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Easter is the triumph of faith,  
a time to determine that God will win  
—in ourselves and our nations.  
This Easter issue tells of people who  
have accepted this calling.

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## FOUND— A MINISTRY

At the end of this month a new production of 'Columba', the play with music about St Columba, will have a first performance at the Westminster Theatre, London, before setting off an extensive tour of England, Scotland and Wales.

JOHN HOLDEN, an Anglican priest, joined it for its 1979 tour, and is part of the present company. He writes:

WE CELEBRATED the anniversary of my ordination while the company was staying in Nairn. I looked at the effectiveness of my ministry over the past ten years. The record was not impressive.

From the beginning of my training I was angry with God. I had always wanted to be an actor. I had a place at one of the London drama schools which I gave up in order to study for the priesthood. When I made that decision something hardened in my heart. My attitude was, 'I have given to God the thing I want for myself. He has no right to expect anything else.'

With this sense of rebellion I accepted quite uncritically the ideas of *Honest to God* and the New Morality. The early '60s was a time of revolution in theological colleges. One of the main ideas was that in a technological society man had 'come of age' and entered into a more mature and less dependent relationship with God. I chose to think I was such a mature and independent Christian that I could do what I wanted with my own life.

I was determined to enjoy myself and was reluctant to face up to the rigorous demands of Christian discipline. The only absolute standard, I argued, was love and that love could justify anything. My life became radically dishonest.

Within a few years I had come to hate myself but did not know why. Abusing another school of thought, that of Liberation Theology—which was born out of the pain of oppressed peoples in the Third World—I turned my hatred against social injustice. I could see that the world needed to change and wanted to be part of the struggle. But I was really using political confrontation as a means of releasing my own inner frustration.

My efforts did not produce social change, at least not on a scale which justified to me the energy which was expended. I became increasingly disillusioned and began to blame the Church for failing to live out the demands of the Gospel. Surely, I thought, if the

institution of the Church placed itself wholeheartedly on the side of the impoverished and oppressed then the world would change? I did not see that my anger with the church was a projected anger at my own impotence. Eventually I left the full-time ministry.

I was making unreasonable demands on the people closest to me. By rejecting God I had created a vacuum which I expected them to fill. The relationships broke down. I became increasingly isolated, cherishing my loneliness as a defense against God and other people.

It was in this frame of mind that I started the tour of *Columba*. However I encountered such a spirit of love that I was reminded that God was real. And that He had called me to serve Him. For 15 years I had lied to God, other people and myself. The comradeship I found in the company gave me the courage to face up to the mess I had made of my ministry. The freedom I saw in them gave me hope that I also could experience God's healing power. Tentatively my prayers became more personal.

The bitterness has gone. God has renewed my faith and I am left with a sense of wonder. I know that the path to wholeness depends on my continued co-operation. God has given me a vision of what my life can become. But in order to realise that I have had to try to restore the broken relationships of the past.

I have also had to accept the responsibility for my own actions, instead of using other men's ideas to justify them.

# NEW WORLD NEWS

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John Holden

Having asked God to take over my life I can go back to the struggle to change the world—but this time in His strength, not my own. God has used *Columba* to bring healing in my own life. I believe that He can use it, together with other plays, to bring healing on a wider scale. We are to be God's signs to the world of His healing power.

Although I no longer have a parish I have discovered the nature of the priestly ministry. It is a task which we are all called to share. It means being prepared to be responsible for others and to share the cost of His redeeming ministry. As the prayer of an unknown priest says:

**Touch thou my life with fire.  
Visit my heart with any pain  
So it be to my people's gain.**

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## CHEERS FOR KEIR HARDIE TO RETURN

MINERS at Hem Heath colliery, Stoke-on-Trent, called for a repeat performance of the play *Keir Hardie—the man they could not buy*, when it was presented at the colliery last week. It is one of Britain's biggest pits, employing 1700 men, with an annual output of over a million tonnes.

The play tells the story of the founder of the British Labour Party, and his struggle for social justice. A group of trade unionists and others are presenting the play voluntarily all over the country.

Invited by Jim Colgan, Hem Heath Branch Secretary of the National Union of Mine-workers, the play was shown in the miners' sports and social club. The audience included striking steel workers—one steelworkers' branch secretary had driven 100 miles from South Wales to see the play.

Introducing it, Peter O'Neill, Secretary of the club and 31 years a miner, said, 'This is a stirring story. Keir Hardie believed that socialism was a principle, not a dogma. He was a man of strong Christian principle. I believe that Keir Hardie is just as important today as in those days. He always stuck to his guns and all his principles were founded on Jesus of Nazareth.'

The audience watched intently as the story of Keir Hardie's fight to rouse the conscience of Britain unfolded. At the end Mr Colgan said, 'I have been very, very moved tonight', and there were cheers when he added, 'We will be demanding another show here in the near future.'

The steelworkers' leader said, 'The impact of this play is tremendous. The sooner we get it to the great mass of people, the better.'

A group of young people from several European countries have been at Tirley Garth, the MRA centre in the north of England, as part of a 10-month course of study and action with Moral Re-Armament. EVA DUCKERT from Sweden, one of the course leaders, gave this talk to the course:

**LIFE IS A BATTLE.** One reason for this is that we are all torn between two forces—an instinctive resistance to God and a natural attraction towards Him. Something very basic in us does not want Him. But at the same time we feel pulled towards Him, because we were created to live in harmony with His will.

I've discovered that knowing myself as I really am is one of the first conditions for getting to know God. By this I mean not just facing the sins I've committed in the past, but facing the tendencies in my nature that keep me away from faith.

Fear is one of the counter-powers to faith in my life. You can't be led by fear and faith at the same time, one crowds the other out. With me, fear is often dominant. The desire to keep a tight control on my feelings and on what happens to me is perhaps a child of fear.

Pride is another obstacle to faith—I hate people to see my weakness, I prefer to cover it up. And one child of pride is fear of what people think of me.

Thirdly I am ambitious—I only want to do things if I can do them well. The combination of fear and ambition leads to tensions, because fear holds me back while ambition pushes me forward. This uses up energy and undermines my ability to know what God wants me to do.

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### **'The magnetic attraction becomes stronger.'**

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There have been a couple of moments in my life when I was forced to see the truth about myself. Each time it was like dying, or like diving to the very bottom of the sea. It felt like being a cripple without sticks. It has been at these times that I have had some of my clearest experiences of God—where I have felt that we've met, when I have felt Christ's love for me, His patience with me, His forgiveness for me and His belief in me.

If I admit the truth about myself so fully that I cannot continue without a total surrender of my life to God, the result is that I start to become more conscious of God's greatness than of my own sin and inadequacy. This is a great relief—it sets me free and lifts my concentration from myself to God.

In this way the most difficult part of one's nature can be a signpost to God, rather than an obstacle to finding Him. But this depends on us. No one can help being born with a difficult character or in a difficult situation. But it's up to us whether we accept the pain and discomfort of facing the truth about ourselves, the first step to making faith a driving force in our lives.

Four years ago, at a time when I was feeling fairly successful in my work for God and at last felt I had begun to find security

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## **Nothing I asked for, All I could hope for**

**'We are talking about not just our spiritual growth, but the survival of mankind.'**

in Him and in myself, I had a breakdown. This affected me physically as well as nervously and for three years I was ill. I felt I had lost all the security I had begun to find. It was like being constantly on the bottom of the sea where it is cold and dark—for three years. And yet I knew all the time that God was still there.

I soon realised that my health would not get better unless I found a much more total dependence on God. So this became a long-lasting experience—like the rare moments of truth I had had before—of my inadequacy and of God's greatness. At times I thought I would never get out of this prison where I was always being confronted with the destructive powers of my human nature. But slowly health returned—always parallel to the growth of a new, real faith in what God could do.

I have been shocked since then at how quickly the intensity of these experiences fades and I begin to feel that I can manage on my own. 'What can I do to keep these painful and powerful lessons alive and alert in my life?' I have asked myself. I have begun to realise that while awareness of one's own limitations and worthlessness is one step to God, that alone is not enough. It is not enough to want God because He is the solution to my problems—I have to want Him simply for His own sake.

The love of God must become my driving force—and I do not think this can happen through my own effort. It is a gift. But a gift depends on how much I want it.

Becoming conscious of one's need of God is one step on the way to learning to love Him. So are obedience to God's direction and caring enough for other people to try to pass on what faith one has. If I do not put all my good intentions and theories into practice my faith will soon become shallow and unreal. Most of life consists of ordinary days without dramatic experiences. Faithfulness in everyday life is one of the keys to a deeper faith.

For faith to grow deep, we need to add something more than activities, plans, good deeds, events and even experiences to our spiritual diet. Reading and studying what others have written about faith has nothing to do with being intellectual. It is a question of drawing from the tremendous spiritual reservoir that exists. The Bible, the books of Henry Drummond, Carlo Carretto and

Cardinal Hume have helped me greatly, as have the lives and writings of St Francis, Frank Buchman, Mother Teresa and many others. Those who think they can do without reading such books limit their spiritual lives to their own experience.

Through reading you can get to know things about God. But it is through prayer that I have begun to get to know God. I have found that the more I pray, the more of a beginner I feel. But at the same time one starts to get a glimpse of an added dimension—in one's relationship with God and with others. The magnetic attraction towards God becomes stronger—and so, at times, does the resistance to Him and to humiliating oneself in prayer. 'Praying,' writes Carlo Carretto, 'means believing deep down in your own weakness and believing deep down in God's omnipotence.'

To go back to my illness—there is no doubt that prayer was the main medicine, and I was fortunate enough to have a doctor who gave me spiritual as well as physical help. By this I don't just mean my prayers for health, for sleep, for pain to cease or that I would come out of this difficult period in my life. Actually the kind of prayer that helped was quite the opposite.

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### **'A spiritual recreation of our lives, our societies and the world.'**

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My husband and I started an experiment. First I tried to find out what the real problem was, because often the physical discomfort was a symptom of something much deeper that was worrying me. Then we thanked God for the difficulties, for the fact that through them I needed and wanted God.

I didn't feel like thanking God at these times, of course. But as I accepted the idea, each time it was as if something turned round inside me, and slowly I did become grateful. This did more than anything to heal me, because the power of evil, the tensions, the resistance and the resentment lost their grip on me. These became such precious experiences—in spite of the pain—that we nearly miss them now that I'm better.

The challenge to me now is not only to thank God for my improved health, for my husband, for the child we are expecting, for all the good things God showers on me, but also to continue to take the obstacles in life as opportunities to thank God.

In a French book of prayers I found this poem, written by a group of handicapped people. This is a rough translation:

**I asked for strength,  
so that I could be successful,  
He made me weak  
so that I would learn to serve humbly.**

**I asked for health,  
so that I could do great things,  
He made me a cripple  
so that I would do things better.**

**I asked for wealth,  
so that I could be happy,  
He made me poor  
so that I could be wise.**



Eva Duckert speaks to the group

**I asked for power,  
so that I could be appreciated by men,  
He made me weak  
so that I would need God.**

**I asked for things,  
so that I could enjoy life,  
I was given life  
so that I would enjoy all things.**

**I have received nothing  
of what I asked for,  
But I have received  
all that I could hope for.  
Almost despite myself  
all my unformulated prayers have been  
answered.**

**Amongst all men  
I am the most richly blessed.**

We have all heard of people who have reached spiritual greatness through intense suffering. Many of the Russian dissidents have experienced this. Their stories move and impress ordinary people, but they may not seem very relevant to our lives, because we are not ill, we are not being tortured or oppressed and we hope we never will be. Does this mean that our faith can never be as real as theirs?

Suffering for us may mean something different. It may be taking the needs of the world or of our friends into our hearts. Or it may be a decision to face ourselves rather than to hide from ourselves. Most of all it may be to accept a calling that is greater than we can manage, that brings us constantly back to God. The evil in the world and in my nature becomes a suffering if I truly have a commitment to see a change in the world. And this sort of suffering can be as much a door to faith for us as that of people in concentration camps and with cancer can be to them.

When faith becomes a commitment not only to search for God's will for my life, but also to search for God's will for the world, it ceases to be comfortable. What we are talking about is not just our spiritual growth as individuals, but the survival of mankind. Either we head for destruction, or we go towards a spiritual re-creation of our lives, our societies and the world. Then we are taking part in the realisation of God's goal for mankind.

## ZIMBABWE A turning point?

by a correspondent  
in Salisbury

'NOW WE CAN get back to our homes.' This was the immediate response of Bande, a family house-servant in one of Salisbury's white suburbs, when he heard that Robert Mugabe had swept to victory in his country's independence elections. Bande comes from Mount Darwin, on the Mozambique border; and twice during the past year his wife and family had been burnt out of their home in a 'protected village' there.

His remark reveals one of the reasons for Mugabe's overwhelming victory. The people have had enough of the war. They have decided it must stop. So they have voted in an avalanche for the men most responsible for waging the war, because they alone had the power to stop it.

To a visitor from overseas, this may seem strange logic: to vote for the man who is punching your nose because only he can stop doing so. And to the young white Rhodesians who have spent costly weeks, year after year, defending their wives and families (and, as they see it, those of the blacks too) from Mugabe's guerrillas, such a statement tastes bitter as gall. But to those who have suffered in the villages it is a compelling argument.

But there is another, deeper reason. In the hearts of many Zimbabwean blacks lies the smouldering memory of millions of slights and insults. While racism was never codified here by law as comprehensively as it has been in South Africa, it has perhaps been all the more hurtful because of this. It seems hard, in the beauty and order of Salisbury's tree-lined streets, where well-dressed blacks and whites move easily in and out of shops and offices, to speak of race hatred. But what else has fed the flame of the black determination, once the opportunity finally came, to end white domination once and for all—and to vote for the man and party who most clearly would do it? In such a case, every white denunciation of Mugabe only drew more votes to his cause. 'We are not interested in what the whites say about Communism,' said a post-graduate student on the eve of polling day. 'If the whites are against it, maybe it's what we need.'

### Parliament

The Rhodesia of Cecil Rhodes—proudly defended by some, scorned and hated by others, battered by international sanctions and so recently locked in a tragic and costly war—has become the Zimbabwe of Robert Mugabe. Sanctions are lifted, the war has ended.

Many can claim a share in this achievement; Mugabe and Nkomo, the fighters in

the bush war, the Front Line Presidents, and other Commonwealth leaders. The 'internal' leaders too have played a part; they manoeuvred the whites into handing over power on a 'one man, one vote' basis a year ago.

And what of Ian Smith? Flexibility is not a quality the world often attributes to him. But to move, as he has done, from the embattled fox-hole from which he shouted defiantly, 'No change in my lifetime', to his present position as he deals on behalf of his white supporters with a Marxist black prime minister, is a remarkable achievement in change. In fact, he is still trusted here, not only by the whites. One militant black leader said yesterday, 'Whatever we think of him, Smith is honest with his own people. He has led them with integrity. We can work with him.' Having won the twenty seats allocated to whites in the new Zimbabwe parliament, Ian Smith kept noticeably quiet during the black elections. Now he was the first political leader to call and congratulate Mr Mugabe on his victory, and his first public statement since the election has been a call to the whites 'not to panic'.

### Guerrillas

The part played during the elections by the white Rhodesians themselves needs acknowledging. When the Australians, Fijians and the rest pulled out of the 'Assembly Points', they left thousands of black young men to be watched over and fed by a handful of white Rhodesians. It is a paradox easily missed, and an essential part of the picture.

The British contribution has won much praise from commentators. Mrs Thatcher's declaration at Lusaka, 'Britain will be responsible' set everything moving. Lord Carrington's skilful chairmanship at Lancaster House kept the momentum going. Since then in Rhodesia, the British have put on a quite astonishing performance. Lord Soames stayed coolly and commandingly on course, and (aided notably by Lady Soames) clearly cared about the people of this country as well as for their political future. From Britain came a first-class, experienced team of administrators to carry through the cease-fire and supervise the elections. In all, there has been a flair about the British enterprise.

Now the people are dancing in the streets. Everywhere there is joy at the victory of 'jongwe', the cock, who was the symbol of Mugabe's party. This is only the latest of many reminders that all this drama has been played out in Africa. As *The Guardian* put it, Britain has taken the processes of Westminster 'as far as they can be taken, into the African bush.'

Both at Lancaster House and in recent weeks, a great deal of quiet work has been done by Zimbabweans whom the BBC called, in a report, 'intermediaries'. These men, independent of party loyalties, have brought together representatives of the rival groups—often at night, in private homes. Some of them have been engaged on dangerous missions in the bush, persuading the 'boys' to

ZIMBABWE contd on p4

# Father and father-figures

MY FATHER DIED when I was six. My mother, who had always been deeply in love with him, was a courageous woman; she wept on the day of his death, but thereafter kept a stiff upper lip. We seldom talked about him. Following my mother's example, I grew up a man of tightly controlled emotions which I was incapable of expressing even to my wife.

Within a month of my father's death I went to my first school. As the eldest of three sons, it fell to me to pioneer the way in life for my younger brothers, who were better at everything and more loveable characters than I was. I came under pressure from *relatives and neighbours*, some of whom threatened to beat me, to take a responsibility that was far beyond me. My feeling of being the black sheep of the family was strengthened by a headmaster who compared me unfavourably with my next brother.

Four years after my father's death, my mother married his youngest brother. We had all been fond of him as an uncle, but he could never be a second father to us, as my mother had hoped. In my rebellious adolescence I was often rude to him.

## Short back and sides

As an undergraduate I gave up trying to live as a Christian and rejected the faith in which I had been brought up. I became bitter and cynical, questioning the right of my parents to bring children into a world I had come to hate and even wondering whether I was a bastard or an adopted child, which might have explained my difficulties in coming to terms with my own character.

At the age of 28 I had an experience of God in my life. I stopped rebelling against family life and built new relationships, especially with my stepfather/uncle and my youngest brother. He volunteered for the Royal Artillery when the war broke out, but found army life too much for him. I had to face the bitter fact that my earlier attempts to undermine his faith had probably played a big part in his suicide.

As a married man of over 40 with two sons, one day began to think and talk about my father in a way I had never done before. To my great embarrassment I was unable to do so without weeping. Memories came pouring back. I remembered sitting on his knee as a child looking at the pictures in *The Railway Magazine*—a source of fascination to us both.

The curious experience of mourning for my father almost 30 years after his death brought with it a new understanding of the fatherhood of God and a new step along the road of faith.

I had been looking for a position somewhere in the middle of a man-made hierarchy with father-figures on whom I could lean, and who would relieve me of the onus of taking difficult decisions for myself, and with beings inferior to myself to whom I could in turn act as a father-figure. Now I became conscious of a glorious Christian fellowship of equals, each with individual characteristics and gifts unlike those of anyone else, which God as our Father would build on and use to the full.

While I was learning to let God mould me, my two sons were rapidly growing up, and I realised how much I wanted to mould their characters, to play God in their lives. Our times of closest companionship were on walks in the country. There were holidays in Wales when we rowed and canoed together and spent days hill walking and rock climbing. But when they reached adolescence, my own wild experiences seemed of little help. I had settled down to become a respected member of society and my deepest desire was that they should do me credit. This led to great tension with our younger son in particular. Working in a milieu in which 'short back and sides' were *de rigueur*, I tried to force him to have his hair cut, which led to a breakdown in our relationship.

Three incidents helped to restore unity in the family. Firstly, my wife and I agreed

never to take action again over our sons unless we were in complete agreement. On one occasion when we could not agree over an action I wanted to take, she said, 'If you are convinced you are right, go ahead. If you are wrong, I will trust you to learn from your mistake and I will never say "I told you so".' I was subsequently proved wrong, but I did learn from my mistake and no harm came of it.

## Jettison

Secondly, I handed my son his passport, which I had kept locked in my desk to keep him under my control. He was 17. I decided it was time to treat him as a man and to let him learn from his mistakes, which he did.

Thirdly, I invited him to lunch at my place of work and watched him make an excellent impression on my boss, who I had thought would disapprove of the length of his hair.

Meanwhile our elder son had found a faith and helped us to jettison many of the bourgeois concepts that had brought disunity.

Experiencing daily the loving fatherhood of God has freed me to care more for others. Naturally I have my prejudices and would prefer to choose my own friends, but I often find that it is precisely those to whom I feel the most antipathy that are, however great our apparent differences, basically most like myself and whom I can most easily help. The fatherhood of God knows no bounds and includes men, women and children of all races, classes, ages and faiths. **WWS**

## ZIMBABWE contd from p3

move into the assembly points. This has meant going unarmed to talk, man to man, with young people who have lived by the gun for years, and to convince them that now it is time to find a better way. It is work which will be needed for a long time to come, as the guerrillas come back from the bush and seek their part in the new Zimbabwe.

## Non-racial society

In the climactic days of the election, a group of these intermediaries signed and launched a non-political Manifesto—'The Zimbabwe We Want'. Set in the framework of a goal for the country—a Zimbabwe where everyone cares enough and everyone shares enough will pattern a new social and economic order—the manifesto carries a call to action in which all are needed to spread a spirit of forgiveness and build national unity.

It is a note now being taken up by all the leaders. Robert Mugabe, in his first speech as Prime Minister called on the nation to 'beat its swords into ploughshares' and build a new country which would be 'the pride of all

Africa'. His emphasis on the need to 'forgive and forget', with generous references to other leaders, white and black, recalls the famous appeal by President Kenyatta—a man who was as much feared in his day in Kenya as Mugabe is in Rhodesia now.

Prime Minister Mugabe, in a press conference, added, 'The requirement now on the part of everybody is to transform. If people cannot change, then obviously they have no place here. We want people with the attitudes that will lead us to create a non-racial society. We hope there will be greatness in the thinking of everybody on this issue.'

The coming months will see how the people of Zimbabwe respond to Mugabe's appeal. Much depends on this, for the future of Zimbabwe will directly affect the rest of Africa, North and South.

And it could affect more than that. A member of the Australian national team observing the elections, Allan Griffith, said after his visit to Zimbabwe, 'The relationship between the races is one of the great issues the world faces. Zimbabwe could be a demonstration of white and black working effectively together. It is a potential turning point in world affairs.'