

LOOKING AHEAD

KLICE Anniversary 20 Sep. 17, Dr Craig G Bartholomew

I am sure I do not need to remind you that we face many complex ethical issues at this time. For better and for worse we are living through all that Brexit involves. Flying in to LGW and then taking the train to Kings Cross it was hard not to notice the level of security at central stations, a sign of the oh too real terrorist threats faced here, across Europe and in other countries. And so we could continue – many urgent issues press in on us from all sides.

This is only my third day at my KLICE desk and so it would be rash even to begin to be prescriptive about the future of KLICE. Instead I want to focus on Jesus. Years ago, J.B. Phillips wrote a well-known book *Your God is Too Small*. It seems to me that too often we have far too small a view of Jesus.

John's Gospel describes Jesus as *the light of the world*, a rich and evocative metaphor. Through its shadow side this metaphor reminds us firstly just how dark the world can become – human beings planning and then detonating bombs at public stations full of men, women, and children, is a sign of this darkness. Evil and darkness are desperately real, and they manifest themselves in all areas of life. For many in Greece at present, for example, it would be hard not to see *economic* darkness as somehow having covered the land.

So deep can this darkness become – just think of the major catastrophes of the 20th C – that it often seems as though it is permanent, triumphant and undefeatable. Growing up in racist, apartheid South Africa it certainly seemed like that. It was hard to see how a way out might emerge.

From where, we might ask, can a strong enough light be found that will dispel such darkness? John's answer is 'in Jesus'. Alas, because we often have too small a view of Jesus we fail to see the full significance of this statement. Jesus is LORD, the one from whom, to whom, and through whom are all things. One who did not underestimate the largeness of Jesus was the 20th c missionary and missiologist Lesslie Newbigin. In his commentary on John's Gospel he says of Jesus that *He is the clue to all that is!* Scripture does not provide us with all the immediate answers we need to the ethical issues of our day, but it does provide us with *the indispensable clue* to find those answers. What I love about Newbigin's statement is that it not only

alerts us to Jesus as the clue, but also reminds us that we need to pursue that clue with all the rigour and depth that we can muster.

And that, precisely, is what KLICE is committed to. Rigorous pursuit of that clue which is Jesus in relation to ethics and the great challenges of our day. KLICE is embedded in Tyndale House with a rotating crop of many of the best biblical scholars of our day from an astonishing range of countries. What fertile soil in which to pursue that clue which is Jesus!

Jonathan has done excellent work over these past 10 years and it is a privilege to succeed him. I'm also very glad that he and Adrienne will remain in Cambridge. We share a sense of the potential and importance of KLICE and I was delighted to receive an e-mail from Oliver O'Donovan along these lines, who would be here today if he was not recovering from surgery.

In the weeks ahead my plan is to spend a lot of time listening, to hear what you perceive as the needs of our day in relation to KLICE. I have already begun talking with Peter and colleagues at Tyndale. A vision for the coming years will emerge out of such reflections and prayer.

What I am aware of is that if we are to dream big in a way that honours the largeness of Christ, we will need your support in prayer, through joining in our ethical reflections, and financially. We need to increase our base of small, regular donations, £5 a month, for example. At the same time, we need to find substantial donors who will help us create the space for rigorous, academic, as well as accessible work on the huge issues facing the UK and the world today. Jesus himself told us that we are the light of the world – if we think of this in relation to just how big Jesus is, then we will begin to get a sense of the opportunity with which KLICE presents us. An extraordinary opportunity to shine the Christ-light into the dark places of our world with the hope of healing and renewal and flourishing where at present there is death and decay and immense suffering.