



Simon Parke

Bring on the empty horses

PERHAPS those New Year resolutions that we made are a matter of horse sense.

Here's one approach. First, make a list of your goals for the year ahead. Be specific. Instead of writing "Get fit" for instance — or indeed, "Get fat," which is another possibility — say, "I want to be able to run five miles by July." All your goals should be positive. You shouldn't say, "I will give up chocolate." Rather, you should say "I will find out more about healthy food."

With your list of goals established, you now prioritise. You focus on perhaps three, and then set a series of realistic targets for each. "I want to be able to run one mile by the end of February" for instance. Or, "I will taste three new fruits before the Ides of March." The secret to this resolution business is to be SMART — Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-based.

This is a sensible vision of personal progress, which life coaches and motivational writers quite rightly dine out on, for there is a level of health to it all. It's absolutely right, for it is the organised affirmation of you. Very good. But it's also absolutely wrong, for the same reason.

The first approach outlined is that of popular psychology; the second, that of what is perhaps best called unpopular psychology. And stepping straight into the Wild West, we may face a shoot-out between the two, as the New Year is getting under way.

Popular psychology bids you grasp the reins of control of your life as you hurtle across the prairie. The insanely powerful horses need a strong hand as they pull your wagon towards your goal — the OK Ranch, by sundown. You just need to take control. You can do it.

Unpopular psychology has a different ambition for you. It suggests you let go of the reins, wave goodbye to the mad horses, and leap off the wagon, which was going nowhere anyway. Standing alone in the prairie — a place you'd previously feared — you now embark on a rather different adventure. In the distance, the wheels come off the wagon and the horses bolt, yet, despite your former goal now being a meaningless hallucination, you seem surprisingly none the worse for wear.

I have a goal. One day I'd like to live in a flat on the seafloor, facing the water's calm and crash. It is so far from what is presently possible, however, that, by the time I get there, it will probably have been washed away — which is the story of most goals. You may make it, but there is a smell of rot and damp even as you enter.

Perhaps, alongside the goals of our life coaches and motivational writers, we need the sparse words of death coaches and demotivational writers. It's good to be SMART: even more liberating, however, is TRUTH — To Remain Unattached To Horses.

The truth behind sex-trafficking

Carrie Pemberton outlines how the lucrative business works, and steps to stamp it out

IT IS VITAL for us all to understand what is happening in trafficking for sexual exploitation in this country — especially in the wake of the brutal murders of five women in Ipswich who had been caught up in street prostitution.

We are also seeing greater interest in contemporary forms of slavery stimulated by the bicentenary of the Act to abolish the slave trade. And the Conservatives have just announced an "action paper" outlining their policies to counteract people-trafficking.

A report issued last year by the European Women's Lobby estimated that 80 per cent of international trafficking is for sex. The police's Operation Pentameter last year, which targeted brothels, lap-dancing clubs, and massage parlours, revealed women caught in slave-like conditions. The Home Office estimates that 4000 women are at present enslaved in the UK. About 70 per cent of women working in UK brothels are foreign nationals. It is reasonable to assume that a considerable proportion have been trafficked.

Awareness of trafficking has been enhanced by a spate of television programmes here and in the United States. Most of these, however, have focused on Eastern Europe. The research gathered by Operation Pentameter, and the work of CHASTE and other organisations, suggests that women and girls aged 15 to 38 have also been trafficked from China, Thailand, Malaysia, South America, India, and West and Central Africa. For contemporary sexual enslavement, the colour, the creed, and the race don't matter — just the sex.

THE FIRST STEP often comes through the offer of new jobs and financial rewards in Japan, Europe, or North America. Those being groomed for the growing sex markets of Europe are told that there will be waitressing, secretarial, packing, or entertainment work.

The women have no idea of the horrendous conditions to which they



For sale? Poster from the International Organisation for Migration

will be subjected when they arrive at their destination. Having had their passports and visa papers removed, they are intimidated, beaten, raped by potential new owners, and served with the costs of their travel, location, and management, which can add up to a substantial debt bondage. One young Nigerian we worked with had a debt of more than £30,000 to pay her manager.

Everyone is familiar with sepia lithographs of Africans in chains being herded into slave markets. Slave sales are now being held in bars, basements, airport lounges, and streets across Europe. Women and young girls change hands for as little as US\$500, rising to US\$20,000 for an exceptionally beautiful, virginal specimen.

One senior Conservative politician wrote to CHASTE recently to lament the perceived lack of immigration controls at our borders. He asked why "victims" were not detected at the point of entry. The problem is that many of those

coming into the country are not aware of the fate that awaits them.

Another question, asked in all innocence, is why the women don't simply refuse. This is asked by those who do not know the force of a fist on their face or chest, the threat of violence against members of their family back home, or having a pistol placed in their mouth.

Many women have wept and pleaded with the clients with whom they are forced to have sex, but find that not a single one has taken the matter to the police. Crimestoppers now provides an anonymous phone line for punters, and other lines are being set up by the UK Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC), a new multi-agency unit led by the police. These telephone numbers need to be in public lavatories, pubs, taxis, phone booths, men's magazines, football and racecourse programmes, and even church noticeboards.

Deputy Chief Constable Grahame Maxwell, the director of UKHTC, has stated that anyone having paid sex

with a woman who is then found to have been trafficked will be charged with rape. He could not have given a clearer signal.

OCCASIONALLY, taxi drivers, concerned women in nightclubs, or alert church, health, or social workers help women to escape. Until September last year, there were only 27 designated safe beds in the UK paid for by the Home Office. At the end of this month, there will be 20 more, made available by members of the CHASTE initiative and paid for by the Medaille Trust and the Salvation Army.

But, as the Conservative action paper suggests, we need to increase the funding for safe spaces for the victims, who can take months to recover enough of a sense of freedom to speak against their tormentors.

The Time for a^{re}st campaign is now lobbying parliamentarians via e-cards. The campaign highlights the importance of signing the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. The Convention requires each country to assist victims in their physical, psychological, and social recovery, and enables their interests to be presented in criminal proceedings.

This last aim is significant, because, at the moment, as a result of the immigration violations that most of these women have committed, often inadvertently, most are summarily deported after debriefing by police or immigration officers. The Convention also places a positive obligation on countries to discourage demand. This will be receiving more attention in Not For Sale Sunday in May.

The trafficking business is now worth an estimated £12 billion globally. Alterations in the law and more resources are essential if it is to be halted. There can be no better way to mark the bicentenary of the Act than to abolish the slave trade.

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'Slave sales are now being held in bars and streets across Europe'

The real threat to Christianity



CONTROVERSIES over whether 10 Downing Street was sending religiously themed Christmas cards, or whether Noel was being renamed Winterval, have led the Church to focus too much on a festive gnat while ignoring a rather large and sinister camel.

The dromedary in question came in the form of a speech by the Prime Minister during Advent, in which he addressed the question of British identity in the face of religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity.

Apparently affirming a multicultural vision, Tony Blair suggested that Christians, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, and other faiths had "a perfect right to their own identity and religion, to practise their faith".

But there was an important caveat. "When it comes to our essential values — belief in democracy, the rule of law, tolerance, equal treatment for all, respect for this country and its shared heritage — then that is where we come together. . . it is what gives us the right to call ourselves British," he said. "At that point, no distinctive culture or religion supersedes our duty to be part of an integrated United Kingdom."

We should not be straining at a gnat, but seeing the bigger danger, says Jonathan Bartley

People have a right to practise a private faith. But when it conflicts with public values, and what it means to be British, then the nation state must take precedence.

Many Christians would wholeheartedly endorse ideas of equal treatment, tolerance, and the rule of law. But, as the Christian religion loses its centrality and moves further towards the margins of British culture, the gulf between Churches and the nation state over the interpretation of such values grows ever wider.

Citizenship of the Kingdom of God involves a global perspective that transcends national borders. But, for the nation state, by definition, equal treatment does not extend to asylum seekers, immigrants, and those beyond Britain's borders. Tolerance is only for those who do not undermine governments. The rule of law means that crimes are carried out first against the

Crown, and can mean tacit consent to human-rights abuses and the death penalty abroad.

Citizenship tensions have been present ever since the Emperor Theodosius required baptism to be a rite of citizenship. Mr Blair has now proclaimed citizenship as a right of baptism. The Kingdom of God must be subservient to the United Kingdom.

This is far more sinister than the supposed threats to religious freedom that bishops and archbishops have involved themselves in over the Christmas period. This is not about "bans" on Evangelical university Christian Unions; whether Christians should be "free" to quote Bible verses from Leviticus and Romans to homosexuals; or even whether crosses can be worn on the outside of company uniforms.

It is not about Christians' protecting their own religious interests at all. Rather, it is about their freedom to speak out in the interests of others.

Against a background of continuing debate about multiculturalism, and as Gordon Brown stands pledged to make Britishness a key theme of his premiership, it is a threat that is not going to go away. But Christians should not be distracted by the insects of religious controversy, while ignoring the bigger beast that poses the real danger to freedom.

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