

District Newsletter for Easter 2016

The name Nikolai Ivanovich Bukharin probably does not mean very much to you. There is no reason why it should. However, during his day he was as powerful a man as there was on earth. As a Russian Communist leader he took part in the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, later he was editor of the Soviet newspaper Pravda, a leading theorist of the Communist movement, and a full member of the Politburo. He was an educated, forceful and dedicated ideologist. An atheist and an academic, his works on economics and political science are still read today.

There is a story told about his appearance in Kiev in 1930 to speak to a huge rally on the subject of atheism. Addressing the crowd for over an hour, he targeted his superior intellect at Christianity, marshalling insults, argument, and proof against it. His reasoning was coherent and persuasive. He spoke with authority and passion. Christianity was a religion for weaklings, morally flawed, scientifically preposterous and a tool of capitalist oppression. No one in the gathered crowd booed or heckled. People seemed quiet, attentive, hanging on his words. When he had finished he asked if there were any questions. Silence filled the auditorium. Then an Orthodox priest got up and asked permission to speak. He approached the rostrum and gave the Easter greeting of the Russian Orthodox Church: "CHRIST IS RISEN!" The crowd arose as one and the response came thundering back: "HE IS RISEN INDEED!"

This is a great story and one often repeated by Christians, although the facts of it have never been established. Nevertheless, the idea underlying it is very powerful, as it appeals to the part of our understanding that recognises our faith as being infinitely more complex than simply assenting to a set of propositions. Although the Christian faith may not be rational in the scientific sense, it is reasonable, and it engages our hearts and minds in ways that help us to make sense of human nature and the human condition. Our human relationships; our awareness of death and our yearning for transcendence; our sense of transience and our need for meaning; every hope, dream, vision, ideal, desire and fear: all of these are woven into an intricate pattern of experience, belief and knowledge to which our faith provides a key. Christ is the lens through which we view life, the universe and everything. Consequently, there are things that we know, as part of our lived experience of faith, which are not readily defeated by the arguments of materialism or rationalism.

The name Gus Speth probably doesn't mean much to you either. He is a United States scientist and was environmental advisor to Presidents Carter and Clinton. He has also been administrator of the U.N. Development Programme, dean of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, and is now a professor at Vermont Law School. He says, "I used to think the top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change. I thought that with 30 years good science we could

address those problems. But I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed, apathy... and to deal with those we need a spiritual and cultural transformation – and we scientists don't know how to do that.”

We Christians think that we might know how to do that. Christ is risen, sin is defeated and the world can be transformed. We know this to be true, not scientifically, but intuitively. So it seems that Christians might have a significant contribution to make at this time in the world's history.

This Eastertide may you know the risen Christ, and may you experience in your own life the spiritual and cultural transformation that the world so desperately needs.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Perry', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Next Issue

The next edition of **The Link** will be published on the **Sunday the 8th of May 2016**. Therefore, items for inclusion in the next edition need to reach me by **Sunday the 1st of May**. Thanks, Mike (MikeOwen10@aol.com)