

BY WALLACE HENLEY

**T**he velocity, scope, and magnitude of change in the contemporary world threaten the equilibrium of individuals and the institutions of their engagement, including church, family, education, government, business - workplace.

Change is the "new normal," as Peter Drucker noted at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when he wrote,

"Everybody has accepted by now that change is unavoidable. But that still implies that change is like death and taxes — it should be postponed as long as possible and no change would be vastly preferable. But in a period of upheaval, such as the one we are living in, change is the norm."<sup>1</sup>

Velocity is the speed by which the information that ignites change rushes at people in the contemporary world.<sup>2</sup> The accumulation of information is the fastest increasing quantity in the world.<sup>3</sup> Researchers at the University of California—Berkeley, examined the total production of all information channels in the

world for two different years, 2000 and 2003.<sup>4</sup> In 2000, the total production of new information in a 12-month period amounted to 37,000 times the information housed in the Library of Congress. By 2003, the accumulation of information was growing by 66 percent per year. The total amount of scientific knowledge has been doubling every 15 years since 1900.

Information alters existing realities, and also creates new phenomena. The velocity of information therefore accelerates change. The Industrial Age shows there are certain periods of mega leaps, when technologies, systems, and processes morph seemingly overnight into radically new forms. An 18<sup>th</sup> century



**Wallace Henley** is the author and collaborator of over 20 books, including his latest *Globequake: Living in the Unshakeable Kingdom While the World Falls Apart* (Thomas Nelson, 2012). Journalist, leadership consultant, and former White House aide, Henley is the founder of Headwaters Leadership Institute and Associate Pastor of Houston's 57,000 member Second Baptist Church. He regularly blogs at [www.ChristianPost.com](http://www.ChristianPost.com)

balloon and the Wright Brothers' flying machine shared the goal of enabling humans to fly, but the airplane was a leap into a new category.

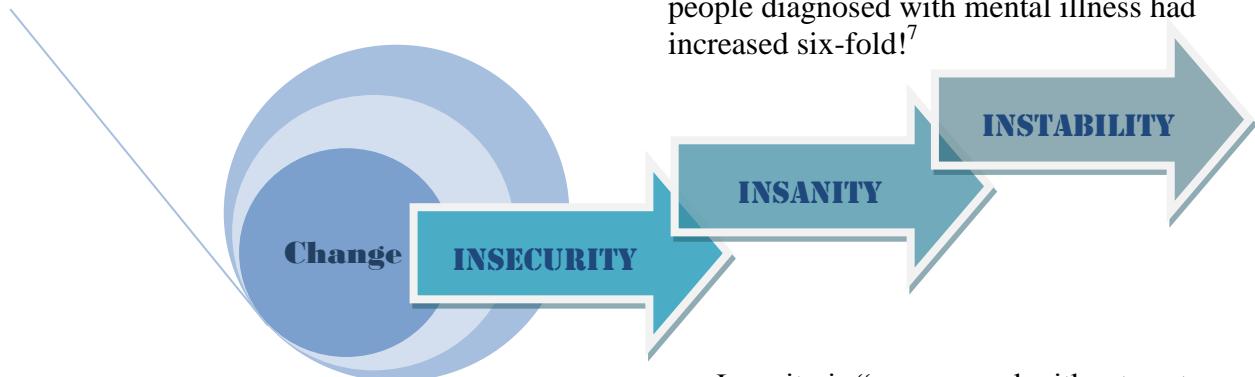
Information is a primary catalyst of change. No previous historic period has experienced the present velocity of the increase of information; therefore, the contemporary period is unique—up to this point of history. This is why change is the new normal.

The scope of upheaval is worldwide. Old values are displaced in the quest for new globally “shared” values. Individuals find the traditional belief systems that constituted the foundations of their lives shattered by the often novel alterations of the spiritual, ethical, and social landscapes. Churches that have defined and sustained core values and worldview are shaken by the contemporary transitions. The vision of families who pass revered truths across generations has been buried in the rubble of a world in turbulence.

Educational philosophies and systems seem to have been blinded in the

The velocity and scope of change impact people in at least three ways. First is the increasing sense of insecurity. Many people are haunted by vague, unidentifiable anxiety, manufactured within their own turbulent souls. Both the real and imagined threats of the turbulence around us drive us deeply into ourselves in the effort to fend off the gremlins of fear and anxiety. The outcome is what we experience presently: self-absorption resulting in what Harvard sociologist Pitirim Sorokin called the “sensate” stage of a culture, when feelings and emotions govern.<sup>5</sup> The more we view the world through the lens of our own emotions, the greater loom the threats to our security.

If we live in a state of insecurity long enough, after a while we drift into the second phenomenon threatening life balance, insanity. This problem is at epidemic proportions, concluded E. Fuller Torrey and Judy Miller in their 2002 book, *The Invisible Plague*.<sup>6</sup> From 1955 into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many medications had become available, but the number of people diagnosed with mental illness had increased six-fold!<sup>7</sup>



dust of upheaval, and lost their way. The principles that have secured governments have been shattered. Businesses and the workplace have rocked with the turmoil. Employees are struck with new tensions including concerns over job security and career longevity, as well as balancing the demands of their total lives with the need to cling to their employment.

Insanity is “reason used without root, or reason in the void,” wrote G.K. Chesterton.<sup>8</sup> “The man who begins to think without the proper first principles goes mad; he begins to think at the wrong end.” Cultural, societal, and national insanity occurs when people destroy their roots and forget their first principles. The velocity and scope of change in our time tears out the root-system and brings down

the edifice of first principles. That's why whole societies as well as individuals lose their balance, lapse into insanity and lose their stability.

Instability is the third impact of contemporary upheaval threatening the balance of the human psyche. The devastating destabilization of global redefinition is its impact on the foundations on which all strength and order rest. Chesterton was reflecting the theme asserted in Proverbs that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and yet the tremors of the present age seek to destabilize the very idea of God. This leads to deconstruction of the concept of humans having inherent dignity because of being made in God's image. What follows is the loss of the confidence that arises from belief in a transcendent God to whom all are accountable, but also the God who is immanent in space and time, and engaged with His image-bearers and their world.

How, then, does one maintain balance midst the upheaval? The question is especially pertinent as it relates to business and the workplace. According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average American spends 16.4 hours of every 24 working or sleeping.<sup>9</sup> The rest of the available hours must be allotted to many other tasks—caring for others, household activities, leisure and sports, eating and drinking. Imbalance arises as the demands of the urgent displace the essentials for equilibrium in the individual's life.

We can group these essentials into three categories:

1. the need for the "otherness" of transcendence;
2. the need for linking transcendence on the immanent scale of the self;
3. the need for a clear philosophy of time and its use.

Understood and applied properly these three elements comprise a proverbial "three-legged stool" on which one can rest in confidence because of its balance and stability.

One of the distortions of contemporary culture is blurring the boundaries between the transcendent and the immanent. In an age of self-absorption people increasingly worship on the horizontal level. They lose the sense of a God who is wholly other, external to themselves and their worlds. Such an attitude cuts off two legs from the stool, which becomes incapable of offering balance and rest.

"If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" asks the Psalmist, rhetorically (Psalm 11:3 (NASB)). His thought is drawn immediately to transcendence, and the writer answers his own question through awareness and focus on the Most High God: "The LORD is in His holy temple; the LORD'S throne is in heaven..." (Psalm 11:4). God's throne symbolizes His serene steadiness, His immovable authority, and the potential for all under the rule and protection of that throne to enter its peace, even midst thundering upheaval. Balance begins by resting oneself on the immutability of God.

This requires linking transcendent reality with immanent experience. Thus the Psalmist also writes,

My soul waits in silence for God only;  
From Him is my salvation.  
He only is my rock and my salvation,  
My stronghold; I shall not be greatly shaken.  
(Psalm 62:1-2)

One of the characteristics of our time is an aversion to waiting and silence, especially in the West. Many are under compulsion to push ahead in lines, to

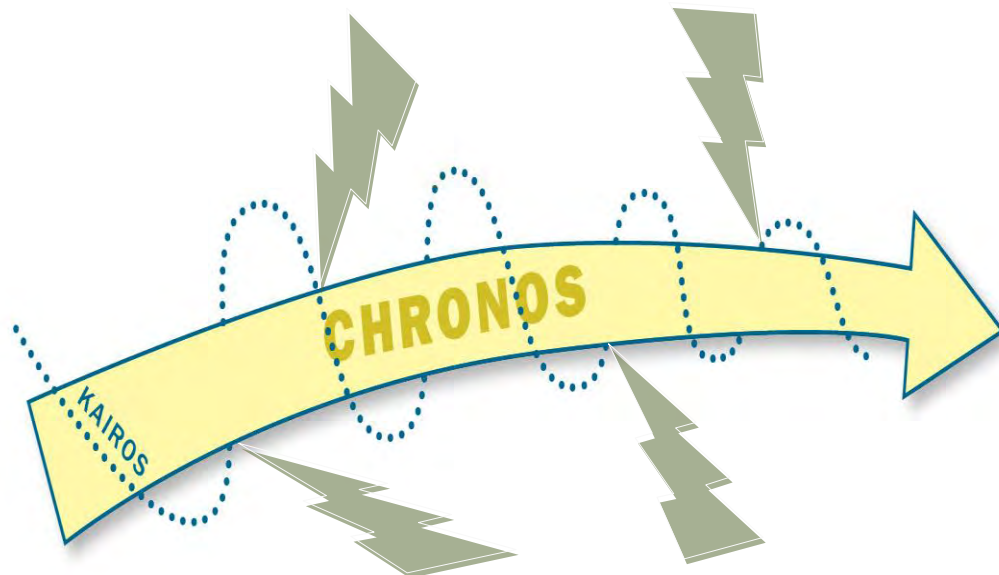
dash under changing traffic lights, to speed toward destinations. We have been conditioned to be uncomfortable with silence in a culture that has gone from static-charged radio music to elevator music, to blaring television in doctor's and dentist's waiting rooms, to boom boxes, I-Pods, and scores of other media delivering a constancy of noise.

Our penchant for noise has come at a great cost. It has robbed us of the beauty of silence in which we can hear the "still, small voice" of God. The disappearance of silence has taken away the connection on the immanent scale of the soul with the transcendent. The loss of that connection impairs our balance, and its recovery is essential for the restoration of our personal equilibrium.

This requires an understanding of the

nature of time and managing it effectively. The Greek New Testament presents two levels of time:

- *Chronos* expresses time on the existential plane. It is the ticking of the clock, the passing of the calendar. It is wholly linear, with a point of beginning and termination. It is a metric, enabling us to measure the segments of our days and lifetimes.
- *Kairos* is the "opportune time," the content of *chronos*. If linear *chronos* is the track, then *kairos* is the train, moving along the track on his spinning wheels. Therefore, *kairos* has a cyclical motion. The biblical view of time therefore synthesizes Western linearity with Oriental cyclical movement.



*Kairos are opportune moments that unveil the eternal, disclosing God's ultimate purposes within the long sweep of time*

Life-balance requires that one get time in balance. There must be opportunity along the linear sequence for the recognition of the presence and impact of the *kairotic*. One must reflect and consider the events and circumstances traveling along the “tracks” and their deeper meanings, significance, lessons, and principles. This calls for a rhythm of time sequencing that allows for regular meditation, inward evaluation, and outward and upward focus.

Such balance comes as we contemplate our own nature as God’s image-bearers. He is triune—Father, Son, Holy Spirit—and we are triune—spirit, soul, body. Paul prays that “the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

The body is that dimension of our being created for interaction with the external world, on the horizontal plane. The soul—the *psuche*, from which we get “psyche” and its family of words—is the facet of our whole person capable of introspection and self-awareness. Our spirit is made for interaction with transcendent Being. We are “preserved complete” when there is a balance in our personal lives between spirit, soul, and body. Imbalance occurs when we lop off “legs” from the “stool” and try to stand on the “body” alone, or cast all our weight on the “soul,” or fail to link the “spirit” with the other parts of our being.

## Life balance requires us to engage in a rhythm that allows for inward evaluation, and outward and upward focus

And we lose our equilibrium when we neglect the wholeness of time, expressed in the *chronos-kairos* linkage. It is the recognition of and participation in the rhythm of time that can bring our whole being into balance. “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,” says the Commandment. That is, there must be

specific regularity in the linear flow of our routines when we pause, and engage with God, the transcendent One. We must thrust our souls outward from the self and the horizontal, and open ourselves to the *kairos* of God that gives us meaning

and purpose.

Ben Young says he was impacted by insights from Lauren Winner, an Orthodox Jew who became an evangelical Christian. She said that what she missed from her routine as a practicing Jew was the Sabbath observance, “a cessation from the rhythm of work and world, a time wholly set apart, and, perhaps above all, a sense that the point of *Shabbat*, the orientation of *Shabbat*, is toward God.” Young agrees. Modern humanity is missing something through its loss of the Sabbath concept, and “we are missing it because we don’t understand what we have lost.”<sup>10</sup>

The promise attached to the Sabbath Command is that we will find “rest” precisely because of the balance, and resulting peace and confidence that comes from living in the wholeness for which God designed us. Jesus Christ freed us from a rigid conformity to the Law as the means of salvation, but He did not set aside the overarching principles



God's "way" provides for healthy, balanced living.

Balancing the demands of life and work necessitates, as Chesterton said, beginning with "first principles," and that means recognizing how we are made and how we relate to the time God has given us. ♦♦

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Peter Drucker, *Management Challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, New York: Harper Business, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Material used here relating to velocity, scope, and magnitude is drawn from the author's book: Wallace Henley, *Globequake: Living in the Unshakeable Kingdom while the world falls apart*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, July, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> "The Speed of Information," *The Technium*, 2006. Retrieved from: [http://www.kk.org/thetechnium/archives/2006/02/the\\_speed\\_of\\_in.php](http://www.kk.org/thetechnium/archives/2006/02/the_speed_of_in.php).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Pitirim Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Dynamics*, Transaction Publishers, 1985, 622-623.

<sup>6</sup> E. Torrey Fuller and Judy Miller, *The Invisible Plague*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002.

<sup>7</sup> "Anatomy of an Epidemic," Robert Whitaker, *Ethical Human Psychology and Psychiatry*, Vol. 7, Number 1, Spring, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*. Published originally in 1908, with numerous subsequent editions.

<sup>9</sup> "Time use on an average workday for employed persons ages 25 to 54 with children." Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/tus/charts>.

<sup>10</sup> Ben Young & Dr. Samuel Adams, *Out of Control: Finding Peace for Physically Exhausted and Spiritually Strung Out*, Nashville: Nelson Books/Thomas Nelson, 2006, 65.