



Update newsletter

December 2012

International: Obama's 2nd term - Eurogeddon - Jordan and Syria - Israel Gaza and Egypt

National (UK): Institutions humbled - New face at Lambeth Palace

Local/Regional: Opposition to Gospel bus - Childrens' work having to close down

Other Issues: Human Trafficking in the Sinai - Morsi Power grab

We see a world which seems to be faced with issues which are escalating in magnitude, widely-varied in nature and arising with an increasing frequency. Jesus spoke of the nature of the times surrounding His second coming. People would be rebellious and lawless. But they would also be just going about their daily business; marrying and giving in marriage; complacent and/or ignorant.

Conducting a street survey the researcher posed the question to the shoppers passing by: "What do you think is the biggest problem today: ignorance or apathy?" The answer: "*I don't know and I don't care.*"

Even within the church there are dangers that we will not see the wood for the trees. In his day, Jesus criticised the religious leaders who could forecast the weather but couldn't tell the signs of the times (Matt 16:2-3). He also rebuked them: "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures .." (Matt 22:29). But it was not just the Pharisees and the Sadducees who were at fault. On the Emmaus road the risen Saviour also had to have words with his dejected travelling companions: "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! (Luke 24:25).

In our sound-bite electronic society awash with trivia and narcissism, there is a serious danger facing followers of Christ. A couple of decades ago the probing question of how a Christian spends his/her time revolved around a comparison of hours spent watching TV set against the time in prayer and in the study of God's Word. **Whatever the proportion of a day spent sitting in front of the box this has surely been overtaken by hours engaged on social networking sites.**

In the light of all of this I am going to focus on main issues (rather than transient and minor ones) and also on matters which are relevant to the church around the world. With the current rates of change in our world we are flooded with 'news'. So I am still thinking through how best to pass news on to you without putting out too much information. Although I am using this (A4, multi-page PDF) format for this update I am still undecided as to how best to serve those who might read it. **Please do let me know if you have any particular preferences for frequency, format and content.**

So on we go..... (most, if not all of the pictures have links to other related web pages)

International

American elections

I placed an article on the website just after the recent election in the US which contains post-election views from two American brothers. Most discerning people that I have spoken to recently see 'Frankenstorm Sandra' as a judgment on America. Of course that is impossible to prove and there are any amount of 'prophecy freaks' out there who have their pet theories.



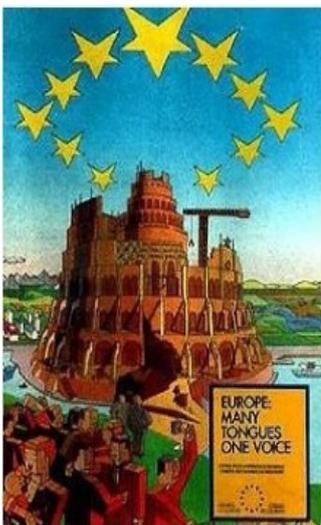
However I am convinced, and this relates not just to America that **the Lord is putting a 'plumb line' (Amos 7:8) amongst the church(es) and is bringing judgment on the nations: principally via secular humanism, neo-atheism, and Islam.**

Eurogeddon

The evening news a few days ago carried stories of riots in Madrid and serious civic unrest in Italy and Portugal. While the Eurocrats are doing their utmost to keep the show on the road, it is very likely that the upheavals will continue as the effects of the crippling budgetary measures continue to bite even deeper. As we know the most recent summit has broken up without having reached any agreement.



If you haven't listened to Russian dissident Vladimir Bukovsky you may be interested to do that. He chillingly remarks: **"I have lived in your future; and it didn't work."**



During the Communist era in the USSR there were two Social Democrat political groups with the same agenda but with different tactics. The larger group was the Bolsheviks. (Bolshoi being the Russian word for 'big'). This grouping believed in radical and even violent means to implement the socialist dream.

Meanwhile the alternative and smaller grouping was called the Mensheviks and they sought to achieve the same goal but by 'stealth'. Well the Bolsheviks won out – until 1989 with the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the USSR.

At that time I was receiving reports from a Finnish journalist working in East Berlin. He said that in the cafes and bars in the city the Mensheviks were still there; and still talking about collective socialism. This is exactly what the EU has been doing since its inception. Let me give you a quote from one of the EU's principal architects:

"We do not want another committee, we have too many already.

What we want is a man of sufficient stature to hold the allegiance of all people, and to lift us out of the economic morass into which we are sinking."

Send us such a man, and be he god or devil, we will receive him."

**Paul-Henri Spaak (1899 - 1972)
former Belgian Prime Minister**



Jordan and Syria

Since my last update I have visited Jordan and Israel as part of a group. And the trip has helped me now write on some of the developments in the region. The article '[Jordan next?](#)' Gives the historical background and takes us through to the present moment. The situation in Jordan as starting to bubble when we were there. There are now full-blown public calls for the overthrow of King AbudullahII. Given the Jordanians respect for his father King Hussein and the place of the monarchy in that country this scale of opposition is quite unprecedented. We were in Amman on two successive Fridays and each morning at 5.30am I was awakened by the Muezzin call to prayer. It was spiritually unsettling to look out of the hotel window in the dark and see a green luminous ring of light about 50 feet in the air (at the top of the minaret) and listen to the prayer chant emanating from loudspeakers placed around the tower. The second Friday was the morning of the Muslim festival of [Eid-UI-Adha](#) and on the afternoon of the previous day while driving through Petra we saw sheep and goats for sacrifice being loaded into the backs of pick-up trucks to await their fate.



King Abdullah II (right) with his father the late King Hussein of Jordan

Israel, Gaza and Egypt

While we were in Jerusalem there were rocket attacks on Israel by Hamas in Gaza. No national leader can tolerate such attacks on its civilian population. Israel retaliated with air strikes and you will have seen the rest of it on the news.

There are three recent articles on the site relating to it all. Although one of these is now history the other two are perhaps worth a read [Hamas leaves Israel no choice](#) and [Israeli Ambassador thanks UK church leaders](#).



I believe that we are increasingly seeing world events as focussing in on Israel - the only country in the world which God has referred to as 'My land' (Joel 3:2; Ezek 36:5; Lev. 25:23) where the Almighty God has '**caused His Name to dwell**' (Ezra 6:12).

Yet with a deteriorating situation in Egypt, Syria and Gaza, if Jordan falls to the Muslim Brotherhood Israel could soon be back in the position it found itself in 1948 - surrounded by hostile nations on all of its borders. And of course that doesn't include Iran. (Ps 83:4)

National (UK)

Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false. (Ps. 24:3-5)

As it is written: "There is no-one righteous, not even one; (Rom. 3:10) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom 3:27).

There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs. (Luke 12:2-3).

Who of us can read these verses without a frisson of apprehension at a personal or corporate level? If there is are two short expressions that I would use to describe what I believe God is doing in the UK over the past two or three years it is 'Exposing personal sin' and 'Humbling institutional pride'.

What started off with the banks moved on very rapidly to the MPs' expenses scandal followed by the exposure of the media through the 'phone hacking' and the Leveson Enquiry. More recently corruption and greed have been exposed in the police who have (variously) sold information to journalists, lied (Cleveland case) and destroyed reports and sought to pervert the course of justice (Hillsborough disaster).

And of course the latest scandal involving claims of child abuse by DJ Jimmy Saville has trashed the BBC's reputation (just as Auntie Beeb celebrates her 70th anniversary) and has brought the integrity of both childrens' homes and hospitals into serious question. Add to this the sexual perversion being condoned and even encouraged within the churches and the exposure of child abuse amongst clergy and It is difficult to avoid seeing a pattern in it all. **We are surely seeing a nation - both of individuals and corporate bodies within it - which is having its 'cover blown'. The Lord is surely 'lifting the lid'.**

Banks



Politicians



Press



Police



BBC



(Each of the above thumbnail pictures will take you to the respective news items.)

Meanwhile God has said to His church:

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.;

as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance. But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written,

Be ye holy; for I am holy. And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear

(1 Pet. 1:13-17).

New Archbishop of Canterbury

There is [an article on the website](#) about this and it includes a 'ready-reckoner checklist' for candidates for the ministry (as in 'clergy'). The article also includes a profile video and a link to a Telegraph article which gives a few insights into the character of **Dr. Justin Welby**.

As we know both the departing and the incoming archbishops have been dealt a blow by the laity voting down the prospect of women bishops. Significantly the



clergy voted otherwise. If we read of the revival in Hezekiah's reign we see that the 'Levites had been more conscientious in consecrating themselves than the priests' (2 Chron 29:34).

Back in 2011 I recorded an interview with Anglican minister Rev. Paul Dawson who is the spokesperson for 'Reform' (evangelicals within the C of E). In our discussion I covered the history of Anglican tensions and a famous fall-out between John Stott and Martyn Lloyd-Jones in 1962 when the latter called for evangelicals to leave the C of E because of a regression in biblical fidelity.

I also made reference in the interview to the double-standards of allowing gay church members and priests while only getting upset when it came to gay bishops. You can find the introductory article which contains a link to the interview here.

Local/Regional

(Citing a couple of developments which, though 'local' also apply universally.)

Provost attacks outreach to schools

The second (local) development relates to some sensational reporting of a Christian outreach to school children.

Seven local churches in Nairn had invited a Christian Challenger Bus to visit schools in and around the town over a 3-week period. A local blogger wrote that some parents were upset and one of them contacted the Nairn Provost, Liz McDonald who then asked the regional Director of Education to look into the matter urgently.



Dr. Donald Boyd of the Scottish Christian Party wrote: 'The Provost's actions suggest that she had little confidence in the head teachers of the five primary schools and a secondary school who had agreed to this educational programme'. Two days later, the Press and Journal (P&J; a regional daily) carries the banner heading: "Evangelicals accused of 'brainwashing' pupils".

The P&J reports the views of some parents - that the Christian organisation providing the teaching programme had extremist views and should not be given access to their children without their permission.

However, a Highland Council (local authority) spokesman stated that "head teachers have looked at the materials and are satisfied that the activities taking place during the school day are appropriate and linked directly to the school curriculum." The work is under the Curriculum for Excellence and some of the material tells the story of Christian and Olympic Gold Medalist Eric Liddell, which Scotland's First Minister Alex Salmond has said should be taught in Scottish schools.

The use of the term 'brainwashing' took little account of the 'brainwashing' of young children into accepting same-sex relationships. Meanwhile the pejorative use of the term 'fundamentalism' (applied as vehemently to Biblical Christianity as it is to Jihadism) is being used to demean and demonise those who hold to traditional values.

However the main point is that Christianity in the West is now having to face up to what many Christian disciples have had to endure in other parts of the world - that is an aggressive hostility to their beliefs. And this from both individuals and public bodies.

Footnote: The Nairn Provost previously attacked a local initiative in 2008 to present copies of the Bible to Highland Council

Ministry to children closes Highland office

A Scottish charity which works with children who have difficulties regarding communication and social interaction (learning difficulties/special needs) is now having to close down its Highland office. There have been several challenges to Reality Adventure Words who have been pioneering this venture, but one of the main reasons behind the closure is lack of funding to cover management support costs.

The charity is solidly Christian and doing a great work in addressing an area of great need (i.e. the children and families concerned) and it is very sad that it is having to close. However the situation illustrates a big problem; that of the source of funding for Christian organisations (previously referred to as parachurches).

These organisations do not have a Sunday morning congregation to support them financially so they are reliant on other sources of funding - often secular sources. And this brings risk. Pray for all those - Reality staff and the children and families with whom they worked.



Other Issues

Human trafficking in the Sinai. I listened to a most distressing telephone interview recently on BBC Radio 4. A worker with Christian Solidarity Worldwide was speaking to a young Eritrean who was been held captive in the Sinai desert under pain of death and of having his kidneys removed under an organ harvesting operation unless his captors received £25,000. There was no way that Philemon Semere's family could raise such sums. The young man 'held it together' for most of the interview, but latterly broke down sobbing. It was heartbreaking to listen.

The Sinai has been a lawless region for many years as a demilitarised zone and the Sinai/Gaza border being the route for weapons smuggling. Recently there have been attacks on Egyptian security personnel and it is likely that Egypt will (for various reasons) want to renegotiate the Egyptian/Israeli peace treaty to allow Egyptian military personnel, equipment and weapons into the area. (In fact this has been happening already.)

Morsi power grab In a move which has seen Egyptians dub their new leader a 'Pharaoh', President Morsi has performed a huge power-grab in granting himself wide-reaching control and immunity from legal oversight. His actions have been condemned within his own country and are causing serious concerns within the international community at large. A report in the Independent expresses surprise at "the extent of the powers that he has invested in his presidential office." The piece continues: "Morsi has effectively anointed himself supreme leader of Egypt, a strongman with absolute authority.

And finally, just to put all this in some perspective, a quote from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on the subject of 'being a Mum'. In awarding a CBE to actress Kate Winslet who spoke about the joys of motherhood, the Queen replied: "It's the only job that matters." We see politicians, businessmen and religious leaders striding about on the world stage, but the monarch's remark takes it all down to earth. (Pr. 22:6).

Remember to visit the Homepage for latest news.