

experience; otherwise it became the seed of future conflict. He had experienced the possibility of claiming each day the gift of a new nature in order to live motivated by love of God, and free from the burden of trying to prove anything about oneself. **Logan Kirk**

THE HISTORICAL JESUS

Leslie Marsh writes:

I am publishing this week a small booklet, *A brief guide to the historical Jesus*.

The historical Jesus captivates me with his purity and boldness, honesty and power to dream, daring fear-free thinking, costly vision and total love for and reliance on God.

Everybody thinks their enemy is "evil people". Jesus saw the enemy was not the people but the "Evil" itself, which was leading both Roman imperialists and his own people astray. He took on to defeat Evil itself.

*Booklet (£2) available from:
L Marsh, 39 Hardwick Avenue,
Kidlington, Oxford OX5 1BH*

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

GREENCOAT FORUMS

24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1RD (RSVP Tel: 020 7798 6000)

Light refreshments from 6.30pm, speakers: 7.15pm till 9pm

TUESDAY, MARCH 9

David Brewer, founder of Media Ideas, will speak on *Building independent media in developing democracies*

TUESDAY, APRIL 20

International Farmers Dialogue (a programme of Initiatives of Change) will host an evening on *Farming as if everyone mattered*

FRIENDS OF WESTMINSTER PRODUCTIONS event

Saturday 27 March at 3pm

24 Greencoat Place

STEVE STICKLEY, actor and storyteller

Followed by tea – all welcome

INTERMISSION and WESTMINSTER PRODUCTIONS LTD

At Intermission at St Saviour's

Thursday 29 April, Friday 30

April at 7.30pm

Saturday 1 May, 2.30 and

7.30pm Four showcase perform-

ances of *Rhubarb, Rhubarb*, a new

comedy written and directed by

Hugh Steadman Williams, design

by Pam Edmunds

Tickets £10 (students £6)

For reservations send cheque and s.a.e. to

Intermission at St Saviour's, Walton Place

London SW1

This issue was edited by Mary Jones and Janet Paine with layout by Blair Cummock. Please send material for the April issue by March 24 to Ann Carpenter, Bourne Cottage, Mill Lane, Mere, Warminster, Wilts BA12 6DA, email: russell.ann@tiscali.co.uk



NEWSLETTER uk

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HOPE IN LIVERPOOL

"True poverty is not someone without a penny but someone without a dream." – Conference delegate

Professor Gerald Pillay, recently appointed Rector and Chief Executive of Liverpool Hope University College, gave a challenging welcome address to the *Hope in the Cities* consultation last month.

A South African himself, he drew attention to the fact that Nelson Mandela made his prison a centre of higher education and gained his degree while in detention, rather than allowing himself to be a victim.

He told how, at his own welcome dinner with the Chief Executive of Liverpool City and the heads of the city's other two universities, the main subject had been their common concern about the sense of hopelessness felt by many young people. These are people with no ambitions and no dreams, who come from areas of deprivation breeding a sub-culture of dependency.

Professor Pillay wants Hope University to create a network of hope and to empower those who are victims. He would like to partner with *Hope in the Cities* in specific areas. Two staff members had recently received *HIC* dialogue facilitation training. One of them told of a dialogue they had initiated between the university students

and staff and members of the community in one of the most deprived parts of the city.

Another highlight of the conference came from Nottingham. Glen Williams, detective and Deputy Chair of the Black Police Association there, spoke with Michelle Campbell, a black community youth worker. Their visit to the International Conference in Caux, Switzerland, as well as *HIC* "honest conversation" dialogues in their city, had broken down barriers of mistrust between them. "It was a life-changing experience," said Williams.

This had led to a commitment with others in the community, who



Glen Williams of the Nottinghamshire Police addresses the conference. (Standing right) **Community worker Michelle Campbell and Barrie Brazier of the Nottingham Racial Equality Council.**

became part of their team, to initiate dialogues involving police and young people in Nottingham. There had followed dialogues in St Ann's, the centre of a district known for drug culture and gun crime. This initiative is ongoing, and their enthusiasm and conviction were infectious. They want to take a lead with others in the Caux Human Security Conference this summer on a "Police, youth and the wider community" workshop.

Nitin Shukla, Gateshead Council Diversity Officer, and Councillor David Down came from Newcastle upon Tyne. Also present were volunteers working with asylum-seeker support initiatives in different parts of the country.

Barrie Brazier from Nottingham's Racial Equality Council was another who focused on how to remove barriers of mistrust that too often lead to frustration and violence and stand in the way of creating sustainable communities.

Here are some of the fascinating variety of people (54 from 10 cities) who contributed to the Consultation: a Brazilian journalist on a Liverpool degree course; a former nightclub door manager from Manchester, enlisting disadvantaged young people in constructive work to create a leisure centre; the Chair of Liverpool's Yemeni Arabic Club; an Afghan woman refugee working with London asylum-seekers; and a South African woman, for 30 years ANC representative in the North West.



Professor Gerald Pillay (right) talking with Taher Ali Qassim, Chair of the Liverpool Yemeni Arabic Club, and his daughter, a student in Cardiff

Dianne King from London spoke passionately about support for well-being and mental health carers, dialogue being a tool which helps remove the big factor of fear. Role reversal occasions had also been effective in developing self-esteem in young people.

Students from Sheffield told of the *Learn to Lead* programme developing leadership skills and encouraging a spirit of service to the community.

John Sephula from Leeds works to empower young people who fall into the gap filled by drugs and crime cartels. "Why does regeneration not affect the heart of communities?" he asked. "We put money into lovely buildings, but the key is the human factor."

Journalist Ana Pereira of Brazil concluded: "At the end of the weekend there was a time for reflection, evaluation and co-ordination of future activities and the confidence that this is indeed a community of hope."

Gerald Henderson

December Pieter Horn and Prof Cornelius Marivate made a second trip to the west of Zimbabwe with a trailer of food which IC friends had raised money to buy. Last month the Chairman of the Zimbabwe MRA/IC Council of Management attended the AGM of MRA/IC in Pretoria.

Finlay & Kath Moir

COLOMBIA

Leaving Mexico, my home country, and going to Colombia for the first time, made me more aware of the challenges we face in our countries. I could see many weaknesses in our attitudes but not without sensing our strengths. In Latin America, one can still feel joy for life. Even in the midst of scarcity and difficulties, people retain their warmth and solidarity. A sense of community can still be found in cities like Bogota.

Yet, if one goes to rural areas, the sense of community goes deeper. We had a chance to visit coffee growers in a little town. For me it was a chance to see how much human effort goes into each coffee bean. Yet how little they are given in return. Coffee growers put much of their lives and hopes into every single plant they grow. However, it is an increasing challenge for them to continue making a living that way. When they can no longer stay in their towns and have to move into cities, it is more than their cof-

fee plantations they leave behind. Their natural sense of solidarity, strong community, values, hope and faith need help to sustain.

Many were the things that struck me in Colombia: all the beauty God has given in this particular region, and then the people – people working hard, hoping for things to get better sometime.

This time in Latin America became more than a journey into the external reality of this region. The interaction with people, their warmth and sense of hope, made it a journey into my inner self. I am grateful to God, and to all the people who were physically or in spirit with me during this time. They have all made this experience what it was.

Fabiola Benavente
working with *For A Change*

SONGS OF PRAISE

On February 15 BBC *Songs of Praise* from St Mary's Parish Church, Haddington, featured congregation member Melville Carson. As an RAF bomber pilot, shot down over Germany, he was the only crew member to survive. It was from POW camp that Melville took part in the attempted break-out, dramatised in *The Great Escape*. It proved abortive for all but three of those involved and 50 of his fellow inmates were executed.

Melville spoke of the need to overcome bitterness caused by past

enough enough?"...

Secondly, if we believe that freedom is our most cherished possession, then why do we compulsively and openly sell ourselves into the slavery brought about by the burdens and chains of debt?

And finally perhaps we need to go behind these questions...to discover the root cause – spiritual deprivation and spiritual hunger. We are not made to love money, or indeed anything. We are made to love and to be loved by somebody – and in the end, through God, by everybody.

St Augustine put it another way: "We were made by God and for God and our hearts are restless until they rest in God." Britain today is a lonely restless hearts club band ... and one thing remains certain: such greed never was and never will be the way to "remake the world" for the common good of all.

RAINBOW NATION

During our two months in South Africa, we had tea with Ginn Fourie in her Cape Town home. At the end of 2002, Ginn had met the man who had organised shootings at two separate venues in Cape Town some ten years previously. One was a restaurant where her student daughter, Lyndi, working in her spare time, was killed.

The story of Ginn's reconciliation with Letlapa Mphahele, commander of the Azanian People's

Liberation Army (APLA), which had been responsible for the shooting, is told in the June/July 2003 issue of *For A Change*.

Last year at the public launching of the Lyndi Fourie Foundation, which together they have set up, Letlapa said, "I have received the biggest gift of all, the gift of forgiveness." An interview with them featured in the evening's TV news. Ginn is bubbling over with what has happened to her and wants to tell everyone. She feels that what she has learnt will be of value to her white compatriots as they play their part in the building of the new South Africa.

Also in Cape Town, Sam and Virginia Pono described the development of their interfaith work. Sam meets regularly with a Muslim MP from KwaZulu Natal, a deputy Speaker in the Parliament. He, Sam and a Rabbi started interfaith dialogues. Now the MP's daughter, a university student, has taken responsibility for these events with other friends in the university. They have practical objectives in mind and want to make the lessons they are learning as a rainbow nation available to other parts of the world.

MRA/IC colleagues in South Africa are strengthening links with their northern neighbours. South Africa has an estimated 2 million refugees from Zimbabwe. The Archbishop of Bulawayo said recently that over 10,000 people had died from malnutrition. In

CORRUPTION – "A QUESTION OF LEADERSHIP"

Britain has a reputation for being relatively free from corruption compared with other countries. But **Laurence Cockcroft** of Transparency International, the anti-corruption body, warned that Britain was in real danger of losing its new anti-corruption legislation, updated in a recent anti-terrorism Act. The Act may soon be repealed if found to infringe human rights, he said.

Cockcroft, who is chair of TI's UK chapter and a founder member of its international board, was speaking on *Corruption and development – a personal odyssey* at a Greencoat Forum in London on February 18.

"Corruption is a dynamic entity," he said. "It is getting better or worse but it is never static." Much of his experience had been in African countries, and his audience at the Forum included people from 12 African countries.

"We have to acknowledge that countries can develop really fast, even with some degree of corruption," Cockcroft said. "There are some conditions when corruption and economic development are compatible... but we have to ask the question to what extent corruption prevents the world from becoming inclusive."

Cockcroft stressed that TI in the UK "needs to focus more on what is

going on in defence and politics". In the private sector changes happen much faster than in the political or public sectors. The day after this forum, the *Financial Times* reported that there had been no major prosecutions of businesses for corrupt practices. The paper quoted Cockcroft as saying that corporate behaviour would "only change markedly when there are a couple of high-profile prosecutions".

So, what is the basis for hope at a global level? With democracy more widespread than ever before, "it is much harder for a senior politician to be corrupt in front of the public," Cockcroft said. "But on an individual level it depends on how

To what extent does corruption prevent the world from becoming inclusive?

far people take on initiatives to change it." TI's Integrity Awards are given annually to four individuals who stand out against corruption. "One has to recognise the huge courage, effort and energy these individuals put into confronting corruption."

In her vote of thanks Amina Dikedi from Nigeria spoke about the new all-Africa *Clean Africa Campaign*, of which she is one of the founders. This aims to train a new generation of young leaders in values of integrity. The first 10-day training programme had recently taken place in Kenya and there are now plans for CAC programmes in South Africa and Ghana.

Anastasia Stepanova

HEADSCARVES, SECULARISM AND THE NEED FOR HUMILITY

The current controversy in France over the government's decision to ban Muslim headscarves and other religious symbols from state schools goes to the heart of a fundamental issue – whether Europe's tradition of secularism is adequate to meet the challenges of highly globalised 21st century societies.

All religions have something to say on human obligations and how people should relate to each other. In this sense Christianity as much as Islam has a political dimension to it. Today it is easy to forget that the principles of secularism were forged out of two centuries of bloodshed in Europe as Protestants and Catholics, each with different visions of the state, fought for political dominance. The claims of religion on political life are not easily surrendered.

Neutral public sphere

In an address to the French Nation on December 17, President Jacques Chirac described secularism as "one of the great achievements of the Republic" and "a crucial element of social peace and national cohesion". The reason for this was "the neutrality of the public sphere which enables the harmonious existence side by side of different religions. Like all freedoms, the freedom to express one's faith can only have limits in the freedom of others and in the compliance with rules of life in society."

It is hard to disagree. The problems arise when the neutral public sphere is defined as a place where religious expression is banned. This goes back to Europe's experience of religious conflicts and the deep assumptions which grew out of it that (a) religion is an inevitable cause of conflict and (b) different religions are incapable of finding a shared vision for society.

Unforeseen problems

Secularisation has led to several unforeseen problems. First, a religion limited to "private life" has much less appeal than one which gives a vision for how human society as a whole should live.

Secondly, when the basis for social cohesion moves from a morality sanctioned by religion to the rule of law there is a corresponding shift in motivation from "acting morally because it is right" to "following the rules so I won't get caught and punished".

Thirdly, when the neutral public sphere is no longer a place for discourse on the fundamental questions of life's meaning and purpose, life becomes meaningless and purposeless for many people. The aggressive pursuit of material possessions is, in part, driven by an attempt to fill that emptiness – with dire consequences for the environment.

Is there an alternative? I believe there is. Religions have come a long

way in the last two centuries and they have found a surprising amount of common ground on issues of morality. The "Parliament of World Religions" in 1993 produced a "Declaration of a Global Ethic" which, I imagine, most atheists and agnostics would also be happy to subscribe to. Mainstream religious institutions have matured politically to the point where they no longer sanction violence and war as a means to religious ends.

Principles to be followed

Admittedly, this still leaves lots of scope for tension between religions, but my experience (and the experience of IC over 60 years) has been that when the following principles are applied it is possible to fully express my own faith whilst working with people wholeheartedly living out a different faith:

1. Focus on the task of shaping the world around a shared moral vision. In this task much more unites us than divides us.

ENOUGH IN THE WORLD

Bishop Michael Marshall, in his newsletter The Trinitarian on January 18, wrote:

While I would certainly not wish to go on record as his disciple, Frank Buchman, the American evangelist and founder of the Moral Re-Armament movement, shortly after the Second World War wrote what is perhaps his most significant work

2. Turn the searchlight inwards. We all have a natural tendency to judge ourselves by our ideals and others by their actions. Instead of blaming others for their failings, first observe and correct where I fall short.

3. Listen with respect. It is hard enough to understand my own faith, so what chance do I have of beginning to understand another's faith unless I listen first.

When I apply these principles I find a deepening of my own faith and a growth in my spirit.

As a European Christian, I humbly have to accept responsibility for secularism's more anti-religious sentiments which largely stem from the failures of previous generations of Christians. However, I hold out the hope that we can discover better ways of living alongside different faiths and cultures which encourage and celebrate a diversity of spiritual expression.

Mike Lowe

– *Remaking the World*. "There is enough in the world for everyone's need," he wrote, "but not enough for everyone's greed." How incredibly timely and relevant those words are today in the *Vanity Fair* of the western powers.

The Bishop then goes on to give examples of present day greed and continues:

So we need to address two questions. First and foremost, "When is