



*And let us not be weary in well doing:
for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.* Gal 6:9

June 2013

'Stop the World, I Want to Get Off' was the title of a musical stage and film production set against the backdrop of a circus. I can identify with the sentiment. The last 12 months have been around the busiest sustained period of activity that I can remember; and it's not showing much sign of easing up..



The reasons for this are more than a few, but I will give some of them in a moment.

Regarding news which I send out, there are some determining factors regarding 'updates' which dictate how much, and how often I post. The reasons for 'no news' can be one or more of the following –



- There is no news (worth bothering you with)
- I'm occupied with other things (this is constant)
- The news is now 'out there' in many other forms (i.e. you will have heard it already)
- There is too much 'noise' in the wider secular media world: this would swamp news which would be of interest to Christians

would be particularly interested in. (In these circumstances I usually try and 'choose the best moment' to send out news.)

- There are rapidly changing events (i.e. in this context what I might send out today will be out-of-date by the time you read it).
- There is just TOO MUCH news.

Too much news? What do you mean?

What we are seeing is an exponential increase in the frequency of newsworthy events. No sooner has one great drama broken into our world (national or international; geo-political or military; secular or religious) than it is overtaken by yet another. The term 'game-changer' has very quickly become clichéd and devalued as each 'game-changer' event is superseded by the next one.

In this context it would trouble you needlessly and be far too time-consuming for me to send out an 'update' on each new development. However -

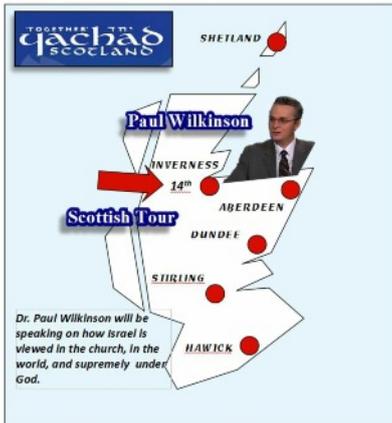
With our first grandchild due this week, 'Birth Pangs' are the expectation. And of course the biblical metaphor picks up on the increasing frequency and intensity of same. A recurring injunction in Mark Ch 13 is "Watch..!"

So if you don't hear from me for a while, please don't think that I have dropped off my editor's perch, but revisit the list of reasons above. And if you feel so inclined, please drop me a note: it's always good to hear from you and catch up on your news.

Now, on we go.....

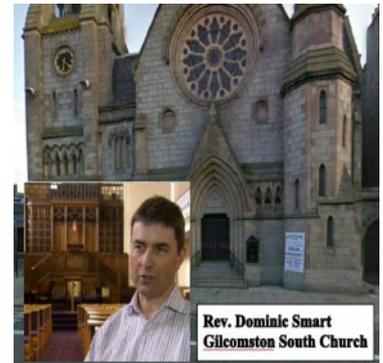
Apart from the usual work routines, the first two months of this year were much taken in the arrangements and oversight of **a meeting in Inverness and a Scottish-wide tour**. The Inverness gathering was an 'invitation' only event as the speaker was a senior Israeli diplomat who had previously encountered highly-aggressive responses from anti-Israel protesters at Edinburgh University.

It seemed to make no difference to the students that **Ishmael Khaldi** was actually a Muslim of Bedouin stock. So the arrangements for the meeting had to be made 'carefully' in order to lessen the risk when Ishmael spoke in Inverness.



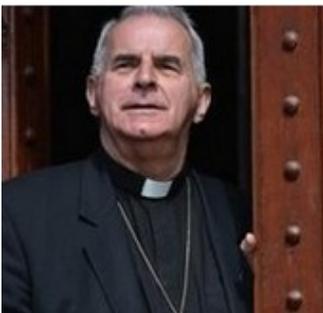
The Scottish Tour was one by Dr. Paul Wilkinson. Paul was invited to Scotland by Yachad (www.yachadscotland.net) of which I am a founder-member and one of the Core Group (See Footnote). He spoke at six venues from the Borders in the south to the Shetland Isles in the far north. (insert link) on 'Christian Palestinianism' - a term he coined during his doctoral studies on Christian Zionism - the belief that the recreation of the modern state of Israel is part of God's redemptive purposes. (More on this later.)

In February the minister and congregation at **Gilcomston Church of Scotland (Aberdeen)** left the denomination; and around the same time a story broke about inappropriate sexual behaviour by the Scottish Roman Catholic leader Cardinal Keith O'Brien.



Within a very short time he resigned as Archbishop, announced his retirement and was ordered by the Vatican to leave Scotland for a time. The four who made the accusations said that O'Brien needed psychological counselling rather than prayer and penance. One accusing priest said, "*Keith is extremely manipulative and needs help to be*

challenged out of his denial. If he does not receive treatment, I believe he is still a danger to himself and to others."



Given that O'Brien was the most vocal and influential churchman in Scotland speaking against same-sex marriage, while the Church of Scotland was experiencing all the publicity of yet another high-profile congregation departing over the same issue, these events effectively left the nation without a single authoritative voice on the government's moves towards same-sex marriage.

The Catholic Church has – as one scribe put it – not so much lost the moral high ground as blown up the top of the mountain. In the midst of it all, the Church of Scotland's media head resigned abruptly following an accusation by a Member of the Scottish Parliament that the Kirk had 'lost its voice'. In fact it was not the hapless journalist's fault: the Church was, and is, hopelessly divided and not in a position to say anything of any substance.

At the time of Gilcomston's departure the media interviewed a former broadsheet editor who was commissioned by the Church of Scotland to write an '*Outside Verdict*' on the denomination. In the course of researching and writing the book (published 2002) **Harry Reid** became so impressed with the Church that he became a member. However during the recent televised interview he opined that as a national institution the Church of Scotland is finished. In April he was quoted in advance of the Kirk's General Assembly in May: "My view is that – whatever the outcome of the vote [on same-sex clergy] – it will not be possible for the Church to cohere and hold together as a national institution."

MARCH The first couple of weeks in March was taken up with the final arrangements for the aforementioned tour by Paul Wilkinson and no sooner was the tour (and the follow-up work) completed, than the planning for a residential 'Taste of Israel' conference came onto the agenda. (See attached.) Circumstances rendered us car-less just I was due to attend a 2-day conference for which was not accessible by public transport. But, via a Christian brother, the Lord came to our aid on both of these issues. So I got to the conference; and now we have another car. God is good.

I was just getting back to the work in my in-tray when a major computer problem very nearly resulted in me having to rebuild the computer in terms of the operating system and all the (very many) programmes that I use. That job would have taken me weeks and much hassle. Praise God – after one final attempt to restore some corrupted files – I managed to get it working again (but it took a chunk out of my time to get it fixed).



The Guildhall - London

By mid-April I was heading to London for three **APRIL** days. I had the privilege of being invited by the UK's Israeli Embassy to an evening 'celebration' event in the capital's Guildhall to mark Israel's 65th birthday.

Without going into details, the security arrangements – some highly visible; others much more discreet - were very substantial. For a variety of reasons (and to avoid any charge of 'name-dropping') I don't want to mention all those with whom I spoke, but one of these was an Arab journalist from a north-African country. His name suggested that he was a Muslim; but I didn't want to ask the 'faith' question.

However two things emerged in our discussion of particular interest to me. First of all he said that his country was moving away from America and looking towards China. While at an obvious level this is perhaps no surprise (America, like Britain and France, have a poor track record in the country) it is the case that Egypt's military is currently reliant on American weaponry and expertise. But when we realise China is building up its military capabilities and is also actively seeking to have the (petro-)dollar replaced in world oil and currency markets, then his statement assumes a much greater significance.

The US being eclipsed?

I once thought that the most powerful person in the world at any one time was the mother of the President of the USA. But I have for some time come to believe that it is those controlling, and personally benefitting from, the world of international finance who are the real puppet-masters – the de facto 'power(s) behind the throne(s)'. And it is they who would have most to lose if the US Dollar is undermined, as surely it would be if the Dollar/oil linkage is broken; a development which would render US currency devalued to the extent of bankrupting that nation which is already in a very serious and unstable position regarding its debt/GDP ratio. I cannot imagine the 'fat controllers' of the international money markets allowing this to happen without a major intervention (and I don't just mean 'stock markets', I mean conflict).

Christianity in North Africa? The other part of our conversation was much more of a surprise to me. In fact my new acquaintance pre-empted what was going to be my question to him. "Do you think Christianity will survive in North Africa?" And he was asking me? To understand why he enquired, would need me to first understand whether the demise of Christianity in the region was something he hoped for or, alternatively, feared. And in the hubbub of the

gathering (a room of around 250 people, with our Anglophone dialogue obliging him to speak in what was for him, a foreign language) it was not possible for me to discern on which side of our question/answer exchange his interest lay. But it was instructive nevertheless that he asked the question; one which, in fact, we were both asking.

Jordan next?

One question we were both agreed upon was the ominous prospects for Jordan. What we are seeing in Syria are local, regional and international conflicts being played out within the one country. (I will write some more on this later d.v.) Iran and Hezbollah (Shia Islam), and Saudia Arabia along with the Free Syrian Army (Sunni Islam) are doing battle with the US and Russia 'in the wings'. King Abudullah II of Jordan has at least two major problems: there are Sunnis/Palestinians within the Jordanian population who are destabilising Jordan; and the country is also desperately short of energy resources. In the context of the first of these problems the King is presently 'happy' to see the Jordanian Sunni 'insurgents' expend their energies in Syria. But once that conflict is over guess what? "Back home guys." Meanwhile (Shia) Iran has been 'helping out' the Jordanian monarchy regarding energy supplies. But pay-back time will come.

While Jordan may not have the extra dimension of ethnic Druze and Kurdish separatists to contend with, as monarch of the established regime, King Abdullah will still be faced with the battle between his own loyalists (including the Jordanian army) against Sunnis, Shias and the secular modernists. Already we are seeing Lebanon and Turkey being drawn into the fray with the latter now showing signs also of the 'Arab Spring' phenomenon. The Golan Heights are another flash point with the prospect of UN peacekeepers withdrawing from that strategic Israeli/Syrian border region. (Indeed some countries have already withdrawn their troops.)

And some fellowship and business



During my short trip to London I met with a small reference/support group from different parts of the UK who pray for, advise, support and inform me. These 'in person' meetings are somewhat infrequent because of the logistics of travel; but how good it was, in a world of superficiality and often Christianity-lite, to share fellowship with kindred spirits from other parts.

MAY

Coming now into May, the workload for the November conference was increasing and the Church of Scotland's General Assembly was in the offing. (Also Israeli jets attacked targets within Syria at the start of the month – more later.) In the event there were two very important 'Deliverances' (reports): one concerning actively-homosexual clergy and the other relating to a report entitled 'The Inheritance of Abraham'. The Assembly documents are published in advance, and nowadays are available 'on line'. When the 'Inheritance' report was made public there was a very strong and negative reaction from the Jewish community both in Scotland and also from around the world.

In essence the report denied the present-day validity of the Covenant which God made with Abraham. A meeting was hastily convened – brokered by the Council of Christians and Jews –with representatives from the Jewish community and the Church of Scotland. The result of the meeting was that the report was taken 'off line' for the purposes of it being amended. However the Assembly essentially endorsed the report in what was substantially its original form.

Both the 'same-sex' and 'Abraham' issues created much 'behind the scenes' work for me. And I will now get down to giving a view on both of these subjects.



same-sex marriage and actively-gay clergy

The Church of Scotland has been debating the sexuality issue for decades. However in 2009 this was brought (forced) into sharp focus by an Aberdeen congregation 'calling' an actively-gay minister. As a consequence, a Special Commission was set up which took a year to report back to the (2010) Assembly. The latter then referred it down via the 'Barrier Act' to the local presbyteries (geographical groupings of churches) for their views which were – by then two years later - presented to the 2011 Assembly.

While the responses and the final report gave no mandate for change, that Assembly nevertheless confirmed its revisionist 'trajectory' by giving approval to congregations calling actively-gay ministers provided the latter were ordained prior to 2009. [This prompted considerable upset within the evangelical wing of the Church.] The 2011 Assembly then set up a Theological Commission to further examine the topic over a 2-year period, and report back to the most recent (May 2013) Assembly. (By now four years have elapsed since the precipitating 'Aberdeen' situation arose.)

The Theological Commission report essentially set out two contrasting views on same-sex relationships; each claiming a scriptural support.

Without offering a view, the Commission again placed the matter before the Assembly in terms of voting for a 'revisionist' approach (allowing homosexual clergy) or the status quo of the 'traditional' position (affirming heterosexual marriage as the only biblically-permissible form of union).



Unity trumps Truth

During the course of the debate the immediate past Moderator **Rev. Albert Bogle** – a self-proclaimed evangelical – proposed an 11th-hour third motion which, in the event, was carried. This motion was presented as having been, so-to-speak, formulated on the back of a hymn sheet over the lunch break. (Really?) It called for a 'Mixed Economy' which would affirm the Church's traditional view, but also give freedom to congregations to call actively-gay clergy.

In presenting his proposal, Mr. Bogle declared his position as an evangelical traditionalist, but cast himself as the 'weaker' brother (of Romans 14) who deferred to those who could, he suggested, accept (the stronger meat of) the revisionists' acceptance of active homosexual relations. Apart from this appalling misuse of Paul's letter to suggest that homosexuality fell into the 'freedom of conscience' scenario, the adoption of this proposal (albeit requiring a further two years for new legislation to be drafted and ratified) has sent a clear signal to the whole Church, to the Scottish nation and to the churches around the world, that active homosexuality was and is OK.

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While hailed by its supporters as a victory for unity, the response from Bible-believing ministers and church members has been one of utter dismay. While it is unlikely that there will be any unified mass secession (as per 1843), members have already left the Church; and a number of ministers and congregations are now actively planning to do so. Meanwhile evangelical ministers who want to stay within the

Church are 'circling their wagons' and planning to meet in a few days time in an endeavour to formulate some kind of consensus on how to respond (or perhaps just to huddle together for warmth).

Whatever the scale, nature and timing of the varied reactions against the 2013 Assembly' decision, it is highly-likely that the long-term future for Bible believers within the Church of Scotland – which will be seriously diminished in status, membership and income by these events – is very bleak indeed. The fact that the Church of Scotland is, in law, the national church compounds the tragedy in a year when the Scottish Parliament intends to bring in same-sex marriage.

For those ministers who leave, another denomination is generally perceived as the safest and most familiar environment – albeit even more schismatic-prone. For members who quit the Kirk, their options will much depend on those individuals' local circumstances. (What is available in a remote hamlet is much less than what can be found in an urban environment.) For clergy leaving the failed denominational systems (plural), the quantum leap is the greatest in terms of having the faith so to do.

The Inheritance of Abraham



Now we come to the second major departure by the Church of Scotland from the authority and veracity of God's Word. This came three days after the same-sex debate, when on Thursday, 23 May 2013, the Assembly voted to adopt the document entitled 'The Inheritance of Abraham'. The document in its original form was prefaced as follows:

"Ten years ago the General Assembly received the report Theology of Land and Covenant, from the Board of World Mission, Church and Nation Committee and the Panel on Doctrine. This report concluded with encouragement for us to listen more to others, "enriched by new insights through continuing questions that need to be faced".

Since 2003, two new insights have been noted by the General Assembly: in 2007, in the report What Hope for the Middle East? the Church of Scotland responded to a declaration from Church leaders in Jerusalem, and endorsed their criticism of Christian Zionism and encouraged members of the Church of Scotland to reject it, and in 2009 Christians in the Holy Land came together and produced Kairos Palestine: a moment of truth, offered as a word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian Suffering (information at www.kairospalestine.ps).

With the co-operation and support of the World Mission Council, we present this [Inheritance of Abraham]report in 2013 as our latest reflection on the 'questions that need to be faced', as the political and humanitarian situation in the Holy Land continues to be a source of pain and concern for us all."

While the political arguments about the situation in Israel with respect to the 'Palestinians' will likely continue until Kingdom come, the Covenant with the Jewish people as the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is both eternal and unconditional (Gen. 14:7-8). Yet the current report states:

"Biblical promises about the land of Israel were never intended to be taken literally, or as applying to a defined geographical territory – The 'promised land' in the Bible is not a place, so much as a metaphor of how things ought to be among the people of God. This 'promised land' can be found - or built - anywhere"

In making such a statement the national Church of Scotland places itself firmly in the camp of 'Replacement Theology' and, as this writer would argue, in direct opposition to the clear will, purposes and promises of God (Psalms 105:8-11; and read Ezek. 36:1-38 noting every instance of God saying "I will..").

So what do we see in all of this?

A verse that has been on my heart for several years now is taken from the book of the prophet Amos who carried God's word to the people:

This is what he showed me: The Lord was standing by a wall that had been built true to plumb, with a plumb line in his hand. And the LORD asked me, "What do you see, Amos?" "A plumb line," I replied. Then the Lord said, "Look, I am setting a plumb line among my people Israel; I will spare them no longer (Amos 7:7-8).



There is already an article on the Christians Together website which outlines serious issues.



However, I believe that what we are seeing is a sifting and separation at a fundamental level. Within the visible church there is an admixture of believers and non-believers (not least because of the "get them into the building" forms of evangelism). And there are some verses which every one of us should contemplate in serious fashion ([Matt 7:21-22](#); [Col 1:22-23](#); [Heb 6:4-8](#); [Heb 10:26](#) et al).

Of course it is only God who sees right into our hearts; and only He knows where we stand in our relationship with Him. So it is not, and never could be, our task to separate out the tares from the wheat. It is something the Lord will do. It is perhaps something that He *is* doing?

It seems to me that the Lord is drawing lines in the sand. The late Derek Prince once said that if God wants to revive the church, He first of all 'electrifies the fence'; meaning no one can sit on it.

The same-sex issue has 'separated out' those who know and adhere to God's word and those who don't. But there is, I believe, a further sifting in progress which will impact on those who have a higher regard for what the Bible teaches. And this will centre around the view(s) held on the subject of God's plans and purposes for the Jewish people and the land of Israel.

I once took note, in an older Bible, of two chapter headings (inserted there by men). Isaiah ch. 59 was summarised as '**Curses on Israel**', while ch. 60 was headed '**Blessings on the church**'. This sums up the heart and the spirit of what has been dubbed Replacement Theology (aka **Supercessionism**) which teaches that the church has replaced the Jews/Israel in the purposes of God. But this is heresy.

Christian Zionism Refuted in English, Arabic, Spanish, Farsi and Korean

Posted on June 6, 2013 by Stephen Sizer



Modern-day theologians and Bible teachers fall into the same category as the early disciples on the road to Emmaus when Jesus had to rebuke them:

*"How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe **all** that the prophets have spoken!"* (Luke 24:25).

Speaking from the (OT) Scriptures, 'beginning with Moses and all the Prophets' he went on to correct their views.

The problem is the same today – 'foolish' and 'slow of heart': faulty understanding and wrong attitudes. (Our responses –to this or that, and in spite of what we might maintain – are very often a product of what is in our hearts rather than what reason would suggest.)

I do hope and pray that we will not see significant division within what has been termed the 'evangelical' church. However it is in fact already happening.

"When people criticize Zionists they mean Jews, you are talking anti-Semitism."

Martin Luther King Jr,



At the risk of mixing many metaphors, could it be that these issues are being used by God as His 'litmus paper' in the great big machine which is called 'the church'? Is God deliberately putting a 'Plumb Line' into our midst in order to purify the bride?

Whatever the case, we are instructed to 'work out [our] faith with fear and trembling' (Phil 2:12) in these tumultuous days in which we live. As Peter's letter reminds us: "And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts." (2 Pet 1:19).

Yours and His,

Colin

Breaking news: There are current reports (some published, others not) that more churches, clergy and members are looking to leave the Church of Scotland. Whether or not the trickle becomes a flood remains to be seen but the net effect is a massive meltdown.

My great concern is that all that might transpire is a reiteration of a sorry historical pattern of Presbyterian schism, secession, reunion. Albert Einstein defined 'Insanity' as: "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results".

What is needed is a second Reformation My prayer is for a breakout from the repeating paradigm.

A friend of mine has an adult child studying at Spurgeon's College. It seems that the biggest trend in Western Christianity is the exodus of committed Christians from established churches. It is interesting and perhaps instructional to note the while in the famous disagreement between John Stott and Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in 1966 the former then argued that 'Christians should stay in their churches', Stott – prior to his homecall in 2011 – stated that the same-sex matter was an issue that would require a 'leaving'. The same view has also been expressed by J.I. Packer.

Footnotes:

Esther 4:14: Because of the importance I believe God places on the (Gentile) church's attitude to and understanding of the Abrahamic Covenant as influencing His dealings with believers (Gen 12:3), I have 'promoted' the 'Esther4:14' (i.e. Esther 4:14) sub-section of the website onto the main menu bar.

Yachad was set up in January 2007 (see leaflet for description) and in the summer of that year we endeavoured to send out to every church leader in Scotland (for which we had contact information) a copy of a trailer for a then newly-released film entitled '**The Forsaken Promise**'.



The award-winning documentary produced by a Christian video company chronicled the time spanning the two World Wars and the UK's 'Forsaken Promise' to fulfil the stated intentions of the Balfour Declaration in terms of creating a new state of Israel. Britain's duplicity (regarding both Jews and Arabs) was, and is, the fundamental reason for the conflict we are seeing through to the present day. The abbreviated (40 min) version of the film has now been re-released with the title 'A Call to Repentance'.