the mothers of the two boys who died. In 1999 Warrington Peace 93 was one of many Warrington groups and individuals helping

to raise well over £1 million to create a Tim Parry Johnathan Ball Young People's Centre for peace and reconciliation programmes. The Archbishop of Dublin, Donald Caird, said at a United Service in the town centre that Warrington had become a byword for gracious response in the face of evil. Colin Parry makes the same point: 'In Ireland Warrington is held up as an example of how a town can react with dignity following a tragedy.' The Deputy Lord Mayor of Belfast, Alisdair McDonnell, says, 'They have turned hatred, despair and conflict into friendship, brotherhood and the hand of peace.'

A Belgian teacher whose 23-year-old daughter, Ann, was murdered by her boyfriend chose to tread the path of forgiveness and founded an organization of support for the families of victims.

When the news broke of Ann's death, Lou Reymen immediately thought back 20 years to meeting an Irish woman who wanted to meet the killers of her son and a woman who had been a victim of a serious road accident and was free of blame. Within 48 hours he and his wife, Mariette, were sure that they should reach out to the parents of the killer. 'It was a question of

putting our faith into practice,' he says. 'At that cruel moment I had to ask myself what I was going to do as a believer.'

With his daughter not even buried and the young man already in prison, as he puts it, he sought the help of the local priest to tell the family that the Reymens were ready if they wanted to say something to them. Two hours later, the doorbell rang. It was the murderer's parents. The wives embraced, consoling each other. 'How is it possible that we could set foot in your house?' said the murderer's mother. The two couples prayed together for their children. Reymen says that taking this initiative 'kept us from a feeling of hatred

and wanting to take revenge'. In an interview in the French magazine *Changer* (July/August 1994) Reymen described his decision to set up a support organization for bereaved parents. 'Sometimes parents have a need to talk,' he says, 'but are often incapable of doing so.' It started with four couples, whose children had been murdered, meeting once a month over a simple meal. Since then the association, called 'Parents of a murdered child,' has been contacted by 60 couples, with half of them becoming members.

Reymen and his wife found that sharing their story helped others. A truck driver whose daughter had been killed said, 'If these parents have had the courage to see the parents of the murderer of their daughter, then I do not have the right to kill the man who killed my daughter.'

The Belgian teacher also decided to write a book that would not only contain stories but also include help with practical questions about money and legal matters, and reference addresses. It was sent free, thanks to sponsors, to members of the

Lou Reymen:
'At that cruel moment I had to ask myself what I was going to do as a believer.'

Peter Biehl:
'Forgiveness has freed us. We can honour our daughter, we can remain true to her convictions and we can carry on her work.'

parliamentary commission on justice, the minister of justice, his staff and the courts. Within a short time the book was being used in police training, with the president of the court recommending it to lawyers.

Repercussions of the Reymens' work have included the appointment in each court of a social worker whose job is to get in touch with the families of murdered children and to be the go-between with the magistrates; the right of a family to have access to the inquiry files; the right to see the body of the child in a 'decent state'; and also some changes in the rules for national and municipal police forces in the cases of children's murders.

He wrote in 1999, 'Our life story is divided between "Before Ann" and "After Ann". It happened nearly 11 years ago. It still is as if it happened yesterday. I do not weep as much as at the beginning, but the pain remains the same.' Forgiveness is still for him the most difficult thing in his life, and in his faith. For years he could not pray, 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.' Even to recall his experiences is still costly for him, but 'I can actually say I am grateful to have suffered'.

Another dramatic example of the value-added dimension of forgiveness is the response of the parents of American student Amy Biehl to her murder in South Africa.

The Cape Town-based Amy Biehl Foundation and its Project Mosaic are training women community workers, supporting violence reduction, mental health education, and other education programmes, all areas which would have been dear to their daughter.

Amy Biehl was on a Fulbright Scholarship in South Africa, attached to the University of Cape Town, and had gone there to support the black majority's struggle for freedom. On 25 August 1993, two days before she was due to leave the country, she gave a lift home to some African friends and ran into a mob shouting anti-white slogans. Her friends tried to protect her, saying that she was a 'comrade'. But the mob saw only a white person and she was stabbed to death, one of thousands killed in the violent political climate preceding the 1994 elections.

The news was phoned to Peter and Linda Biehl. Amy had prepared them, repeatedly telling them that angry black youth were only doing what had been done to them by generations of white oppressors. They remembered her observation that when blacks died they were just numbers, when



Amy Biehl with Albertina Sisulu and Gertrude Shwopo of South Africa

whites were killed they got complete obituaries 'with names, families, pets, everything'. 'There was never any question about our position,' Peter wrote in the California State University quarterly, *Reflections*, 'It was a time for humility—a time for forgiveness.'

The four young killers were brought to trial and sentenced to prison. Then they applied for amnesty under the terms set up for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The Biehls wanted to participate in the hearings. Amy believed strongly in the importance of democratic elections and had told them four years earlier that the Commission was a pre-negotiated condition for free elections. They announced that they would not oppose amnesty to the killers if it were granted. 'We were certain Amy would concur.'

The Biehls were besieged by the media who plied them with questions like 'Aren't you angry?' or 'You mean you are prepared to forgive the killers?'. This response they found curious. 'What should be so strange about this,' asks Peter, 'in a country where recon-

ciliation and forgiving is national policy, rooted in centuries of African tradition?' At the hearing Linda did not feel anger when the killers came in, only a sort of sadness, a void, a feeling which Peter says describes his feeling too. They met the parents. 'We wanted them to know that we understood a bit what they might be thinking and that if their sons should be fortunate enough to win amnesty we expected them to be accountable for the behaviour of their

sons. Accountability is an important part of forgiveness,' he says.

One of the mothers was wearing an Amy Biehl Foundation T-shirt. Linda hugged her, a gesture which, Archbishop Tutu said, was a message that 'sent electric shocks down your spine'.

Peter ended his evidence to the hearings, after describing what Amy was doing in South Africa, with an offer to help in literacy training and education and job skill training. 'We at the Amy Biehl Foundation are willing to do our part as catalysts. All anyone need do is ask.' They have been taken up on their offer. They now spend half the year in South Africa, their lives linked permanently with the country.

Peter wrote in *Reflections*, 'We grieve our loss, yet forgiveness has freed us. We can honour our daughter, we can remain true to her convictions, and we can carry on her work.' They are often asked whether the amnesty process had brought them closure. He says, 'We have never sought closure and have no desire to close the book on Amy.'

It is not given to all of us to live through such testing experiences of violence and pain as many of the men and women in this book. But all of us in some degree or other share in the human experience of hurt and disappointment and broken relationships. And all of us can experiment with forgiving or asking for forgiveness. The results can be rewarding.

We might always remember the cautionary word from Philip Yancey, 'The only thing harder than forgiveness is the alternative.'

'Forgiveness: breaking the chain of hate' by Michael Henderson is published by BookPartners, Wilsonville, Oregon, 1999. See review p20. These edited extracts are reprinted with permission of BookPartners Inc.



Left: Warrington town centre in the aftermath of the bomb which killed Johnathan Ball and Tim Parry in March 1993. Right: Artist's impression of the young people's centre for peace and reconciliation which is due to open in March in their memory.

THE FOREST: mankind's first and last refuge

Alan Channer joins people of many faiths and traditions at an ecological symposium in the Château de Klingenthal, France

the Charles Leopold Mayer Foundation and the Goethe Foundation joined forces to support the venture.

Discussion about 'the tree and the forest' began with a review of the status of forests in the world today. Professor Hansjürg Steinlin from Germany pointed out that forest cover in fully industrialized countries has actually increased slightly over the last 30 years. As marginal agricultural land has been planted with forest, the growth of new trees has outstripped the exploitation of timber.

He contrasted this with the situation in the tropics, where forest has been diminishing at the relentless rate of one per cent per year for the last 20 years. 'This is not a problem of forestry,' he stressed, 'but of development.' He maintained that poverty, population growth, political instability, a lack of legal policies, poor policing and corruption all contributed to tropical deforestation.

Letitia Soares, an environmental activist from Brazil, supported this view. 'Eighty per cent of wood cut in the Amazon forest is illegal,' she told symposium participants. Since 10 per cent of the world's plant species are found only in the Amazon, it is a unique reservoir of potential pharmaceutical, horticultural and agricultural products. And yet, Soares pointed out, countries which have reduced timber exploitation at home are now putting increasing pressure on the Amazon. 'Our main need is to have the political will to have sustainable management,' she stressed.

The continuing assault on tropical forests is beginning to have far-reaching ecological



An indigenous forest dweller from Sarawak exchanges views with a senior French forestry official.

consequences. Hydrological cycles have become less predictable: river flow is more unstable, rainfall more erratic, and the frequency of floods, mudslides and drought is increasing. Trees also play a vital role in the carbon cycle; taking atmospheric carbon dioxide and 'sinking' it into wood. The burning of fossil fuels (including the remains of prehistoric trees) and of wood, is increasing the levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere which cause global warming. Thus the world's overall loss of forest is also contributing to climate change.

So the relevance of a symposium like this was quite clear. How can human populations be persuaded to respect the integrity of forests, before it is too late?

A remarkable plea was made by Bruno Manser, a Swiss artist and environmental activist who lived for six years with the Penan tribes in the jungles of Borneo. 'The last remaining virgin forests are a gift of the highest value that no human being can recreate once they have been logged,' he said. 'Only one per cent of all tropical timber comes from sustainable production. Only 10 per cent of the profits in the tropical timber trade remain in the exporting country.'

'Officially, only 0.6 per cent of the profit from timber cut in Sarawak goes to the indigenous Penan people. But even this doesn't reach them. Instead, there are 700 people imprisoned in Sarawak for complaining about the logging of their land. Is it worthwhile to sacrifice the biodiversity and resources of a country, for low prices, to the already overfed industrialized nations for the profit of some few?'

French Catholic priests, an Algerian Muslim, a Hindu, a Baha'i, a Christian and an activist Cameroonian, an Aboriginal from the Central Lands Council of Australia, a Shinto university lecturer, a Polish agnostic, a Cree Indian from Canada—all found themselves in complete agreement on this ques-

tion. And an awareness of how to start doing something about it began to grow.

First of all, it was made clear that ordinary people in the West are contributing directly to tropical deforestation without giving it a moment's thought. For example, the cabinet sold under the label 'walnut brown hue'; or those nice all-weather chairs, originating in 'sustainably managed forest in south-east Asia' down at your local garden centre; or even that humble broom which declares the 'brushhead is beechwood, originating Switzerland'—are probably from plundered forests in Cameroon, Cambodia and Malaysia respectively.

In other words, 'walnut' is only the hue, not the wood; 'sustainably managed forest in south-east Asia' is a only a label fabricated in Vietnam for wood cut illegally in Cambodia; and while the brushhead is made from beech, the handle comes from Sarawak. The fact is that unsustainably exploited tropical wood is cheap, and the timber trade conceals its origins. But such deception is not going to last.

Consumer groups are now lobbying retailers of wood to detail the origin of the wood and the species of tree. 'There must at least be good information,' said Marie-Lise Ramackers from the French group Agir Ici (Act Here), 'then at least it can be up to the consumers' conscience.'

Organizations like the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) are also working at it. Chris Elliot cited 'the unique situation in Mexico, where 80 per cent of forest is controlled by indigenous people'. There, WWF officials work with local people to verify the sustainability of their forest management practices. Export consignments of Mexican furniture, bound mostly for the USA, are then issued with 'ecological certificates'.

Chris Elliot pointed out that an internationally agreed and monitored system of 'eco-certification' would constitute a signifi-

cant step forward in safeguarding the world's remaining tropical forests.

The value of eco-certification was highlighted in the fourth Klingenthal Appeal, produced at the end of the symposium and made available to the press. The document also advocated the importance of spiritual education 'in order to stimulate respect for Creation and nature'. It mentioned that forest, which served as humanity's first place of refuge, 'has an important place in practically all religions and spiritual currents'—and that, furthermore, these currents can contribute to policies of conservation and sustainable management 'more than is generally acknowledged'.

As one quotation in the appeal pointed out: 'The composure of trees makes us aware of our own agitation... Their measured lives highlight the artificiality of ours—and remind us, if we had forgotten, that we too belong to nature and that nature does not belong to us.'

The symposium ended with an intercultural celebration. The participants sat in a large circle while a Franciscan nun placed fragments of tree from different parts of the world on the floor, at the four points of the compass. Then she thanked 'Brother Sun' and 'Mother Earth', 'Brother Fire' and 'Sister Water' for their life-giving qualities. Someone played a tape of birdsong—from Borneo, Brazil, Kenya and Australia. Then Bruno Manser dispensed incense from the jungles of Sarawak through the formal meeting room. Everyone was riveted.

At the opening of the symposium, Philippe Roch had said that if the 21st century could be a century of ecology, culture and spirituality, then it would necessarily be a century for the forest. I concluded that, if the 21st century could be a century for the forest, it would necessarily be a century of hope for mankind. ■



Mohammed Bouchentouf from Algeria helps to plant a tree in the grounds of the Château de Klingenthal. Bouchentouf works in programmes to halt desertification in Algeria.

Tropical rainforest, Costa Rica

The Penan woman from the rainforest of Borneo plucked at the strings of a simple instrument and primordial music suffused the formal meeting room. An Algerian, dressed in white, held up the branch of a date palm. A Tibetan Buddhist monk lifted some seeds out of a small bowl. In the French Château de Klingenthal, about one hour's drive from Strasbourg, an unusual symposium was beginning.

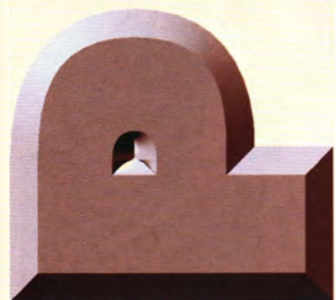
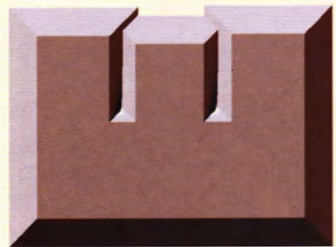
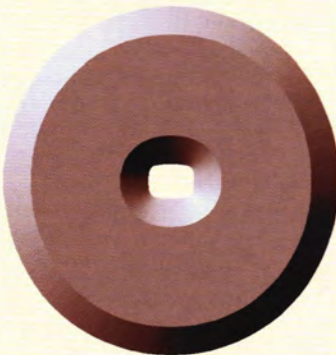
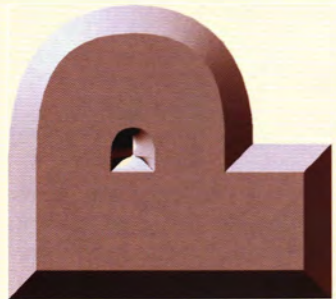
The theme was 'The tree and the forest—from cultural symbolism to programmed extinction?' and the opening address was given by Philippe Roch, Director General of the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment, Forestry and Landscape. He presented the ecological and the economic value of forest. Then he surprised everyone in the audience with a personal experience.

'For me the link between nature and

spirituality has always been close,' he said. 'In the modern world there is so much talking. I go to the forest to "listen". And whenever I have experienced great difficulty, when I have suffered, when I have hated someone and felt unjustly treated, I have gone to the forest, and my hatred has disappeared.'

Roch explained that while a vital objective of his government department is to manage commercial forests sustainably, he also believes it is essential to set aside areas of forest as 'sacred spaces', entirely independent of man's material needs.

The Klingenthal symposia are the brainchild of Dr Jean-Pierre Ribaut, a Swiss zoologist and Catholic deacon who, before his retirement, headed up the nature conservation department of the Council of Europe. Ribaut's idea was to bring people of diverse spiritual traditions together with scientists and policy-makers in fora which address globally significant environmental questions. The Catholic movement Pax Christi,



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Edited by
Edna Yee



Adriano Costa

Harnessing Lusiana's human resources

Three quarters of Italy cannot be farmed with modern equipment. The people, who have been living there since prehistoric times, would have left if the state had not provided services and offered incentives to stimulate the local economy. One of these services is maintaining schools, complete with headmaster and administrative staff, even when there are only a few classes.

The small village of Lusiana is the centre of a constellation of hamlets spread over the slopes of the Alps, north of Venice, and climbing to a plateau at an average altitude of 1,200 metres.

For 20 years Francesco Montemaggiore was the local mayor here and headmaster of a middle school with five small classes in Lusiana. The 'light' task of running the school suited his need to devote time and energy to his civic duties.

At the end of World War II the Lusiana area provided a meagre living to a population of 7,000. Now only 2,900 people live there and most of them commute to jobs in the plains.

In the early Nineties a national debt amounting to 120 per cent of GNP forced the Italian government to slash expenditure by reducing the budget of various ministries. This indirectly penalized the mountain areas. As a result many small schools were being

Francesco Montemaggiore of Lusiana, Italy: enhancing the self-esteem of mountain people

closed or integrated into schools in the plains.

A group of members of parliament formed a committee to draft a law that would reconcile the requirements of the budget with the needs of the mountain regions. Montemaggiore was invited to sit on the committee where he suggested that an article of the law should deal with the school system. The legislation passed into law in 1994 and allowed schools in sparsely populated areas to merge under a single headmaster even if they served children of different age groups.

Montemaggiore gave up his civic posts and offered to be the first 'guinea pig' for the new law. He found himself in charge of a school system with 14 establishments as far as 25 kilometres apart from each other, with 600 pupils and a teaching staff of 90. The size of his school district made it easier to draw on human resources and funds, which considerably improved the service his schools could offer.

He values the local people's self-reliance, respect for authority and strong family ties. He acknowledges that there is often antagonism between the hamlets, which is typical of sparsely populated mountain regions, and in this case is enhanced by ethnic and historic causes. Roughly half of the population served by his schools belongs to a German enclave on the plateau, which was never subdued either by the Romans or the Venetians.

The other half has Romanized, Venetian-Celtic origins.

Montemaggiore sees these differences not as a drawback but as a resource. With the support of the area's mayors he has organized optional courses for children and adults and established a children's chorus and theatrical group which have become a focus for civic and cultural life. Parents are also involved, and this helps them to appreciate the different regional traditions. Both the choir and the theatrical group have won prizes in national competitions; this has enhanced the self-esteem of the mountain folk.

Adriano Costa

Helping Crimea's street children

The Crimea is one of the best resort areas in the Ukraine, known for its beauty, warm weather, and recreational activities. However, one can also easily find hungry street children.

These homeless children need a 'halfway' point to help them either to return to their families or to get documentation so that an orphanage or school will take them on. A solution is the 'City Halfway House' in Simferopol where staff and volunteers serve abandoned, neglected and runaway children by providing food, clothing, accommodation and

Christian fellowship. The House also offers scholarships to university and provides room and board so that the older children can continue their education. The House, established with the help of American missionaries, is also supported by Ukrainians, Russians, Crimean Tartars and South Africans.

'Ukraine has always had difficult times—before and after independence,' says volunteer Angela Starovoitova. Parents cannot always feed their children and leave them on the streets to fend for themselves.

Ksousha Stoulova, National Director of the City Halfway House, says that of the 463 children helped by the House between January and October 1999, 161 were orphans, 208 were from dysfunctional families, 181 were from low-income families and 13 were from large families. Breakdown of the family also contributes to the number of runaways.

According to Stoulova, the main reasons why these children are on the streets are conflict with their peers, conflict at school and conflict at home. Some may have been sexually abused, in particular when they have prostituted themselves to get money for food.

The children face tuberculosis and sexually transmitted diseases. The children's heads are shaved to prevent the spread of head lice. Because of this and their baggy unisex clothing, no one can tell the sex of the children. Questions about their gender embarrass them and lower their self-esteem even more.

The staff and volunteers at the House provide a caring and nurturing environment for the children. Volunteers teach maths, reading, writing and offer Bible study as well as fellowship. They also provide activities such as arts, crafts and games.

'It is heart breaking to see children begging on

the streets,' said Starovoitova, 'and the horror stories you hear when you ask them why are unbelievable.'

When people ask how they can help, Stoulova and Starovoitova ask for prayers. The House is always in need of clothing, craft supplies and money. Despite hardships, staff and volunteers are proud of three success stories.

Two of the children went on to and completed technical college, and another is attending the Crimean-American College.

There are no orphanages within Simferopol city limits. The House staff and volunteers have a vision of creating a 'Three Stage Christian House' to help children in whatever transitional stage they may be. Stage 1 would provide shelter for a few nights; Stage 2 would provide shelter for three months or longer; and Stage 3 would allow children to stay until they are 18 or find jobs.

Edna Yee

Youth cyber café

You are invited to make a better living. You move your family to a place where you think you can get good work and house and feed them, and even send your children to get a proper education.

Instead you work your fingers to the bone only to find that you are given deplorable housing and offered jobs that nobody else wants. The salary is not enough even to sustain your family. To add insult to injury, your home is attacked and vandalized.

At the top of the M1 motorway, Leeds was the furthest north Afro-Caribbeans settled when they came to Britain in the late 1950s. Farming, mining and heavy industries were major sources of employment in the area. They came with high expectations, only to have them dashed.

Today the black community in Leeds has ideas on how to solve problems of education, training, and sustaining the community. Claude Hendrickson and his colleagues, Paul Auber and Dave McKoy, have run a successful series of job fairs and commu-

nity conferences, and opened a cyber café in the Chapeltown district of Leeds to offer a way into education and jobs for the area's youth, many of them black and Asian.

Hendrickson helped to establish the 10-2 Club in Chapeltown in June 1992 in response to the needs of young people. A clean, alcohol free environment open from 10pm to 2am, the 10-2 Club is a place for young people in the transitional stage between school and career or between jobs, and for those who cannot find jobs or need training. The Club offers guidance on housing, advocacy, money-management, and more.

In 1998 a local college had the idea of starting a cyber café, where the Internet could take customers beyond the physical location and time, but the initiative failed. Hendrickson understood the potential of the idea and saw it as a way of extending the services of the Club.

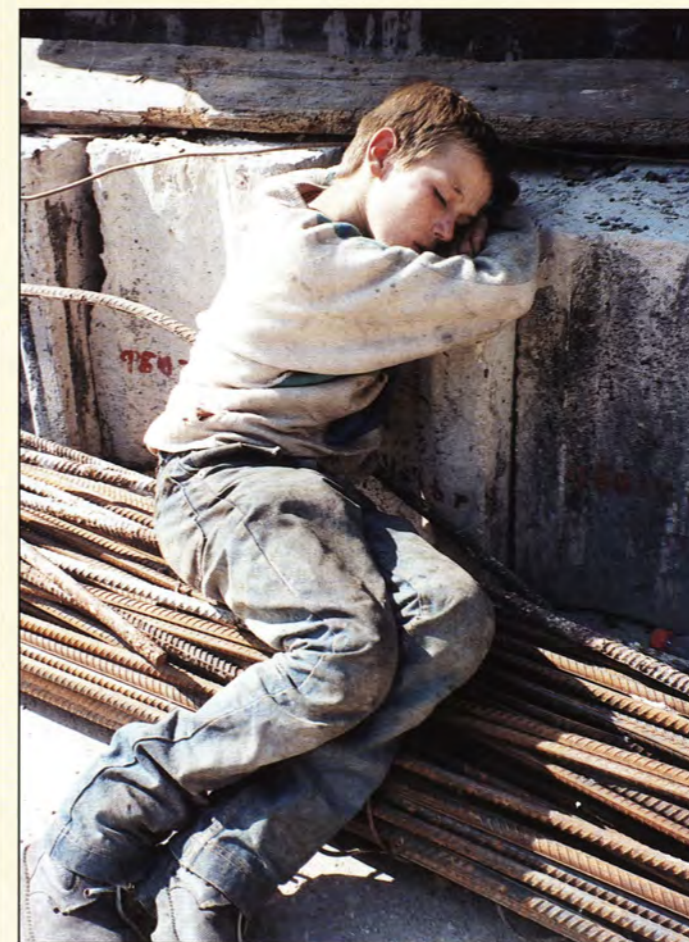
In 1999 a partnership was formed resulting in the YES (Youth Enquiry Service) Cyber Café, which he and his associates run in partnership with Thomas Danby College and Unity Housing Association.

The café's fully operational Web site was launched in January 2000 (www.yescyber.org.uk). The café's physical location is 131 Chapeltown Road in Leeds, where users are served tea and coffee. Services like e-mail addresses, Internet access and IT training are overseen by trained and experienced staff, who also act as role models and mentors.

While Hendrickson did not have any particular role models growing up, he knew the people he did not want to be like. He is driven by a determination to break stereotypes of the black community and by his belief in equal rights and justice.

'Ignorance and lack of information fuel racism,' says Hendrickson. 'Communication is an important step to progress.' The club in the café provides a supportive environment that reaches young people who may feel intimidated by university, colleges or formal advice services.

Edna Yee



Ksousha Stoulova

Simferopol's street children face tuberculosis, sexually transmitted diseases and lice.

Australian concert pianist
Penelope Thwaites talks to
Mike Lowe about music,
 parenthood and the
 need for grace.

DOING THE MUSIC JUSTICE

I've been working in an extremely competitive and unpredictable profession for 25 years,' says concert pianist Penelope Thwaites as she offers me another exquisite pastry in her beautiful north London home. 'There is only room for so many people, and at the very top just a tiny handful.'

Thwaites made her London debut at the Wigmore Hall in 1974 and has played in over 25 countries since then. Highlights have included Mozart with the Philharmonia, performances at the Festival Hall and a Royal Gala at Covent Garden. Her career has also taken some unorthodox turns. She is best known as a leading exponent of the work of Australian composer Percy Grainger, but has also created the music for a show about John Wesley, composed much besides and raised a family.

Preparing for a performance takes 'blood, sweat and tears'. She starts thinking about a new recital up to a year ahead—just memorizing the pieces is a huge achievement—and as it draws near she lives with the music day and night. 'You dwell on certain technical problems, and suddenly the solutions come to you. On the positive side you have the wonderful privilege of a deep acquaintance with the pieces of music you choose. On the negative side, you become haunted by the fear of not doing the music justice. You can't stand up and say to an audience "I'm sorry, I usually play that better, I'll try again".'

Having children raises hard choices for any professional woman, but in the music world it is particularly difficult. 'I'd built up a modest career before I got married,' says Thwaites. 'Some people knew my work. But if you step out of performing for any length of time you lose confidence, which is fragile at the best of times.'

When her first child, Matthew, was five months old she was invited by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation to tour her native Australia. Her husband, barrister Ted Jackson, travelled with her, and a neighbour, who had just qualified as a child-minder, enabled her to put in the hours of practice needed. But she admits that it wouldn't have been possible without the help of friends in Australia.

Matthew was followed by a daughter, Lucy. 'Babies are fantastic but they also have a mentally shredding effect,' says Thwaites. 'You move around in a perpetual fog of tiredness. Either you give up for good or you keep going. If it comes to a choice, then obviously the family comes first. But there was never a period of more than a few months when I didn't perform. I had concerts all through my pregnancies.'

She doesn't believe in being the kind of parent who sacrifices all for the children. 'It puts a terrible burden on them—the "after all I've done for you" reproach. Incidentally the famous Venezuelan pianist Teresa Carreno, who had six children, is supposed to have kept a pistol on top of the piano which she waved whenever they threatened to disturb her. You need something of that attitude.'

Once, at a particularly stressful time, she asked her children if she should give up performing. 'No, no,' they replied, 'we love your concerts. Besides, if you gave up we'd never hear you on the radio.'

Her children show signs of musical ability, but she wouldn't recommend the profession 'unless you are the kind of person who cannot live happily without it'. She is disenchanted by the way musicians can undermine colleagues or flatter those who might advance their careers, and saddened that artists are often marketed because they look good on a CD cover. 'To maintain your own integrity is a tremendous challenge.'

In such a tough world, she believes, acts of kindness are important. 'I was touched recently by a generous comment from another pianist. We performers find it very hard to praise each other.'

She met her husband at a dinner party with a mutual friend, and a few weeks later he attended one of her concerts, 'after which he sent the most intelligent and crafty letter. He wrote, "I have a friend who is a conductor. Do you play the Mozart piano concertos?" No performer could fail to be interested.' He proposed soon after. 'I thought he was crazy—we hardly knew each other—but he gradually won me over.'

It was her friend and mentor, the composer William Reed, who first suggested that as an Australian she might take a look at Percy Grainger. So she included a medley of the Australian composer's pieces at the end of a recital in London's Wigmore Hall. 'I wasn't sure I could get away with playing *Country Gardens* at the Wigmore, but it went down well.' As a result she put together a successful lecture recital called *The Inimitable Percy Grainger*.

Thwaites studied music for four years in Melbourne University in the 1960s with hardly a mention of Percy Grainger, despite the university being next to the Grainger Museum. She puts this down to the Australian 'cultural cringe' which, she says, is thankfully now disappearing. But she admits that Grainger didn't help his cause by putting 'absolutely everything' about his life into the Grainger museum.

'People have seized on the personal eccentricities which he exposed there, when

the really important thing about him is his music. Somehow it is a feature of our age that we always want to pull people off pedestals. You can honour a great artist without necessarily agreeing with his lifestyle.' Last year she put together an international weekend of Grainger's music in London. 'We had 120 performers and 70 works showing the breadth and humanity of his music.'

Grainger is now increasingly recognized as one of the most original composers of the century. 'He questioned everything—the orchestra, the traditional forms of the symphony—and was one of the first to take an interest in and record folk music from

'For me a performance is linked with the need to ask for grace. There should always be an element of something extra which is given.'

around the world. In many ways he was ahead of his time.'

Recently she persuaded the Chandos record company to embark on a complete recording of Grainger's works—a mammoth project which currently runs to about 25 CDs. 'So much of Grainger's music is for unusual combinations and is unlikely to be performed. Now at least people can listen to it.' So far Thwaites has contributed to five of the CDs, winning universally excellent reviews. John Steane commented in *Gramophone* magazine, 'I've never known a composer who seems so present here in the room; and have never been more grateful to a series of recordings for bringing him there.' Now she faces the task of recording the solo piano music.

She believes that music has a power to reach deeper than words, opening windows in the mind and allowing fresh ideas to enter. 'This gives us purveyors of music a tremendous responsibility.' She is dismissive of performers using music for their own self-aggrandizement, feeling that a musician needs the humility to put the music first and to respect the audience. 'For me a performance is linked with the need to ask for grace. There should always be an element of something extra which is given. Then everyone is a part of it—composer, audience and performer.'

Thwaites agrees with the popular perception that the classical music establishment has often been dominated by a snobbish minority and sees lessons in the success of

Britain's Classic FM radio station, which plays mainstream classical music. She feels that some composers this century fell in love with experimentation for its own sake and were supported by critics 'whose palates were jaded, perhaps from listening to too much music. Now we are realizing that composers, however experimental, must connect with their audience or art music will die.'

She recalls a concert she gave in Turkey, at a university where there had never been a piano recital before. The television was there, the Australian ambassador and the Governor. 'They received the music, old and new, as a gift, with intense spontaneous appreciation.'

She still gets moved by music she has heard many times. 'I remember one early morning drive when the mist was still lying on the fields listening to Fauré's *Pavanne*. It was magical. Another time I was sitting at the traffic lights when Schubert's ballet music for *Rosalinde* came on, and there was something special about the moment.'

She is concerned about the low priority given to music in British schools today. She once taught music for three years in a girls' boarding school and realized that children have to be taught how to listen. 'It's been proven that children do better academically all round when they are given a musical education. But there's an element in society that wants to undercut what has come through from previous generations. As my mother used to say, "Children are being asked to write poems before they've read any poetry."'

In bringing up her children, as in performing, she feels 'you do the best you can and leave the rest to God'. Like any parent she constantly questions whether she has done enough. 'There was a time when Ted used to take Matthew to school on his motorbike. Each morning I'd send them off with a prayer for safety as they wove through the London traffic. You have to live close to God. We don't have much time on this earth and we have to choose at each moment how we can use what we've been given to enrich others' lives.'

Thwaites remembers receiving a letter from an elderly man she'd invited to a concert. 'I kept reflecting on the miracle of it all,' he wrote. 'First that there should be music at all, then that people should work out a way of writing it down, and all the hours of preparation that you put into it to produce that marvellous evening.' Moved, she called his number only to discover that he had died that morning. 'Those are the kinds of reason I keep going,' she says. ■

How Dodds brightened up his game

Fifties cricket star, TC 'Dickie' Dodds tells Paul Williams why he started hitting the ball harder.

When in 1959 TC 'Dickie' Dodds retired after 13 seasons as opening bat for Essex County Cricket Club, the *World of Cricket* wrote that his had been a career 'that delighted cricket followers all over the country'. What delighted them was the unrestrained, flowing nature of his batting. 'More players like him are the key to bigger attendances at county games,' commented *The Star*. 'Whether his innings is long or short, it will never be dull.'

Dodds says he had not always played like that. Opening batsmen are, after all, expected to stay in and not take undue risks. He traces the total transformation of the way he played to a decision he made shortly before being released from the army in the spring of 1946.

War service had taken him to India and Burma. As it was coming to an end, he found himself asking searching questions about the future—and his role in it. What sort of post-war world would be constructed? How would things be different from before? In India and in Burma, and on the troop ship home, he had read books on, and met people connected with, Moral Re-Armament. Their idea was that change in the world began with yourself and the way you lived personally.

Staying at his father's vicarage in Warwickshire as he negotiated to join Essex County Cricket Club as a professional, he had long talks about these things with his younger brother Arthur. Arthur, who had served with the



Denis Lupton

RAF, had already decided to experiment with letting God run his life. 'Sitting in a deck chair on the vicarage lawn on a warm spring morning,' Dickie recalls, 'I decided that I would from that point only do what God told me to do, as far as I could understand it.'

The decision took a moment in time. With it I stepped into a new world.' Soon afterwards, sitting up in bed in his hotel room on the morning of the second day of his first full county match, he had a surprising thought—if professional

cricket was to be his life, he should ask God how he should play it. 'Immediately there came a thought into my mind, "Hit the ball hard and enjoy it."'

It was such an uncomfortable answer for an opening batsman that he tried to put it out of his mind. What eventually decided him to obey it was the realization that he was being asked to play cricket the way God wanted. 'I realized that God likes beautiful cricket. I was being asked to play beautiful shots to please a God who loves beautiful things.'

The Essex coach, Frank Rist, called Dodds 'a miracle man' because he 'had changed overnight from being one of the slowest opening bats in the country to one of the fastest'.

He carried his new way of playing through 13 seasons, making over 1,000 runs in each of them.

It remains an unbeaten record for Essex.

After retirement from the first class game, he carried his message of a way of life centring on obedience to God to different parts of the world. He spent many years in the Caribbean, working with the late West Indian Test cricketer Sir Conrad Hunte to bring new motivation to people across those islands. For the past 20 years he has done similar work in Thailand, making many visits there with his wife Kathleen.

For today's players Dodds (now 80) has a simple message: motive is everything—and it shows. 'The key question all cricketers should ask themselves is: why do they play the game,' he says with conviction. 'The thing that you have in your mind as a cricketer is what the spectator will get. You play the way you think and each of us chooses the way we think.' For Dodds himself the motive was to try to please God. ■

Cristoph Spreng



Natalie Porter: 'I wanted to fit in'

Peer pressure with a friendly face

When she was 16, Natalie Porter's stereotypes let her down. Drugs came to her in the hand of a friend, not some dodgy dealer.

be different, I wanted to fit in. 'It's OK, you know,' she said, 'nothing will happen to you. We're all here to look after you, you're our friend now.' A couple of them walked over casually and said, 'Yeah, we think you're cool, Nat.'

So much for the bullies surrounding their victim and being forceful. This was far more subtle. I felt obliged to share the tablet with my friend, because I didn't want to be the odd one out. As a teenager I was riddled with insecurities of non-belonging and loneliness. I only saw two possibilities, do this tablet and be accepted, or don't and be rejected.

And that was it. Every weekend we all went out together and used drugs. Over the next five years my friends offered me harder and harder drugs with higher and higher prices. I was as dependent on them as they were on me. We were a gang and needed each other in a very dangerous way. I left college, my relations with my parents failed, and I couldn't hold a job for longer than a month.

The drug dealer turned out not to be the dodgy looking guy on the street corner with the tatty clothes and unshaven face that my mother had told me about. He came in the shape of my friend, well-dressed, full of smiles and confidence.

Not once did these new friends look after me as they had promised that night. Quite the contrary. Many times they abandoned me and left me in unfamiliar places with unknown people. Often they would take my last pound for drugs, leaving me with no money to get home safely. We all have standards about what we believe to be true friendship, but somewhere along the line I settled for less.

How did I get out of it? I was lucky: I had the chance of a lifetime, to go to Australia to take part in a course run by MRA.

By then I had reached such a level of desperation that I was looking for ways out. But after years of drug and alcohol abuse I felt extremely weak in my will power, and didn't have the support network around me to help me break free.

When the chance came to go to Australia, it was a big decision to make. I had to take a harsh look at my life, which hurt, and decide to leave all that I had come to know—friends, lifestyle, habits, behavioural patterns. I had to start my life again, without my old peer group.

I felt very alone but I knew that what I was doing was the right thing, long term. I needed time to go back to basics and to find what I had been lacking for the past five years—direction for my life and a faith, something to hold me through moments of aloneness. The first three months were the worst, because there was this uncertainty about whether I really wanted to leave the old life behind—wasn't there some way I could have the best of both worlds? There were times when I felt very homesick, but I soon realized that complete cut-off was the only way I could succeed.

During my time in Australia I learnt an alternative lifestyle, which was far more rewarding and fulfilling and which enabled me to repair the broken relations with my family. Now I have returned home, and have not returned to my old friends.

Do I regret my choices? No, not even the bad ones. They led me to a journey of self-discovery, of who I am and what my needs are. Breaking with the old peer group was hard at the time, but I spare them little thought now. It was time to move on. The past is the past and tomorrow is the future. But today is a gift, that's why it's called the present. ■

FOR A CHANGE

FAC depends on charitable gifts to extend its outreach, particularly in countries with currency restrictions. Any gifts in the UK through covenants, Gift Aid or legacies are tax deductible. These and other gifts should be

made to: Moral Re-Armament, 24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1RD, UK (Registered Charity No 226334). Bank account details and Gift Aid forms are available on request.



BOOK REVIEW

HARD: BUT SO IS THE ALTERNATIVE

Forgiveness: breaking the chain of hate
by Michael Henderson
BookPartners, Oregon, 1999
ISBN 1-68151-050-0

Twenty years ago there were few books available on forgiveness; now there is a spate of them. Michael Henderson's is one of the latest, and strong as well as intriguing because he puts together many disparate peoples and histories, ranging from the problems of the Aborigines in Australia, the Good Friday Agreement and other initiatives between Britain and Ireland, to attempts to overcome racial and ethnic attitudes in North America and Africa. He has filled his narrative with individuals too, some unsung, some famous like Nelson Mandela and Pope John Paul II, who has often admitted his church's failures or asked forgiveness for them.

Henderson is a bold writer, with a background in journalism, so perhaps is incautious in some statements. Early in his book he claims that Mandela-like attitudes seemed to appear in profusion in 1998, with apologies from the United Church of Canada to native Canadians for abuse in church-operated schools and an apology from Italy to Ethiopia for its occupation in the 1930s. But some will want to question his listing of an apology from Tony Blair for Britain's role in the Irish famine of the 1840s, because the Prime Minister only admitted to the Irish his sense of regret. Similarly President Menem of Argentina only expressed regret for the Falklands/Malvinas conflict in the British newspaper, *The Sun*, despite that paper's headline suggesting the President had made an apology. Indeed, Henderson himself admits on p102 that 'President Menem was criticized for his expression of regret because it might be interpreted as an apology', although on p16 he has asserted, 'the President of Argentina apologized to the British for the Falklands/Malvinas war'.

Clearly, as he assembled his material, Henderson found he was dealing not only with forgiveness but with its relation to history; to contrition; to justice; to apology and to reconciliation. Later, too, he found the need to write about the relation of forgiveness to reparation as he documented the financial arrangements made by the US to Japanese Americans who were interned during World War II and their descendants.

Henderson admits forgiveness is hard, but so is the alternative. Forgiveness can be

found in all faith communities, he explains, citing the Dalai Lama's attitude to the Chinese who have so abused Tibet; the change that occurred in Mahatma Gandhi's grandson over the assassination of Pakistan's Prime Minister, Liaqat Ali Khan, which he had initially welcomed; and the work of Jews, Christians and Muslims at Open House in Israel. Here he tells in some detail the story of this house in Ramle, once owned by an Arab family, then—after their expulsion—acquired by a Jewish one, and now turned over by the daughter of the first Jewish occupant to peace and community work in the town.

Always something of a mystery, forgiveness is also a gift, indicates Henderson, citing a Bosnian priest. It can transform and ennoble people. Indeed, hatred can be replaced by love. As he starts his survey of many of the world's trouble spots, he admits that there is a 'link between personal and institutional forgiveness' but leaves the social and foreign policy implications 'to those who are better qualified to tackle the subject'. He does concede, however, that politicians have been 'nervous about forgiveness', perhaps, I suggest, because of possible demands if wrong-doing by the state is admitted?

In one area, Britain and Ireland, Henderson does venture forth, claiming that 'Repentance and apology alone cannot assure forgiveness or guarantee a settlement that lasts. But it is hard to think that a settlement is possible without it.' He is at his best when recounting stories like National Sorry Day in Australia, where attempts are being made to heal the wounds



between the Aborigines and the Europeans who went there, and the personal encounter between Eric Lomax and Nagase Takashi from Japan, who had been involved in Lomax's experiences as a prisoner of the Japanese during World War II.

I personally wish he had given clear references for his sources but am glad he draws attention to the heights of grace some attain. But lest some consider such heights unscalable, he ends his resumé with the Clean Slate Campaign from Oxford, and its suggestion that any individual can take one wrong in his or her life and put it right.

Brian Frost

Available from BookPartners Inc. PO Box 922, Wilsonville, Or 97070, USA, price \$18.45 including postage, or from Grosvenor Books, Tirley Garth, Tarporley, Cheshire, CW6 0LZ, UK, Price £11.50 including postage.

QUIET BUT RADICAL VISIONARY

The second conversion of Dr George Dallas
by Dr Roddy Evans
Belfast, 1999

This important and insightful little book appears at the moment when negotiations on the future of Northern Ireland have reached a point where there are real grounds for hope. It is packed with conviction and analysis which will be of interest to anyone trying to get to grips with the root causes of the conflict on both a political and personal level.

Written as a posthumous biography by Roddy Evans, a Southern Irish Anglican and close friend, it tells the story of George Dallas, a Northern Presbyterian. The introduction by Father Gerry Reynolds, a Northern Catholic, highlights the collaborative approach to the book. This would have pleased Dallas as his deep love for his own community led him to dedicate 20 years to learning to understand, and thus improve, the relationships between all communities on the island. The latter half of the book is made up of his writings on these issues.

Dallas's perception of reconciliation is not sentimental and his gutsy interpretation of the issues pulls no punches. His views are radically expressed in a way which may enflame those who consider themselves to be British in the Northern Irish community, but Dallas was a visionary, and a prophet is seldom accepted in his own country.

This book eloquently expresses the effect of the past 200 years on the mindset of

Protestants and Catholics on both sides of the border. Dallas believed that the situation in Northern Ireland needed the creative cooperation, understanding and repentance of the English who had planted Protestant settlers there and perpetuated the unjust society which resulted. He claimed that this had had a profound effect on the psyches of both the oppressed Catholics and those Protestants used to maintain the system. This factor has largely been ignored in the constant focus on the IRA, and blame of it for the political chaos and violence.

Dallas believed that the power of ideology fused with the Holy Spirit would be the driving force of radical change in human motivation. This for him meant an acceptance by all peoples of Northern Ireland of their place in an Irish nation which would embrace all our different communities and backgrounds and free us from entrenched attitudes and suspicions. Many Protestants would find this incredibly difficult, as years of polarization have brought a fear of Catholicism, which is seen as intrinsically linked with Irish national identity.

The key, Dallas felt, lay with the Northern Presbyterians. Punished for uniting with the Catholics in an attempt for independence in 1798, they adopted a British identity and from then on looked to Britain for the security of their religion and culture. The intransigence that we have seen over the years is partly due to the insecurity and alienation of a people who felt neither accepted as Irish nor British, and at the same time nurtured the feeling of being a special people favoured by God, unwilling to give up their political supremacy.

Dialogue will be inadequate if it is only between political moderates. Through his writings and the remarkable friendships he developed with others of different traditions, Dallas managed in his quiet but honest way to open people's hearts to those whom they had perceived until then as 'them'.

As John Austin Baker, then Anglican Bishop of Salisbury, wrote to George's wife, Ruth, on his death, 'He helped us all to see our own situation in a new light and challenged us to find the courage to acknowledge our common humanity.' Dallas also provides a worthy contribution to the current debate in a radically new political forum of devolved government, which will go a long way to establishing a lasting peace into the new Millennium.

Frances Hume
works with Christian Aid in Glasgow.

The book is available from Mr and Mrs DH Hume, 11 Fort Rd, Helen's Bay, Co Down, BT19 1LD, Northern Ireland. Price £4.00 (including UK postage). Cheques payable to The Oxford Group Belfast.



Loading books gathered by children in Gwynedd and Conwy for schools in Lesotho

Wales and Lesotho— a unique partnership

The path of aid does not always run smooth, as Welsh school children have discovered. A consignment of books worth £120,000 from Welsh primary school children was a casualty of the political unrest in the southern African Kingdom of Lesotho in September 1998.

The books had been collected as part of a three-year scheme being organized by Dolen Cymru (Wales Link), the promoters of a unique inter-country twinning between Wales and Lesotho that started in the mid-Eighties (see *FAC* Feb/March 1995 and Aug/Sept 1997). Welsh school children are being asked to donate reading books they no longer need as part of the project, funded by the National Lottery, to help raise literacy levels in Lesotho.

The first container-load of books, from Anglesey, was safely distributed to schools in the Mafeteng district. But the second consignment, in 400 boxes, was destroyed when a Ministry of Education warehouse in Maseru was burned to the ground. The unrest had started after the May elections but tension increased when South African and Botswanan soldiers entered the capital to try and restore order.

Dolen Cymru told Clare Short, UK Secretary of State for International Development, of the loss, and her department's Pretoria-based Programme Manager for Lesotho later purchased replacements.

Undeterred by all this, children from many parts of Wales collected three more container-loads of books during 1999 (some of which had to be replaced after being infested by rats). Some books were distrib-

uted in remote mountain areas of Lesotho where books of any kind are a rarity.

Dolen Cymru was the brainchild of a doctor, Carl Clowes. He suggested finding a developing country the same size as Wales with which Wales could identify, and where a relationship could be established. Lesotho was chosen after wide public consultation.

Since the Link was formally established there have been many exchanges and myriad initiatives in such areas as health, religion, agriculture, women's organizations and education.

For instance, in the latest of a series of exchanges between young people from the churches in Wales and their counterparts in Lesotho, an ecumenical group of nine from Wales spent two weeks in Lesotho last July. They had been selected from six denominations. Paul Christmas, the Catholic representative, said, 'One of the most valuable experiences for me was that of ecumenism, both from my Welsh and Basotho friends.'

In 1999 Queen Mother 'Mamohato of Lesotho visited Wales with her second son, Principal Chief Seeiso Seeiso, and four others. They attended the twinning of St Davids and the Queen's home village of Matsieng.

The royal party also took the opportunity to visit the grave of Prince Jeremiah Labopena Moshoeshoe in Welshampton, Shropshire. The prince, a son of Moshoeshoe I who founded the Kingdom of Lesotho, died there in 1863 after walking in the rain and developing pneumonia.

The evidence suggests that both Wales and Lesotho derive benefit from the link. How long will it be before more countries take up the idea? Kenneth Noble



A DIFFERENT ACCENT

by Michael Henderson

Have you heard the one about...?

An English reviewer of a book of my commentaries wrote, 'Michael Henderson has a good memory for old jokes.' Praise or criticism, the comment told me the reviewer was my age. This column may confirm his verdict.

What with Clean Slate Campaigns and Y2K alarms, it's been a serious season. And there's seriousness in this issue of *FAC*, some contributed by me. A little lightening up would do no harm. So be warned, there is nothing serious about this column.

I speak a lot and am always looking for appropriate jokes. I don't like speakers telling their audience, 'I am going to start with a joke.' A little more subtlety is called for. I once spoke to a formally dressed audience in Virginia. No-one had warned the speaker that it was a black tie event. I was underdressed. So I was able to tell of the first dinner party we gave when we came to live in the US. Concerned that I might be over-dressed, I went to a window where I could observe the guests arriving. I stood behind the curtain and turned out the lights. Sure enough, our first guest was open-necked. I dashed to my room and shed my coat and tie. The doorbell rang. I went to the door. There stood the wife. 'Where's Cyrus?' I said. 'Oh,' she replied, 'he saw through the window that you had a tie on and has gone to get one.'

There may be some question about how

long you are to speak. On such occasions I remember that a certain economics professor had a reputation for long speeches. His wife said, 'After you have heard one of my husband's speeches you may not be any wiser but you're certainly a lot older.'

Or if there is a question about the size of the audience don't forget Churchill's response to one woman who gushed to him about the numbers of people who had come to hear him: 'It is quite flattering, but whenever I feel

'He is telling a joke. Please laugh.'

this way I always remember that if instead of making a political speech I was being hanged, the crowd would be twice as big.'

Sometimes a joke may work only if the audience has certain knowledge. For instance, the front page of *The Gleaner* in Kingston, Jamaica, once had a large photo of the Catholic archbishop and me enjoying a joke. The paper didn't tell their readers what the joke was. I am not sure they would all have got the point. It was about a British ambassador who had had a heavy day at the office and wanted to let down in the evening. He went to a party. When the band struck up he noticed a red dress across the hall. He

went over. 'May I have the honour of this dance?' he asked. 'Certainly not,' came the swift reply. 'For three reasons. One, this is our national anthem. Two, you're drunk. Three, I am the papal nuncio.'

Sometimes American audiences, perhaps from my accent, make some connection in their mind with the BBC, which, as I point out to them, is not always regarded with the same esteem at home. There was a BBC documentary producer who wanted to film a confessional. When the last penitent had gone, he went and knelt down. 'Excuse me, father, I work with the BBC.' 'Thank you for coming to see me, my son,' said the priest. 'It must have taken courage to make a confession like that.'

If you are dealing with some theological subject, there's an adaptable joke about a woman, confused about moral issues, who went to see her bishop. When she came back, she was asked, 'Are you still confused?' 'Yes, but on a much higher level.'

Not all jokes are translatable. At one international conference a speaker was impressed with the attentiveness of many in his audience. He did not know that the Japanese interpreter was saying through the headphones, 'He is telling a joke. Please laugh.'

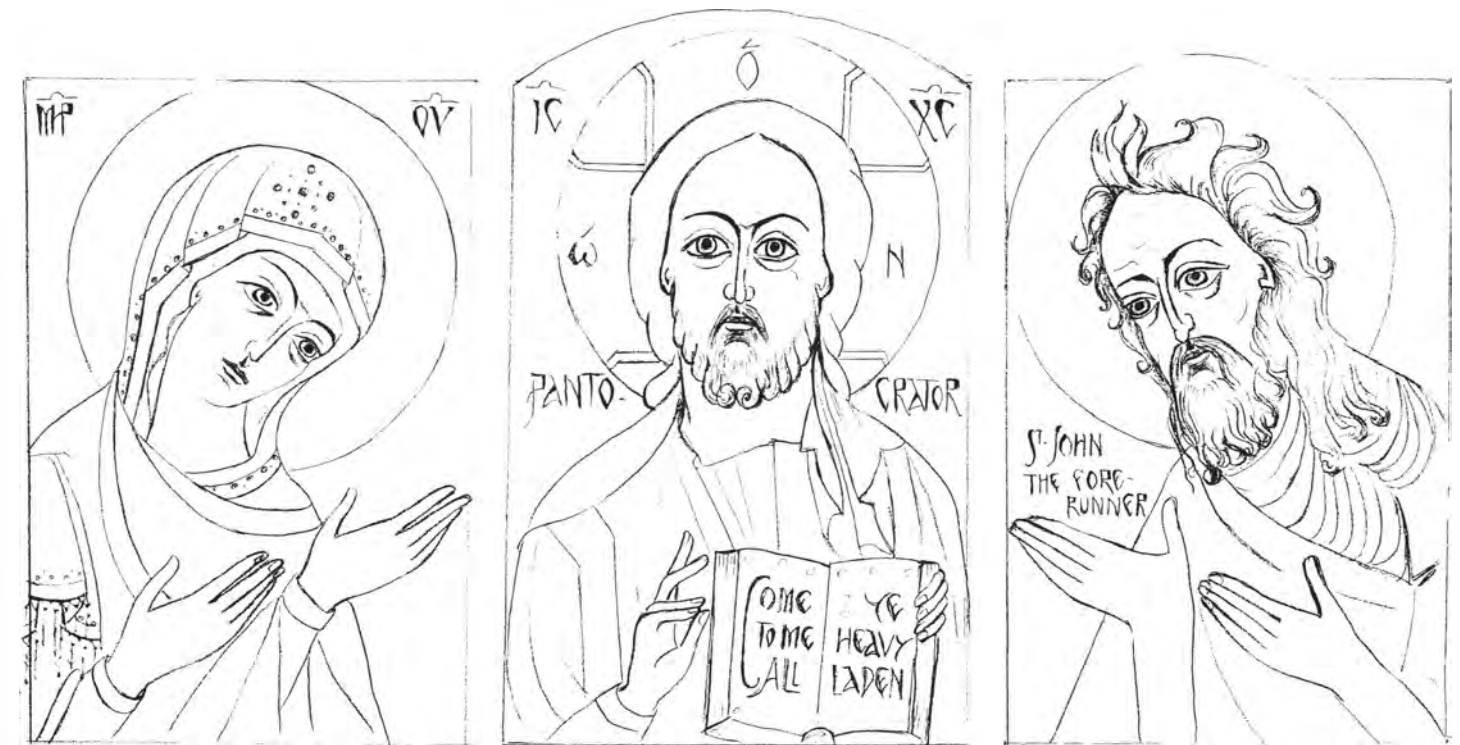
Never try the following story at an international conference. There was once a mixed-up fellow who went to see his psychiatrist. 'Doctor,' he said, 'sometimes I feel like a wigwam and sometimes like a tepee.' The psychiatrist gave his diagnosis: 'You are just too tense.'

By the way, if at any point in the future you are listening to one of my speeches, just imagine someone saying to you over headphones, 'He has told this joke before, but laugh anyway.'

Michael Henderson is a British journalist living in the USA.

REFLECTIONS

by Eva Riise Gundersen



Drawing by Eva Riise Gundersen based on 11th century icons from Georgia

A window to another reality

There is a growing interest in icons and icon painting, amongst people of all denominations and people of no faith. I believe this is more than a fashion trend. People are tired of empty materialism and intrigued by the spiritual depth of icons, often unable to explain why.

Personally, I was also ill at ease about some developments within my own denomination and felt a need to learn more about the Christian church before it split into its Eastern and Western parts nearly 1,000 years ago. When one is searching for a way forward, it helps to know where we have come from. I practically stumbled over the icon milieu of Finland, where I, a Norwegian, have been living since I married a Finn 11 years ago.

The Orthodox Christians have been guardians of a tradition which belongs to us all. The apostle Luke was the first icon painter, according to legend. Painting icons is the best way to learn about them and their roots. I am part of a group which works together on Saturdays at a new Orthodox church near my home in Helsinki. Sometimes we travel six hours to seminars at the New Valamo Monastery in East

Finland, to which our group is linked.

One begins to see the differences between icons representing traditions from specific areas, as well as the overlappings between them. The Byzantine painters travelled widely in those early centuries. Having myself struggled to make a drawing of the extraordinary Vladimir Mother of God (13th century, now hanging in Moscow) I was thrilled to see a mirror picture of her face in a beautiful Georgian 11th century Angel Gabriel.

Finns from the country's Eastern borders have been Orthodox for 1,000 years and are influenced by the Novgorod school of icons, which developed in the 14th century. It is softer than the contemporary Greek style and, some say, more spiritual. Incidentally, it was in the original Viking city of Novgorod that the Norwegian king and saint, Olav, took a few years' sabbatical when my countrymen rebuffed his efforts to make them officially Christian. Believers in Novgorod may have helped him to become more humble; when he returned home he succeeded in his endeavour—before being killed in 1030 by farmers who worshipped the Norse god Odin.

If you disregard the life source of icons you cannot fully grasp what they are about.

Icons were an effort to crystallize Christian thought. An image was necessary. Indeed how can you express in words alone the light of the resurrection? In Orthodox church services icons play a part alongside the spoken liturgy and music.

We are learning to let the light be the main element in the painting. In icons as in life the darkness of evil kills communication. Just as when you perform music, as icon painter you do not create, you interpret on the basis of tradition and liturgy. No icon can mediate something which is lacking in the life and consciousness of the painter. There is always harmony in truth, therefore the basic drawing must be harmonious.

The written and spoken word on its own often reaches the brain more than the heart. And the brain is man's best weapon for control. A good icon imposes nothing, not even itself. For the listening heart it opens a window to another reality and eventually to deeper insight about ourselves. That gives a basis for communication.

A need for dialogue is already the mark of this new Millennium; between East and West, between the continents, between people of different faiths and ethnic backgrounds. The guardians of our icon traditions have much to contribute.

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