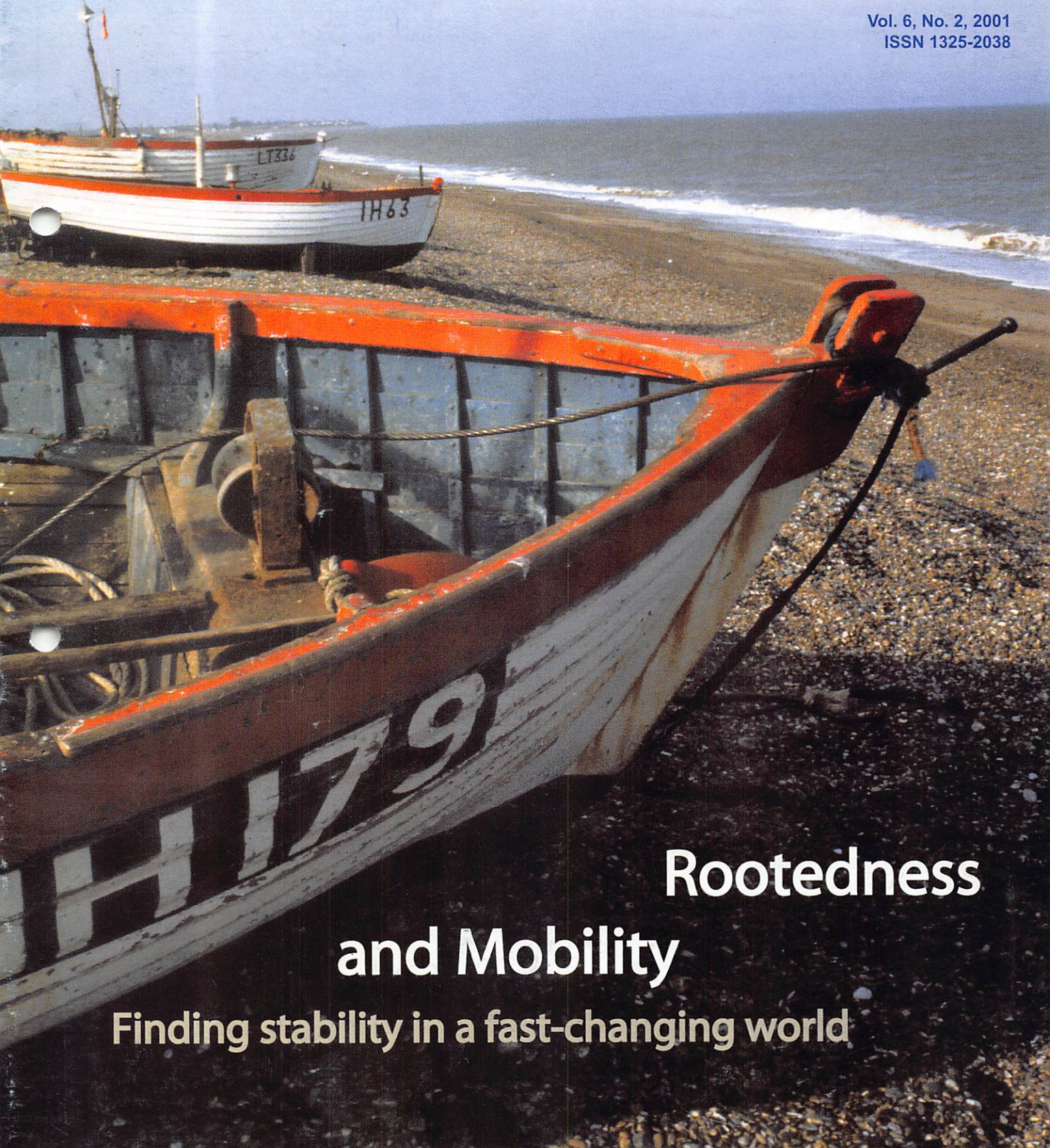


# GLOBAL EXPRESS

Vol. 6, No. 2, 2001  
ISSN 1325-2038



## Rootedness and Mobility

Finding stability in a fast-changing world



## EDITORIAL

As Editors, 'GE is an international youth magazine' has become a stock phrase—used whenever we require a brief description of this publication. However, we would forgive you for recognising a bias in the content. In this issue, for example, we have contributions from the US, the UK, Malaysia, Australia, Honduras and Brazil. Not bad, but could be better balanced by more content from 'non-Western' regions. Problem is, the Editors are Western, live in the West and, inevitably, have more Western contacts.

We are the 'most mobile generation ever', according to Ray Simpson, who inspired the theme for this issue. With the travel and communications revolution spinning ever faster, we are in contact with people literally all over the world. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that communication by any method other than 'in person' is, and will probably always remain, far from ideal. So, we ask for help from you, our readers, to spread the word and make GE truly international.

**Next issue:** We will look at the themes, 'Light', and 'The shadow side of life'. Feedback and contributions welcome. **Deadline:** September 15, 2001



*Our cover photo is by Peter Sisam. Peter's photos have become a regular feature in GE over the last few years. His recent book of photos and poems, 'Heartsease', is available at £5.50 (incl. p&p) from: 3 Henley Rd, Marlow, Bucks SL7 2BZ, UK (Please make sterling cheques payable to Peter J Sisam)*

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## Why Global Express?

Global Express (GE) was started in Melbourne, Australia, in 1994 to link up young people who care about the future. Dissatisfied with what we were being offered by commercial youth magazines, we felt an alternative was needed.

Our aim is to inspire people to believe in themselves, and to believe they can make a difference. In GE you can question the way things are, and search for solutions. It is also a great opportunity to make contacts outside your 'comfort zone'.

Most of the GE team met through MRA (Moral Re-Armament), which is a worldwide network of people working for personal responsibility and conflict resolution. Absolute standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love, together with a search for inspiration from God (or the inner voice), are central to this approach to life. MRA is a Non Government Organisation recognised by the United Nations. For more information visit: <http://www.mra.org.uk>

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### Global Express goes to:

Africa: Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa; Americas: Brazil, Canada and USA; Asia/Pacific: Australia, Cambodia, Fiji, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand and Western Samoa; Europe: Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Russia, Scandinavia, Serbia, Switzerland, UK and Ukraine; Middle East: Lebanon and Palestine.



# rootedness & *mobility*



New York, Photo: Jodie Long

Enter the **airplane** — enabling us to travel anywhere, at any time, for any reason. And we think this is a good thing. Don't we?

Enter the **cell phone** — enabling us to be reached anywhere, at any time, for any reason. And we think this is a good thing. Don't we?

Enter **e-mail** — enabling us to send and receive messages anywhere, at any time, for any reason. And we think this is a good thing? Don't we.

Don't we?...



I'm from the United States. Recently I was in Croatia to attend a conference—travel time, roughly nine hours to cover 4,505 miles. Within 15 minutes of landing, my colleague's cell phone was in use, announcing my arrival to another colleague. Within one hour, I was on my colleague's home computer sending an e-mail to my wife, letting her know that the plane had landed safely and that I was in good hands. Airplane. Cell phone. E-mail. All good things. Right?

Let me step you through a brief history of some related events:

- 1860: US Pony Express** carries mail from Missouri to California (approx. 2,000 miles). Travel time for a piece of mail: 10 days.
- 1924: First airplanes** fly around the world. Travel time: 175 days.
- 1929: The Graf Zeppelin** flies around the world. Travel time: 21 days.
- 1933: First solo flight** around the world. Travel time: 7 days.
- 1948: First non-stop** around the world flight. Travel time: 94 hours.
- 1981: First Space Shuttle** flight. Travel time



**In this age of  
instant  
accessibility,  
who has time to  
'know thyself'?**

**around the  
earth:  
90 minutes.**

- 1980s: Cell phones** begin to take hold, particularly in Europe.
- 1990s: E-mail** really takes hold with development of Internet browser technology.

Apparently, the technology is now available to locate a person using a cell phone down to a range of a few meters, anywhere on the globe.

We are moving in the right direction. Right?

Does it matter where we live now? Does it matter where we work now? Does it matter where our family and friends live now? We are microseconds away from being in touch with anyone, anywhere, any time, for any reason. This is a good thing. Right?

What has the travel-communications-technology revolution brought us, really? Has it strengthened our relationships within families and between friends? Has it improved our sense of community? Has it prevented wars? The answer is undeniably no. The answer is also undeniably yes.

Poor inter-personal communication stands as one of the highest causes of divorce and workplace dissatisfaction. Communities, particularly within the US, are more fractured than ever—witness the recent race-related riots in Cincinnati, Ohio. Armed conflicts using some of the world's most advanced technologies currently exist in more than 25

locations around the world.

On the other hand... numerous arguments have been headed off—at least in my household—because of the judicious use of cell phones to communicate our whereabouts and timing. E-mail has enabled families and friends not just to stay connected but to deepen relationships when separated by long distances. Electronic communities, facilitated by 'chat' technology, enable relationships among people of varying backgrounds and nationalities who would otherwise not meet. Air travel has brought more people together and exposed them to more places than we could have imagined. And who knows? Perhaps a brief e-mail or text message to the right person at the right time *did* head off a war situation. I wouldn't doubt it. Not now.

What has the travel-communications-technology revolution done to our sense of identity—our rootedness, so to speak? It was Socrates who told us that the unexamined life is not worth living, that to know one's self is the primary goal of the thinking person. In this age of instant accessibility, who has time to 'know thyself'? We have convinced ourselves of our own importance based on the number of phone calls and e-mail messages we receive in a day. We are so anxious to get from one place to another that we miss out on the here and now. We have lost our ability to be *fully* present with our families and friends, and to contribute to the communities in which we live.



Dr Amitai Etzioni, university professor and leading spokesperson for the communitarian movement, has offered a definition of community—it includes both a web of affect-laden relationships and a commitment to a set of shared values, mores, meanings, and historical identity.<sup>1</sup> There is no question in my mind that access to travel and improvements in communication technologies offer remarkable new means of creating communities.

Sustaining communities, however, requires more than just technology. It requires me. And you. It requires clarity on what we, in our deepest sense, have to offer the community. Technology cannot answer this for us.

My suggestion? Turn your cell phone off. Turn your computer off. Turn your television off. Read a book. Think. Discover who you are. Then turn the technology back on and offer yourself more fully to your family, to your friends, to your community, and to the world.

<sup>1</sup> The Monochrome Society, Princeton University Press, 2001

### **Steven Greisdorf, USA**

*Steven is a financial planner and management consultant. He is currently serving on the Executive Committee of the Junior Round Table, an international network of young professionals bringing an ethical perspective to businesses around the globe. He lives with his wife and daughter in Maryland, USA.*

# house on my back

It's getting easier and more common to move around. Many of us do. Is it possible to maintain a sense of rootedness while on the move?

This question resonates deeply with me. Having spent the past few years on the move, I sometimes feel like a snail with my house on my back. I can hardly remember the last time I had a permanent address. In the last four years I have lived in Paris, Boston, New York and London with stints in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Living and seeing new places has greatly enriched my life, but it has not always been easy. I have had to learn to adapt to new surroundings, people and customs. At first, I depended on getting to know as many people as possible. During my first year at university the idea of spending an evening alone was terrifying.

At times it has felt like my roots are in shallow ground, that I have not given them enough time to grow deeper in each new place. But rootedness does not come from the length of time we've spent somewhere, or from how many people we know. It comes from within—from a sense of self, and from a set of values which help us to make judgements and prioritize in a world overcrowded with information and choices. This, of course, remains an ongoing

challenge.

Rootedness is also knowing where we come from, for this is part of who we are inside. It was only after moving away from my home in Southern California that I realized we have a particular mentality and way of life that I had taken for granted. I began to see how my background had shaped me. I recognized positive aspects of American life (optimism and initiative), as well as negative (a tendency toward materialism, and a narrow worldview). Most importantly, I started caring more consciously for my relationships with my family. Because I am often not there in person, I have to be creative and make an extra effort to keep in touch. No matter where I go I still feel that my roots run deep back home. It is where I draw my energy from.

The combination of feeling confident about who I am, and where I come from, has allowed for a quality of relationships that can make almost any place feel like home.

### **Kristen Cibelli, USA**

*Kristen is Programme Coordinator of 'Foundations for Freedom', which encourages the values that underlie a truly free society through training courses and initiatives with young people in Eastern Europe.*

*website:  
[www.f-4-f.org/](http://www.f-4-f.org/)*



**I depended on getting to know as many people as possible... The idea of spending an evening alone was terrifying**



# post-modern monk

Ray Simpson, author on Celtic Christianity, inspired our theme, Rootedness and Mobility. Photography Anne L. Hopper

**W**e are the most mobile generation ever, thanks to the travel and communications revolution, yet mere gadabouts do nothing for the world. We (in the Western world, at least) may be the most rootless generation ever, due to the fragmentation of community and family life. How can we sustain mobility with roots?

Columbanus, the Irish monk who restored vibrant faith communities across the continent of Europe at the turn of the 7th Century, said, 'I am always moving from the day of birth to the day of death'. He urged all Christians to 'travel in perpetual pilgrimage as guests of the world until the day of death'. A leading church historian, David Edwards, says, 'Europe was changed by the pilgrims for the love of God'.

Yet these wanderers were rooted in six ways.



St Aidan, founder of the Celtic Church in England

First, they were grounded in a tested spiritual tradition, which connected them to God, to the earth, and to the everyday world. My own calling, through the network of Christians called 'The Community of Aidan and Hilda', offers grounding in such a tradition through printed resources, retreats and training courses.

Second, they shared a common set of values with their fellow travellers. These they called a 'Rule of Life'.

Columbanus' Rule included these values:

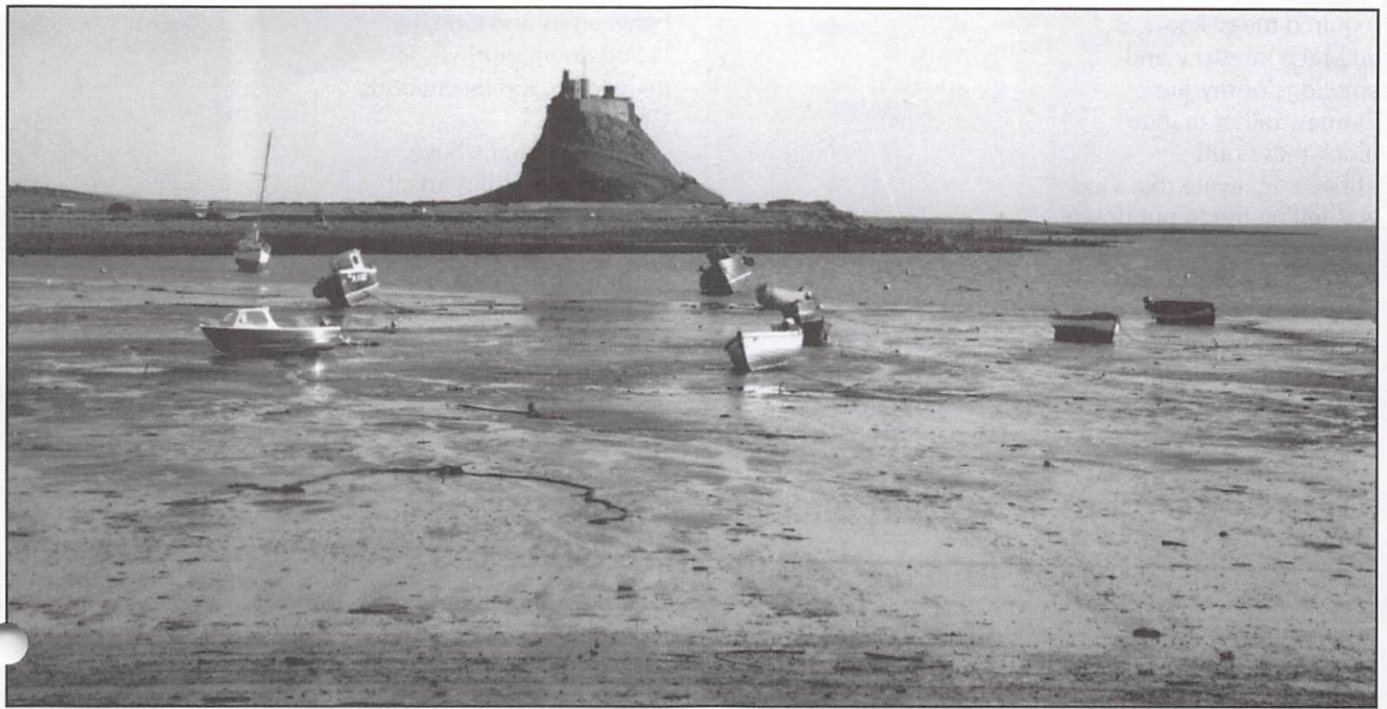
*Honour, and listen to each other intently. Never grumble or hit back.*  
*Avoid mindless or boastful talk.*  
*Eat and drink nothing that overloads the stomach or confuses the mind.*  
*Possess only what you need or what you can offer as gifts.*  
*Cultivate humility and purity.*  
*Pay heed to the season of your life, to your temperament, ability, and energy levels. The ceaseless prayer of the heart, not external uniformity, is what binds everyone together.*  
*Develop wisdom, balance, wholeness, discernment of good and evil and of what justice requires.*  
*Never judge another.*  
*Live simply in order to purge vices and foster perpetual love of God.*

Third, they were accountable to a wise senior mentor whom they called a soul friend. They were taught to beware of proud independence which secretly nourished their own desires, and not to make decisions which should first have been considered with their soul friend. They would be transparent with their soul friend about money, sex and power. Today, Celtic Christians follow a common set of values called 'A Way of Life'. With a soul friend, we work out how to apply this to the changing conditions of our life's journey.

Fourth, they invited creation itself to nourish them. Columbanus taught that, 'If you would know the Creator, study the creation'. They practised perceiving God's presence beckoning to them through creation, and used nature as material for prayer throughout the day. We are creatures of rhythm, in our breathing, walking, sleeping and rising. Learning to walk in the rhythms of creation brings harmony into our movements.

Fifth, they used their Scriptures as a memory pack. As they constantly repeated the Psalms and Gospels they





Lindisfarne Castle, built in 1550 on a volcanic mound, is one of the most distinct features of Holy Island

internalised and fed upon them wherever they were, whatever they were doing. In an age of print and the Internet we have no physical need to do this. However, we choose to do so to avoid being destroyed by information overload. As we memorise eternal truths, and these are lodged centrally within, the myriad other data which invade us take their appropriate secondary place.

# on island of *promise*

Sixth, deep bonds with their extended families sustained them even when they went into lifelong exile as pilgrims. Because these early Celtic Christians were so firmly rooted in their familial communities, they had the inner stability and confidence to leave behind comfort zones for the totally unknown. In our dysfunctional family networks this dynamic is weaker. However, we are called—and have the means—to repair, heal, and build up family relationships even at a distance.

For many years I did not know how to be mobile without leaving behind a trail of accidents—I did not have healthy roots. I asked people who seemed to have both to pray for my inner healing. This



required me to know and embrace the story and emotions of my life's journey, rather than to block these out.

I became aware that God was telling me to put down roots. This meant learning to live with myself and with those people I was called to have primary relationships with; and most of all, to live in love with God. By a strange paradox this freed me to follow the advice of the Irish proverb: 'Let your feet follow your heart until you find your place of resurrection'.

I began to draw inspiration from Celtic saints such as Aidan and Hilda. I left my salaried post as a vicar, and went to live on the Holy Island of Lindisfarne as a post-modern monk. This is a tidal island. When the tide is in, the encircling sea makes it a place of contemplation; when the tide is out, the flow of people makes it a place of outreach. As I learned to be deeply still, I found others were drawn to come; I did not need to rush around. However, during the times of reflection, concerns grew in my heart for the world out there, and I had time to disentangle these from mere reactions to human pressures. So I venture out for initiatives of change which have been born of deep roots.

I believe God is calling us again to give up the ambitions, possessions and fears that we are chained to, and to walk the world with love in our hearts. We can be modern

'martyrs' by leaving everything that comes

**I did not know  
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roots**



between us and God, by laying down our lives for the people and inspirations God gives us.

Celtic Christians have retained the ability to sit loose to the ties that bind, and to follow their inspirations. Jesus told us to pray, 'Lead us not into temptation'. What are the places we should steer clear of? Places where the spirit of fear rules, or of lust, or of artificiality, or of unbelief, or of the power of one ego over another, or of the shoddy? To know where we should not be led is an exploration in itself.

But far bigger is to tread the way of the true journey; to pray, 'lead us into your way, lead us to the kingdom of God, lead us into our place of resurrection'. Each of us needs to identify in our own lives any place where we have given up thinking that change can come. Frequently we do not leave the past behind. We clasp onto it. We dissect it and let fears for the future, tempered by the past, unconsciously prevent us from *taking up the task eternal*. We are tempted to go the known ways, the safe ways, basking in previous achievements, not replenishing spiritually or materially the capital our forefathers left us. This is my prayer:

Ray Simpson's books on Celtic Christianity include, *Exploring Celtic Spirituality*, *Celtic Blessings*, and *Soul Friendship: Celtic Insights Into Spiritual Mentoring*. If you would like to know more please contact 'The Community of Aidan and Hilda'...  
website: [www.aidan.org.uk](http://www.aidan.org.uk)  
e-mail: [aidan@theopengate.ndo.co.uk](mailto:aidan@theopengate.ndo.co.uk)

*Lead me from that which binds to that which frees;  
Lead me from that which cramps to that which  
creates;  
Lead me from that which blights to that which  
ennobles;  
Lead me from that which hides to that which  
celebrates;  
Lead me from that which fades to that which is  
eternal.*



# highly mobile people

With a population of 22 million highly geared towards external trade, Malaysia is a small nation of highly mobile people. Malaysians have always had to travel for business, leisure and education. Meanwhile, in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society—described as one of the most complex in the world—they are strongly rooted in their faith and culture.

Malaysia comprises three major ethnic groups: the majority Malays who are Muslim by faith; Chinese who are mainly Taoists, Buddhists and Christians; and Indians who are predominantly Hindu. There is also a host of minority groups and indigenous people.

Instead of pursuing the 'melting pot' version of culture, like many multi-ethnic societies, Malaysia opted for the 'salad bowl' concept—the 'unity in diversity' model. Even though Islam is the state religion, there is freedom to practise all religions (mosques, temples and churches adorn the landscape) and encouragement to maintain one's own cultural identity. Government and private radio and television stations broadcast programmes in Malay (the national language), English, Chinese, Tamil and Hindi. And as English is widely used, and the

influence of Western media pervasive, Malaysians are subject to a good mix of Eastern and Western culture from a young age.

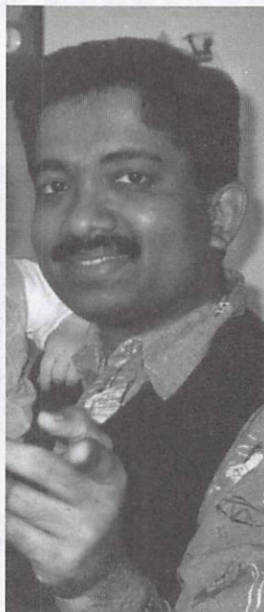
I am a third generation Malaysian—Sri Lankan Tamil by ethnic origin and Hindu by religion. At school, we interact with all ethnic groups; my best friends were Malay and Chinese.

Mobility began at a young age. At 16, I found

**Malaysia is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society described as one of the most complex in the world**

myself at a boarding school in the UK. It was my first time away from home, and I managed the transition pretty well. As a Hindu, I had no problems joining the Christian worship in the chapel every morning. Since I was young, I'd been encouraged to pick up life-meaningful messages from whomever I heard them.

I returned home five years later, after completing my degree. (A shortage of



places in tertiary-level institutions in Malaysia in the 1970s and 80s led half of those desiring a university education to seek it abroad.) I felt equally comfortable resuming life in Malaysia. I had gone to the UK a vegetarian and teetotaler and returned to Malaysia the same, despite having spent a lot of time in pubs!

After commencing working life, I felt the need to contribute to society and decided that the environment was the issue to take up. I joined the Environmental Protection Society Malaysia as a volunteer and have been its President since 1999. Also, realising the damage inflicted by tobacco companies on human health, I became an active member of the Action on Smoking & Health (ASH).

My efforts on the environment and smoking control made me even more mobile. Most of my vacation leave has been spent attending meetings, seminars and conferences around the globe. Now, as a travel and tourism journalist, this trend continues. I have enjoyed every minute, meeting outstanding people of all backgrounds. Asked about my desire to interact, I would say that, rooted in my faith and culture, I welcome listening to and learning more of the faith and culture of others.

**Nithi Nesadurai,  
Malaysia**



# rediscovering rootedness

Just at present I would have to say that I identify considerably more with mobility than with rootedness. At the end of last year I left the city which had been my home for two years and where many of my closest friends live. For the last three months I have been constantly on the move, and when (before long) I do settle down, it will almost certainly be in a place where I have never lived before. Such mobility can bring opportunities to view life from a different angle, to live into the experiences of others, and so to challenge our perceptions of what life is all about. This was certainly true for me recently during two months travelling in Kenya, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Ethiopia, meeting people from varied walks of life: what a privilege!



Chris (second from left) exchanging songs at a high school in Soweto, South Africa, Photo: Edward Howard

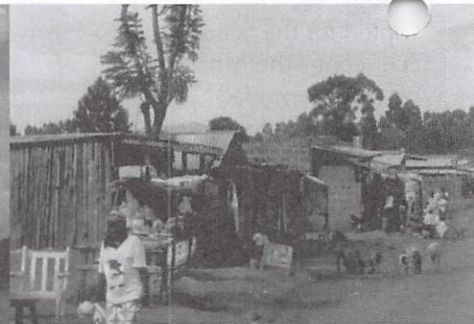
of the world's population is not 'on line'. Yet Western society might well envy the strong sense of rootedness which becomes evident time and again. There is a deep connection to the people and locality which represent home—so often I was invited back to meet a person's family and see their home because only then would I have really met that person. (As I write it

music and dance were performed for us in place after place.

However, the most fundamental and unifying sense of rootedness and identity springs from faith in God, which bubbles to the surface at every opportunity. When there is singing it will inevitably be to, or about, God. When there is food on the table, God is thanked for such provision—yesterday there may have been none. Even the minibus-taxis

have reassuring stickers such as: 'Relax. God is in control'. (Unlike the driver, it occasionally seems...)

Such rootedness is reflected in the depth and reality experienced in everyday life, which show up all too clearly the superficialities of Western materialist society. Everywhere we went there were people ready to take on the vast struggles facing their



## It begins to feel thoroughly unsatisfying to pursue one's

For many of these people, mobility and the communications revolution are a world away from daily life. Despite the Internet's remarkable capacity for linking people across the globe, the majority

suddenly becomes obvious to me why the time in Africa had the unexpected effect of deepening my sense of belonging to my own country.) There is also a rootedness in culture, reflected in the pride with which traditional

countries. In Zimbabwe the rule of law is gradually receding as the President increasingly seizes power for himself; we met one of many Opposition MPs who continue to oppose the regime's injustices, despite having received



# s, depth and reality

death threats for their efforts. Kenya's economy has been crippled by corruption and poor administration, yet the editor of a national daily, who has twice been jailed for exposing government malpractice, says, 'I would rather be a prisoner of the government than of my own conscience'. South Africa has 4.2 million AIDS sufferers, the highest figure in Africa; in the face of such ravages it is humbling to meet people who, in their own communities, give sacrificial love and care to the sufferers and families (often orphans) left behind.

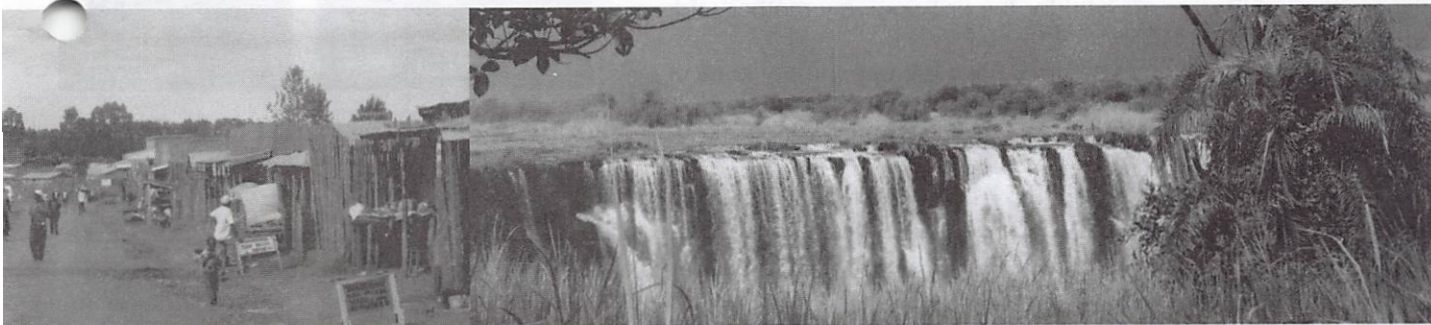
The temptation, of course, is to flee with relief back to the shelter of a society where one has no such struggles. At home we can live a comfortable life, complete with 'basic necessities' such as television, mobile phones and the Internet. Our society is reasonably stable and will continue to provide for us without threatening our freedom or enjoyment of life. But

larger purpose. Yet if one were to seek such a purpose in many Western countries, it would not necessarily be for democracy, freedom of speech, basic justice or human rights. Could it be, then, that the equally important struggle to which we are called is to rediscover that quality of rootedness, depth and reality in life?

The benefits of increased mobility and connecting with the world at large are many. But we must also value a sense of rootedness and a clear knowledge of our identity. The more 'mobile' I am, the more I find myself needing to draw on the rootedness which is found in the One who gives us that identity. As St Augustine wrote, 'Our hearts are made for you, O God, and they know no rest until they find their rest in you'.

**Chris Lancaster, Australia**

Left to right: Rift Valley, Kenya; Rural township, Kenya; Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe; Photos: C. Lancaster



## own life without committing to any larger purpose

what a shallow life it is, especially when thrown into relief alongside the depth of the experiences I've described. Indeed, it begins to feel thoroughly unsatisfying to pursue one's own life without committing to any

*The Moral Re-Armament (MRA) team in Kenya extend a warm welcome to any young people who would like to spend a few weeks there to experience life both in Nairobi and in rural towns and villages. Please contact the Editors if you are interested.*



# REMOVING



I grew up without my father and had a bad relationship with my mother because I never felt her love. She married when I was seven, and it was difficult for me to accept my stepfather. I fought with him all the time—if he said 'A', I said 'B'!

I really wanted to meet my father, and was always waiting for him... but it never happened.

To live without a 'normal' family was very painful. As well as the deep hatred which grew in my heart towards my father, my stepfather and my mother, I had low self-esteem. At one point I thought about killing myself—I was so tired of trying to be accepted by the people around me. I tried everything—smoking, drinking, relationships... I tried to be popular, always ready for a 'good time' with my friends. But when I was alone, I was sad.

I couldn't talk about my problems with my friends because, as a guy in Latin America, you don't talk about deep things like love, dreams, feelings, etc. You have to be 'macho' all the time. So it was difficult to find a way out.

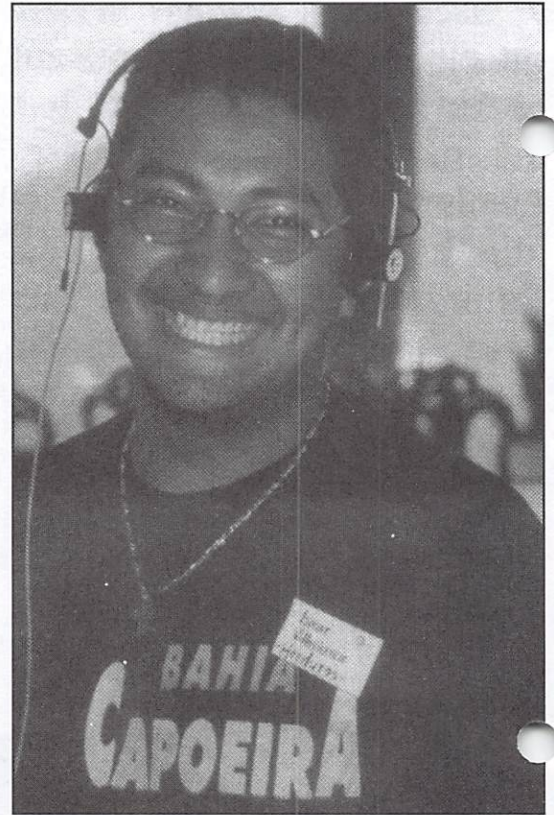
Almost five years ago, I joined a theatre group—Gente Que Avanza—travelling around South America. I was asked a question that changed my life: 'Why don't you try to be yourself?'. I thought, 'Why not? I've been trying different ways to be happy, so why not try this one?'.

And now I can tell you that this way is working. It's not easy, but I've realised that I'll always find people who agree with me, and people who don't. So, what can I do? Just do my best!

I decided to forgive my father, even though he didn't ask for my forgiveness. I forgave my stepfather and my mother, and of course I had to ask their forgiveness too. After that we all began a new relationship and three years ago, for the first time, my mother said, 'Ismar, I love you'.

Amazingly, almost at the same time, I had the opportunity to meet

my real father. He is in the USA, dying of leukaemia, and recently I spent two weeks with him. The time together was a huge gift. He didn't say, 'I'm sorry', or, 'Please forgive me for not having been with you'. But I didn't need that, because I had forgiven him already, and was free in my heart.



## WHAT - U - THINK

Next issue we look at: **Do you ever/never watch the news on TV? Why? Deadline: September 15, 2001**

This issue: **Why are some people prepared to sacrifice themselves for a principle, or for others?**

### Nabnita Jit, India

Sacrifice is giving up what we value most. In most Indian homes, children are taught to let go at an early age. We are brought up on stories from our scriptures which highlight the goodness of sacrifice, and the happiness achieved by giving up one's own comforts for the sake of others' well-being. The joint family system (extended families living

under one roof) encourages a culture of sacrifice. So 'giving up' for one's dear ones comes naturally to most Indians. But giving up for a principle or cause happens only when one identifies one's self with it—measuring one's character according to certain standards.

According to our *Vedas* (ancient scriptures and holy books), 'What one values the most in this world is one's self, i.e. one's ego'. Each sacrifice that one makes for a 'value or principle' is really to satisfy one's ego. Often people make sacrifices to obtain happiness and peace. So anything other than giving up one's ego is not really a 'sacrifice'. But this does not undermine its value. In fact, sacrificing gives us the strength to resist evil and helps



# THE MASK

Now, I hate to think what would have happened if I hadn't taken the decision to forgive, and to be myself—my better self.

**Ismar Villavicencio, Honduras**



For a long time I had a blockage in my heart which prevented me from being free.

Growing up, I was jealous of my younger sister who was often ill and received a lot of attention. I thought she was taking my space in the hearts of my parents, so I rejected their love. I often went out, pursuing love and relationships with different boys. I lied to my parents, and became one person at home and another on the street.

Seeking in boys the love of my parents, I had bad experiences. I used them to have a good time and then left, never wanting a real commitment. By playing with their feelings I hurt them, and myself too. More importantly, I learnt that all those relationships didn't fill my need for love.

One day, some years later, it dawned on me that nothing would change unless I was prepared to change first. Thanks to God and the help of good friends, I was able to make some tough decisions. I asked forgiveness of my parents, my sister and my old boyfriends—and found the power of real forgiveness for myself. All that was a big release, because I discovered how to live fully. I went six years without any relationships, and matured as a person, and as a woman. A year ago, I married Ismar. Recently we celebrated the birth of our first child.

In life there will always be blockages and difficulties. But I am discovering that the world is better if I am better. Maybe there isn't another way, because I am part of the world. I can choose to be one more problem, or I can be part of the solution...

**Fabiana Duarte de Villavicencio, Brazil**



build our character. It frees us from the temptation of worldly goods in our search for a higher goal. There is a sanskrit saying: You cannot know God through preaching, You cannot know God through learning, You cannot know God through reading, But you can know God through *Tyaag*, i.e. sacrifice.

**Samantha Unger, Australia**

The concept of 'sacrifice' is a complex one. It conjures up images of dying in warfare in the name of religious fervour and sanctity. I would argue that this is now quite removed from Western lifestyle—though ongoing conflicts in places

such as the Middle East highlight that human sacrifice will always exist.

I freely admit that I wouldn't readily (if at all) sacrifice my life... though I would sacrifice time, money, energy and way of life for causes I am passionate about. Many would. Living in rural Costa Rican communities (with Youth Challenge) taught me so much about myself, Costa Rican life and culture, and community development. The sacrifice of my time, money and lifestyle weren't really a sacrifice at all—as I gained so much in return. I found that by opening myself up to the possibilities of change, development and learning, the 'sacrifice' was one of the most valuable life experiences I could have had.



**N**agaland is recognised as a state of India.

However, racially, culturally and historically the Nagas are not Indian, nor were they ever part of the 'Princely States of India'. Prior to British rule, the Naga ancestral domain covered not only parts of India, but also parts of Burma (now Myanmar). When the British took over the area, after strong resistance from the Nagas, they added the new 'Naga Hills District' to their empire. What followed in the decades to come was a division of these lands into smaller administrative units under two nation states, India and Burma. Just as the British were about to withdraw from the Indian sub-continent in 1947, the Nagas declared their independence. This was not recognised, leading to serious conflict between the Nagas and the Union of India. In 1963 the state of Nagaland was formed, leaving more than half of the Naga areas and the majority of the tribes outside of it. The conflict has continued ever since.



Angami stone-pulling ceremony, Nagaland, Photo: Maria Lancaster

The arrival of American Baptist missionaries in the 19th Century also continues to influence the present situation. They converted the Nagas to Christianity and introduced Western education and medical care. The force of modernisation, as well as the ongoing conflict for recognition as a nation, has taken its toll. What remains is an unstable society torn apart by corruption, drugs, alcoholism, and the loss of indigenous values and culture.

Towards the end of 2000 I had hit a rut. I was studying first year university, doing a course I was starting to question, and my plans for the summer had fallen through. As writer Henri Nouwen puts it, I was in a state of 'spiritual dryness', questioning and doubting

everything I believed in and thought I stood for. I was wondering what—if anything—was 'truth' in the world around me. An invitation came to work with an international team in Nagaland, helping to run workshops on 'Managing

# IN NAGALAND

## LIVING EVERY SECOND

### WHAT - U - THINK

**Alleson Mason, Jamaica**

Sacrifice derives from the Latin 'sacer' (sacred) and 'facio' (I make). The reasons for sacrifice are as varied as the sacrifices themselves and the people making them. For some, religion is an important factor. Most religions are centered around an individual or deity sacrificing him/herself for the good of humankind. Followers of these faiths are expected to live in a sacrificial way too. Often there is a promise or reward, for example eternal life.

Others make sacrifices for moral and/or nationalistic reasons. Nelson Mandela spent over 25 years in prison for standing up for equality and brotherhood. And sometimes, simple survival compels people to make sacrifices. The South

African people had to fight just for the right to exist in their own country.

Love is another reason for making sacrifices. Christ said, 'Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends'. Christians believe that his death was the greatest sacrifice of all. On a smaller scale, many parents make sacrifices to ensure that their children get the best life has to offer.

Sacrifice makes life more precious—opens our spiritual eyes so we can better appreciate what we have. If there is nothing for which we are prepared to make a sacrifice then life is hardly worth living.



Conflict Creatively'. I had no idea how I would fit into this picture, or what I had to offer the team; I knew little about Nagaland and the nature of the conflict there, but something inside me said, 'yes'.

During a cease-fire in January, a group of us were allowed to enter with special permits. The first two-day workshop was held in Shillong. Twenty teachers, social workers and other community leaders participated. The second was a four-day residential workshop in Dimapur, with teachers and principals from around Nagaland.

The workshops focused on practical and creative ways to deal with personal and inter-personal conflict. The aim was to train teachers so that they could introduce the ideas into schools. The hope is that, by teaching children to deal with conflict, they will grow up less likely to resort to drugs and/or violence to deal with their problems.

The participants' conviction and hope for the future was truly inspirational. Our facilities were limited—electricity completely unreliable, no mosquito nets for the many who slept on mattresses on the floor—yet such was their belief in us and what we had to offer, that they had come. It was a singularly humbling experience.

We had meals with many people in their homes, laughing and singing and sharing. I ran games and drama workshops with youth groups and school groups, one of which numbered fifty. (Had I been told I would do this at the same time last year, I would have laughed.) I also sang some of my own compositions and shared a little about my background. There was a keen awareness of, and interest in, the Australian Aborigines and their situation.

It's hard to know where to begin and where to end when I talk about my experiences there. We met people who had been through intense hardship and pain, yet were full of love and generosity. It meant so much to them that we were there—and cared enough to listen—that anything else was a bonus.

Something I miss now is the need to live every second of life in faith. The first step had been to believe in the 'yes' within me, that Nagaland was where I was being called. There, everything we take for granted in the West—from electricity to running water—can cut out at any time. After all our planning and organisation as a team, we could only

place the outcome in God's hands. In the West, where we can take life itself for granted, it is easier to believe that we can control and steer our own course.

As for my own 'spiritual dryness', I believe God was calling me to something deeper. Challenging me not just to talk about change and honesty, about purity and unselfishness and love, but to truly live it. When people asked me why I had come to Nagaland, I had to be honest. In a society where trust has been shattered, I had to speak the truth and pray that God would give me the words to speak that 'truth' they were looking for.

Now that I am back at university, I have tried to continue the deeper challenge God has issued, to practise what I preach. Life is so much more simple and free without these contradictions within me, and I am a more whole (and sane) person because of it.

On one of my final days in Nagaland, a friend said, 'Maria, in a few years' time I can see you doing great things'. And for the first time, I was believing it.

**Maria Lancaster, Australia**

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### **Katharine Babington, UK**

Love, conviction, passion are key words which spring to mind as 'reasons' for sacrificing oneself. On closer inspection, however, fundamental questions are raised about our life perspective, both on an individual and collective level. Are perceptions and motivations for sacrificing oneself solely determined by life experience, culture and/or values? For instance, some Japanese men who deem themselves unsuccessful providers for their family take their lives for the sake of 'honour'. One person's 'sacrifice' may be perceived as another's weakness.

To give up one's life (or aspects of it) may be done for a

higher consideration, or for mere advantage. What of those who lose their lives to save another from drowning? To what extent does love, instinct or ego play a role? Society may attach notions of heroism to such behaviour, but what if ego was the motivator?

The story of a man in a concentration camp, who offered to die in place of another who had a family, is told by the surviving father. If pure, unselfish love underpins sacrifice, this is true sacrifice. But then, that is my own interpretation.



# GLOBALISATION

## Beirut smells of jasmine and petrol...

Since the time of the Phoenician traders, Lebanon has been known as a place where East and West meet, the passport to the Orient, the Paris of the Middle East. Today it is a country struggling to defy its history and to rebuild itself, both physically and metaphorically, after years of conflict. In central Beirut, the bullet-ridden, bombed-out shells of



Ella (front left) with British friends and Lebanese hosts

buildings teeter alongside glass offices and wide new streets—the destruction of war continues to have a place in the mental landscape of the Lebanese today.

I am here with the British-Arab University Association (BAUA), with five other British students, united by a desire to move beyond media representations and see Lebanon for ourselves. We are hosted by a range of Lebanese, many of whom have come to Britain on BAUA exchanges in the past. Every day is stretched to its limits (or rather ours), with discussions, meetings and food. Our first afternoon finds us drinking dark coffee in a Beirut drawing room, listening to 'people who know'—like Mounah El-Solh, a leading political thinker—talk about the war, Iraq and party politics. It is election time and the dignified drawing-room politics is interspersed with the sounds of horns and shouts from the streets. A couple of blocks down, a plaza fills with supporters; it is more Westlife than Westminster, a heady mix of pop politics under a crescent moon. 'You reserve this kind of spectacle for the Spice Girls', says Mounah's son, a journalist, 'here it is our politics'. As the trip continues, we find ourselves in the heavily-guarded offices of Sheikh Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah, a prominent Shiite cleric close to Hizbollah and one of the proponents of inter-religious



dialogue in Lebanon. Later, we're at the border to Southern Lebanon, until recently occupied by Israel, where war has never felt so close. All the time we're learning—whether it be about gender and Islam, Sufism, political history, the way the West's role is experienced in the Middle East, or how to make a good taboulleh salad.

The BAUA trip, however, is more than a cultural package holiday. It is not just a fast track to understanding Lebanon's complex social and political situation, nor a process of one-sided cultural absorption on our part. It is a process of exchange and self-reflection. Everywhere we go we are accompanied by our new friends: Lebanese enter Palestinian refugee camps for the first time, Christians stay in Muslim villages in the South. This is an intra- as well as an international exchange.

It is these friendships, both with the Lebanese and between them, which are the treasures of the trip. They represent a small but important step in promoting a humanitarian globalism. Many of the Lebanese we meet, Muslims and Christians alike, speak negatively of the phenomenon of globalisation, perceiving it as a political and economic project which furthers the needs of a few at the expense of the many. They speak of the need for an internationalism based on equality and dialogue, for the globalisation of human relations as a necessary counterpart to economic globalisation. As a long-term investment in human relations, the BAUA exchanges are a rare and valuable thing.

Our last night sees us in a big circle with most of the people we've met, stumbling through the Dubki (a traditional Lebanese dance). I look around, and realise that every religious group in Lebanon is represented here, holding hands and dancing... It's unreal, like a child's picture or a folk song. It doesn't exist outside of this hotel lobby, but right here, right now, is a microcosm of the kind of world I want to live in.

**Ella Saltmarsh, UK**

*Ella's visit to Lebanon took place in September 2000. BAUA has, since 1973, conducted exchanges with Arab universities, with the aim of establishing firm links of trust and respect between students in Arab countries and those in the West. The conviction underlying its programme is that the Islamic and Christian cultures share, with others, values on which trust can be built. For more information, e-mail: [info@baua.org.uk](mailto:info@baua.org.uk).*



Inner-city Beirut (above)  
Roman temple at Baalbek (left)  
Photos: Mike Carpenter



# knowing *for the first time*

***We shall not cease from exploring  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time***

'Gerontion' by TS Eliot

I started my adult life as a student at Oxford University and now, at the age of 45, I am back in the city again—a housewife and mother of two.

My goal in life at 18 was quite clear—to be successful, a high-achiever. My state of mind was also clear—it was unhappy. Oxford, city of dreaming spires, picnics and punts, ancient architecture and beautiful libraries, seemed to me grey, drab and wet.

But I did achieve highly. I graduated in 1977 with a first class honours degree in Modern Languages, and moved into the gloriously distracting, high-achieving, high-stress world of advertising. Within a few years, I was a Board Director at Saatchi and Saatchi, the fastest-growing agency of the '70s and Number One in London at the time. My state of mind had moved on from unhappy. It was now a combination of euphoric and depressed, depending on the ups and downs of work and relationships.

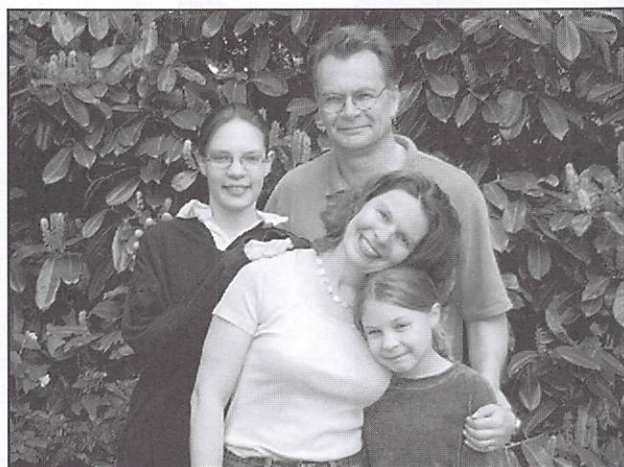
Like many women of my generation, I was determined to have it all, and could see no reason why this shouldn't be

possible. At 33, I got married and within a few years had two little girls. Euphoria, depression, workaholicism, lack of sleep and two toddlers is, I have to tell you, an explosive combination. And it wasn't long before I did explode! At 37, I had a severe nervous breakdown. My life split into many different and incomprehensible parts. Suddenly, I was vulnerable, confused, uncertain, afraid.

I remember parking my car, one rainy night, in the shelter of the old grey stone wall of our local church. Somebody (it turned out to be me) was repeating over and over again, 'Help, please help me'. I have no doubt that this call was answered, and marked the beginning of my spiritual journey.

I was confirmed into the Church of England and threw myself into Sunday School activities, but it wasn't long before I began to feel a sense of detachment and uncertainty. The conviction of many of my Christian friends that theirs was the only true way left me feeling strangely uncomfortable. And so, eventually, I became a Buddhist, thinking that here I could embrace all religions—as well as secular spiritual thinking—from the standpoint of my own faith. I got involved with a local Japanese school of Buddhism run by a lay group called the Soka Gakkai. The teachings were fascinating, compelling and truly enlightening. But this group, I discovered, was deeply committed to *shakubuku* or conversion. I followed it for three years but eventually had to concede that this evangelical approach was not for me. I felt sad that the world's great religions could still enter into rivalry for people's spiritual wellbeing, when there is so much to be gained by sharing different insights. However, I had learnt so much. My Christian background, combined with the Buddhist teachings, was finally beginning to give me a perspective on life (and death) with which I could feel comfortable.

A friend lent me a book called 'Autobiography of a Yogi' by a Hindu/Christian yogi called Paramahansa Yogananda. There I read...





*When every soul will rise above petty divisions in true spiritual understanding, world misery will be consumed in the fire of the realisation of the universality of God and the fellowship of humanity.*

Here was the blend of eastern and western philosophy, the mutual enrichment of different spiritual approaches, that I had dreamed of. Karma, reincarnation, forgiveness, compassion and the over-arching, subtly magnificent concept of love—they were all here. I read the book from cover to cover, each sentence sending a shock wave of recognition through my body.

With the realisation that this was the right spiritual path for me came a much better understanding of other people's conviction about their own faith. I remained very interested in the issue of religious intolerance and the effect that this has had, over the centuries, on world peace. I was fortunate, at this time, to come across the International Interfaith Centre based in Oxford, which is committed to 'creating understanding and harmony between people of diverse faith traditions'. One of the many extraordinary thinkers in the world of Interfaith is John Hick. In 'God and the Universe of Faiths', he writes...



Photo: Laura Trevelyan

*The function of a religion is to bring us to a right relationship with the ultimate divine reality, to awareness of our true nature and our place in the Whole, into the presence of God. In the eternal life there is no longer any place for religions; the pilgrim has no need of a way once he has finally arrived. In St John's vision of the heavenly city at the end of our Christian scriptures it is said that there is no temple—no Christian church or chapel, no Jewish synagogue, no Hindu or Buddhist temple, no Muslim mosque, no Sikh gurdwara... For all these exist in time, as ways through time to eternity.*

Reading this, I felt more confident that we would, one day, be able to respect each other's 'ways' and no longer feel threatened by them, and that this would have a dramatic impact on our strife-torn planet.

And so, here I am, back where I started and knowing the place for the first time, fighting my way through layers of karma to find a tenuous union with a divine source that I can, at last, whole-heartedly embrace. Unhappiness has given way to optimism; euphoria and depression are levelling out towards peace; and Oxford (still wet!) has never looked so beautiful.

**Joanna Jeczalik, UK**

*"I felt more confident that we would, one day, be able to respect each other's 'ways' and no longer feel threatened by them"*



# scattered thoughts

The background of the page is an abstract watercolor illustration. It features several thick, dark lines in blue, red, and yellow that crisscross the page. Interspersed among these lines are various colorful watercolor splashes and blotches in shades of orange, red, yellow, green, and blue. The overall effect is one of organic, hand-painted chaos, which visually represents the 'scattered thoughts' mentioned in the title.

In a full heart there is room for everything, while in an empty heart there is room for nothing - Antonio Porchia

Truth exists; falsehood

has to be invented - Georges Braque

The secret of being a bore is to say everything - Voltaire

Live in accordance with the light you have received.

Life - still or sparkling?

I don't know the key to success but the key to failure is to try to please everybody - Bill Cosby

You can't fall off the floor.

Courage is the indispensable virtue, without which all others fail - Proust

Part of the inhumanity of the computer is that, once it is competently programmed and working smoothly, it is completely honest - Isaac Asimov

The relief after a nightmare is the purest of emotions - Amanda Lohrey

Expect nothing; live frugally on surprise - Alice Walker

Please leave this planet as you would like to find it.