

GUEST EDITORIAL

There is little debate that the secularisation of Western society is not waning and even, it must be admitted, increases seemingly by the year. Philip Jenkins has recently brought this to our attention, stressing that Christianity is migrating south to such an extent that the idea of a white, European (certainly 'evangelical') Christian will be as surprising a concept as a 'Swedish Buddhist'.¹ One need only stand on the corner or walk down the street on a typical Sunday to be persuaded that Jenkins is probably correct. Church buildings sit empty, and most that house a minister are far from full and lively. The beautiful structures built to dominate the skyline with spires that point us to an existence that gives us hope and meaning have become merely historical landmarks or architectural novelties. This cultural condition has presented a huge challenge to ministers and parishioners alike. How do we express the gospel of Jesus Christ in such a way that they stop and listen? Every minister who takes the calling of God seriously is consistently burdened by this question.

In spite of the pessimistic (or, maybe, realistic) tone there is much for which to be hopeful, and this is where Rutherford House finds its place. It is the aim of the House to enable biblical ministries by 'ministering to ministers'—both current and future ministers. We want to support churches by providing resources that aid them in answering that all important question of how to communicate the gospel to those around us. Though sometimes his hand of providence may be less obvious than in other parts of the world God is very much at work in the West. The gospel is far from death or hibernation, which is why Rutherford House has renewed its vision for the UK by appointing a new director and setting a course that we pray will help to bring hope and life to a secular society. I am privileged to receive this appointment and look with great anticipation toward the future. To accomplish this vision we have adopted a two-pronged approach that includes the following goals and activities:

First, we want to do everything possible to assist evangelical ministers reach their parishioners and speak to the culture. This will involve seminars, small groups and a pool of resources that address issues such as preaching, theology and culture, developing leadership and shepherding. We would like to see the development of a strong, vibrant network of ministers, united around the gospel for the purpose of strengthening the church. The House, through the work of the director and volunteers, also aims to provide pastoral care to ministers and congregations who have

¹ P. Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 3.

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ministry needs or are enduring a crisis. We strongly believe that the life of the church and the cause of the gospel can be advanced through these activities.

The second aspect of our renewed vision centres on evangelical academic work, both for the benefit of students and ministers. There is an indissoluble relationship between the academy and the church, and both should be controlled and guided by God's Word. Thus, we wish to engage in academic work that takes seriously God's revelation in Jesus Christ in Scripture and that impacts congregations across the country. This Bulletin greatly contributes toward this goal, and Rutherford House will strive to support the Scottish Evangelical Theology Society in maintaining the high, gospel-oriented academic standard of SBET, whilst working to increase its profile, relevance for the church and circulation. Additionally, we anticipate continuing the successful Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference that has resulted in theological publications of the highest order. We also wish to host day conferences that concentrate on various topics in Reformed theology or pastoral ministry. Participants would hopefully include students, elders, pastors and professors, highlighting the link between academic work and the practical mission of the church. Finally, as the old cliché reminds us to 'put our money where our mouth is', Rutherford House plans to provide bursaries toward study in evangelical and Reformed theology. If the future of the West is to look different than it currently does, we must invest prayer, time, effort and financial resources in it.

As director, I am excited about these opportunities and intimidated by the overwhelming nature of the challenge. I cannot go it alone. We humbly ask that you pray and contribute to the ongoing task of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with our society. By the grace of God we expect great things in Scotland and beyond.

Dr Jason Curtis, Director of Rutherford House