

and I've got my swipe card for heaven and I'm out of here'. In the meantime I just live in this world the same way as anyone else in the culture does. What we don't realise it that we are living by the myths of Enlightenment modernity, consumerism, individualism and all the unseen idols which run quite contrary to the Bible story.

So we need to become more aware that our lives are to be lived within the framework of creation, the radical implication of the Fall and sin, but we still live in God's earth and God's mission and plan is to redeem *all things* in heaven and earth under the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a cosmic dimension to our faith as well as a personal dimension.

This turns upside down the questions people ask when they become a Christian in the Western context and say 'How can I fit God into my life?' We need to ask instead, 'How can I allow God to fit my life into his purpose?' so that God becomes central, not my life. So we don't ask 'How can I apply the Bible to my life?' we ask instead 'Where does my life fit into God's story in the Bible?' I don't think 'How can I make the gospel relevant to the world?' because God is actually going to change the world to be the shape of the gospel. So it turns upside down and inside out a lot of our thinking.

The final point in relation to the church is that it ought to mean that the church as a community of believers should recognise that they have been called into existence for the sake of God's mission. Therefore, a church has to exist in mission. Not just by sending out missionaries to far off places around the world but by being salt and light in the community where they are. Mission is the very mode and existence of the church, it's not just an extra thing we do, it is the very way we are.

In your recent book, The God I Don't Understand, you tackle four 'hard to understand' questions of faith. It's an autobiographical book in some ways, a personal book. In a world of such suffering, gross inequality and of natural disasters like Haiti and in light of violent judgement of God in the Old Testament—how can we believe in the goodness of God? The title of the book is quite deliberate, *The God I Don't Understand*. People ask me 'How do you understand this and that?' The whole point of the book is that there are certain things that I don't understand! I'm quite serious about this. I want to say that it is okay to know and love God without knowing all of the answers. With Haiti I feel angry, I ask God. 'Why, yet again, is it where the poorest people live that these tectonic plates shifts and the earth groans and people get killed? Why do you allow that?' That does not mean that I don't believe in God's existence. It means that I'm puzzled and angry about something that I don't understand.

But then I think about it in terms of human relationships. Would I rather, in human life, know someone I love in a marriage relationship – with whom sometimes I get angry and do not always understand – rather than have nobody at all? I think most people would say that they would rather have a relationship where there is pain, and puzzlement and anger than no relationship at all. Therefore I have to say I don't find Haiti or the Tsunami a reason for doubting the existence of God, but rather a source of pain and puzzlement

as to why God allows such things to happen.

On the issue of evil, the book does address suffering, the Canaanites, the cross of Christ, and the end of the world. In each case, I try to explain the things that I think the Bible does explain and leave as matters of mystery (sometimes as puzzling mystery and sometimes as glorious mystery in the case of the cross) and leave those as the Bible does – as things that God has chosen in his wisdom that it is better for us not to fathom.

Changing focus to the world of contemporary evangelicalism: you are chair of the Lausanne Theology Working Group and are involved in the upcoming global congress in Capetown in October 2010. What are some of your hopes for that congress? Lausanne, of course, is committed to world evangelisation, that is in its bloodstream. I would hope that Capetown will result in many positive partnerships among people who are committed to the gospel and living the gospel in the world. I hope that Capetown will continue to affirm the holistic and integral understanding of mission that is there in the Lausanne Covenant – that evangelisation is not just preaching, it is also living and demonstrating; it is words and works. There are enormous realities of the needs of the lost world of those who do not yet know Jesus that I hope that Capetown will inspire the church take up.

My other hope for Capetown is that evangelicals will be willing to take a self-critical look at themselves and hear the prophetic word of Jesus to 'Repent and come back to me'. We can't be bad news and preach good news. We actually have to be the good news that we are preaching. If we are going to share Jesus with the world we have to be like Jesus and that includes loving our neighbours as ourselves, loving our enemies, non-retaliation, humility, seeking justice, compassion for the poor – all the things the Bible tells us we ought to be doing.

A final question: You are back in Ireland. What are some of your impressions?

I'm encouraged by the growth of Irish Bible Institute. I'm also encouraged by the growth in evangelical witness both within Ireland and from immigration. It is tremendous that the third largest denomination in the country is the (Nigerian) Redeemed Christian Church of God. You almost see God smiling 'If those Irish Christians can't get it together I'll send a few African Christians to cheer them up.' God moves people around the world. From that comes fresh growth and life from people who actually believe the gospel and want to live it and preach it. Consumerism seems to have replaced a very religious culture. If the empty idolatries of mammon have now disappointed, the challenge for Irish Christians is to continue to point people to the living God.

Interview with Patrick Mitchel, 30 January 2010.

The full script of this interview can be found at <http://faithinireland.wordpress.com/2010/02/16/interview-with-chris-wright/>

SUPPORT UPDATES



Our Annual Appeal is only one aspect of the fundraising effort and I would like to thank all of you who have responded so far. This year we asked for contributions towards our Student Bursary Fund.

Many of our students have to work part-time to pay for their fees and others have to make considerable financial sacrifices to be here, so it is great to be able to offer them a bursary. Your contribution is an enormous help to our students and to the college.

Our target for the Annual Appeal is €55,000 and to date we have received approximately €30,000. 80% of our donors are from the island of Ireland, which is very encouraging and we have a number of new donors again this year.

Anne Somerville

Support Co-ordinator

A change of role for Anne

For the past two and a half years Anne has had, what some consider, the most difficult job at IBI; being my PA. Here Anne has helped mainly with support & development and organising my calendar. As I begin studies at Trinity College it seems right that Anne takes on a co-ordinating role for IBI support.

The college does not receive government support and while student fees bring in approximately 50% of the income needed the other 50% has to be raised from supporters. This is no small task; this year we pray that God will provide €280,000 in gifts and we expect that to come from over 300 different sources while hundreds of others around the world support us in prayer. Anne's coordination of much of the support leaves me more time to focus on face-to-face meetings with individuals, trusts and churches.

Pray for Anne as she takes on this important role as Support Co-ordinator and for IBI as we continue to build stronger relationships with all those who support us both financially and through prayer.

Jacob Reynolds

PRAYER

It is great to know that people are praying for the work of IBI. Many thanks for your interest and your desire to bring our work before the Lord. Here are some items for praise and prayer to help you pray more effectively:

- ✿ Give thanks for the Lord's rich blessing. We have a great bunch of hardworking and very conscientious students, who are eager to learn and to grow in grace. We are delighted by how well community has developed among them and how well the CETC students have integrated into IBI.
- ✿ We are working on recruitment for the next academic year. Pray that the Lord will give us opportunities to recruit in churches, etc., and that He will continue to work in the hearts of those He is calling to train for ministry in Ireland.
- ✿ It has been five years since we received accreditation from the University of Wales and in June this year our courses are due for review. While there has been no indication of problems in those five years, the task of preparing for the review is an onerous one so please pray for faculty and staff in the practicalities of pulling it all together.
- ✿ Some of our lecturers this semester are pastors of churches and would appreciate your prayers as they add teaching in IBI to their already very busy ministries.
- ✿ Our students are now well into the second semester and are already preparing for assignments. Pray that what they learn will impact their hearts and will transform lives. There are always those students who struggle academically. Please pray that the Lord would encourage them and that they would be aware of his presence in all they do.

		
For Charitable giving Cheques payable to IBI and post to: Dawn Langrell IBI, Ulysses House 22-24 Foley St, Dublin 1 (CHY 6478)	For Tax Efficient giving Checks payable to Irish Bible Institute and post to: Nils Petersen IBI, P.O. Box 681152 Schaumburg Illinois 60168-1152, USA (501c No: 36-4380290)	Charitable donations For Gift Aid Cheques payable to Irish Christian Charity Services and post to: Dawn Langrell IBI, Ulysses House 22-24 Foley St, Dublin 1



Attention all past students:
We are planning a conference in Dublin and a get-together in Cork during April/May. More details to follow. Also, check out our Cáirde Facebook page for lots of photos going back over the years. If you have good photos of your time as a student here, please email them to Dawn@IBI.ie

MISSION OF GOD

The Mission of God Conference was, I think, a really encouraging event. St Mark's church was full. It was a first time for IMap, Tearfund and IBI to co-organise an event like this and partnership is always encouraging.



Chris Wright speaking at the Mission of God conference Jan 2010

Chris Wright was the keynote speaker and he unpacked themes from his book *The Mission of God* in great style. He talked about the necessity of seeing the entire story of the Bible as being God's mission in which we are invited to participate – it starts and finishes with God, not with us. The skeleton of his talk was:

- i. GOD WITH A MISSION: The whole mission of God is framed by the bad news of the Genesis 1-11 narrative and the vision of the Revelation 21-22 narrative.
- ii. HUMANITY WITH A MISSION: Mankind is given ecological, economic and social responsibility. God's agenda is to move from judgement to blessing which begins with Abraham.

iii. ISRAEL WITH A MISSION: The uniqueness of Israel's God Yahweh leads to their election to be a blessing to the nations and to reflect the character of the one true God.

iv. JESUS WITH A MISSION: Jesus is not only Israel's Messiah but is the saviour of the whole world. In him is the promise to the nations fulfilled.

v. THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH: It is only here in the narrative that 'we' come into the picture. The commission for Christians is to fulfil God's mission to the nations by being witnesses and servants.

One comment Chris made to think about: The call for the Christian is to 'fit our tiny slice of life on earth' into this grand, redeeming, healing, mission of God. And this is a radically different way of seeing not only mission but the whole purpose of both church and our lives. *Patrick Mitchel*

EXCITING DEVELOPMENT IN THE MA COURSE

The MA course enters a new phase this year with the launch of a full-time option. This will run in parallel with the existing part-time course and offers the possibility of completing the MA in a year. The full-time course will have a similar structure to the existing part-time option, but will be completed in a full calendar year (instead of the 3 years on the part time option). Students on the full-time course will complete 4 taught courses and a dissertation in their year of study. The new full-time option will start in late August this year and recruitment for the course will start this month. The entry requirements for the course will remain the same as the part-time option. This adds a significant dimension to the MA course and will

complement the options available on the BA course. "Five years after the start of the part-time MA course this is a significant and exciting development." Jacob Reynolds, Principal.

Please pray for the new development. And if you know of anyone who would be interested in the course, please put them in contact with us.

For more specific details of the course (including course option and dates) see the IBI web site www.IBI.ie. If you are interested in chatting further about any aspect of the course, please contact Steven Singleton (steven@ibi.ie) or Mimi Kelly (mimi@ibi.ie).

STUDENTS HAVE A SAY!



Community

"After being in CETC for a year, when it was decided that it and IBI would merge together, I was curious to see what IBI would be like and excited to try something different. So far I've been in IBI for six months and I'm loving it! There is a definite feeling of community between students and staff, and there is a strong emphasis put on the importance of encouraging each other. I can honestly say that each person I've met has been so welcoming and I've had some great discussions with my classmates. IBI is a comfortable, safe place where I have been stretched and challenged in my faith both by the class work, the assignments I've had to do and by discussions I've had both inside and outside the lecture arena! Overall, I've found that I look forward to my days in IBI, because each day holds something different and the experiences I've had there will definitely hold me in good stead when I finish up my degree and head out into the 'real world'." *Kirsty Harnden*

sense of community combine to fuel the engine at IBI. Our Biblical focused subject matter is providing the solid foundation required for someone considering a future in Christ centered ministry. It is important to note that one should be motivated to put learning into practice and the IBI model of developing head, heart and hands does provide the impetus to share application with others either on an individual basis or in the context of a church environment." *Seán Redmond*



Two is better than one

"IBI has been an adventure worthy of partaking in together. During our first year of marriage together we found the IBI college experience, our curriculum, and the pace of life there has complemented our marriage more than we could have expected. We've re-learned old truths, absorbed new concepts, built lasting relationships, and have ultimately learned more about Jesus Christ and His Kingdom together. We are excited about what God is evidently doing in Ireland and beyond through this centre of worship through education."

Norman and Emily McCorkell

Fuel for life



"Passionate teaching, encouraging staff and strong fellowship coupled with a tangible

Diversity

"Having lost my job as a mortgage advisor, I didn't know what to do next, until God directed my path to IBI through a friend who had been praying with me that I would find God's will for my life and ministry.

My experience in IBI has been great, as no two days are the same. This is a place where people from diverse backgrounds study, fellowship and pray together. I just couldn't ask for more really.

I am blessed to be here as I am getting all the necessary support from the tutors, staff and fellow students. I recommend IBI to folks looking to fulfil their calling through christian education."

Olanike Oluokun



Eamon Parkes

Journey with God

"Joining IBI has meant more to me than joining an educational institute. I could describe it simply as a connection of individuals from different backgrounds coming together to find out more about who God is and our journey with him.

Head, heart and hands is the motto here and let me tell you I have been inspired, encouraged and challenged.

Coming from a generation, who on the whole, has never known God but are seeking more than dodgy spirituality or secular satisfaction, I find my search for life's meaning starts here with the Irish Bible Institute."

SCOT MCKNIGHT AT IBI SUMMER INSTITUTE 2010

Who is Scot McKnight?

"Scot McKnight is a New Testament scholar and also one of the most engaging Christian authors around today. Many of his books reveal his heart for helping Christians make connections between the Bible and their everyday lives. Check out, for example, *Embracing Grace*, *Jesus Creed*, *Praying with the Church*, *Fasting*, *NIV Application Commentaries on Galatians & 1 Peter* and *The Blue Parakeet* (on how to read the Bible). He also has a deep passion for the church and is a popular speaker and writer



on church and mission themes. His A *Community Called Atonement* is an outstanding book on how the church community is to be shaped by the cross. Scot's blog <http://blog.beliefnet.com/jesuscreed> is one of the top 10 Christian blogs on the internet and one of my favourite places to spend some time. It is a rich resource of learning and gracious discussion on a whole host of contemporary issues. This is Scot's first visit to Ireland and a unique opportunity to hear and spend time with him and his wife Kris." *Patrick Mitchel*

"Scot McKnight has been a kind of secret weapon for my own education and growth." *John Ortberg*

IBI Summer Institute

We are delighted that Scot will be the speaker at our 2010 Summer Institute on 11-12 June. His theme will be '*In the Beginning was the Gospel*'. Scot has recently been doing a lot of thinking and writing on the 'Gospel'. During the two days he will be unpacking the good news of God's redemptive purposes as told from Genesis to Revelation.

We will be spending time reflecting on the depth and breadth of the gospel - how in Jesus Christ God is restoring broken lives within loving communities of people empowered by the Spirit for the sake of the world. Along the way there will be plenty of room for discussion of how this all applies in the Irish context via input from Irish leaders.

If you are involved in church leadership, why not mark out the time in your diary, bring a team with you and book now?

Early booking is highly recommended and a discount applies. There will also be a discount for groups of 4 or more.

SUMMER INSTITUTE 2010
WITH SCOT MCKNIGHT
JUNE 11-12
'IN THE BEGINNING
WAS THE GOSPEL'

OPEN DAY AT IBI

If you are considering a course at IBI
 You are invited to come and sit in on class
 and meet with staff and students

on
 Tuesday April 13th
 From
 11.00 am - 2.00 pm.
 or
 6.00 pm - 8.15 pm

To book in
 please contact
 Linda on 01-8069060
 or email Linda@ibi.ie



Essay Competition

We are pleased to announce a sponsored prize of €250
 for an essay on either of these titles:

'*Evangelicals and Mission in 19th Century Ireland*'
 or
 '*Evangelicals and the Famine*'.

Length: About 5000 words
 Deadline: 1 September 2010
 Interested?

For further details contact
Patrick@ibi.ie

Mission of God in the 21st Century

an interview with Chris Wright

Welcome to a new section of the IBI newsletter. We've decided to add a bit of 'meat' to the news by having an article, interview or reflection on issues that connect theology with ministry. We hope this will be a blessing and of use to our readers.

Feedback is always welcome. Let us know what you think by emailing Louise@ibi.ie

Chris, you've been here in Ireland speaking about The Mission of God and the work of the Langham Partnership.

From your first-hand experience of global Christianity, what are some encouragements that you praise God for and what are some challenges that you observe?

I'm praising God for the phenomenal growth of the Christian community around the world in places like Africa, Latin America and Asia. The church in the West in now a minority of the world church (perhaps about 25%). The great majority of the world's Christians now live in countries that we used to think of as the mission field but we need to stop thinking that way.

The challenges are that as church growth happens rapidly it can also be very shallow. Shallowness is not just a feature of the church in the majority world, it is universal. There are a lot of shallow Christians in the West as well. One of the results of shallowness, as Jesus pointed out, is that people become very vulnerable to false teaching and to the cares and temptations of the world. One example is a sort of 'sanctified covetousness' which regards success in the kingdom of God as identified with wealth, prosperity and health and so on.

Yet, some of what I think is a very debased form of Christianity flourishes alongside forms of Christian faith that believe in the miraculous power of the Spirit of God to change things, to liberate people and to bless people. So, it's like Jesus said; when the kingdom of God is working, you get wheat and weeds in the same field. So, there is simultaneously that which is of the Spirit of God (and is positive and healthy and good) and that which is very definitely from a different spirit and not healthy.

Another challenge is that there is a need for the evangelical community around the world to ask itself what it means to be evangelical, not only in belief but also in behaviour in terms of commitment to the Bible, to the Lord Jesus Christ, to serving his kingdom and not just to a form of religion without the power of it.

What then are some of the challenges the growth of the church in the Global south poses to the church in the West? What are some of the idols that we face?
 One is for the church in the West to recognise its own relativity and to see that we are simply a part of the body of Christ. We are no longer the 'home church' or the 'elder church' and we need to have a greater degree of humility and spirituality in our attitude and in our practice towards our brothers and sisters in Africa, Latin America and elsewhere.

Another is to recognise that idolatry takes many forms. The Western church, I think, is very much polluted by its syncretism with idols of consumerism and a materialistic lifestyle. There is almost no difference between the way evangelical Christians live in America and Britain and the way everyone else lives. We worship the same gods as our culture. There is also syncretism with the idolatry of national pride and militarism - the putting of our hopes and security in the government and the army - which is syncretism of Christianity and patriotism. And that can be very powerful and becomes very destructive of relationships with other parts of the world that suffer some of the effects of Western self-aggrandisement and empire building.

"There is almost no difference between the way evangelical Christians live in America and Britain and the way everyone else lives. We worship the same gods as our culture".

These idols within Western Christianity can also be the despair of our brothers and sisters in the majority world. They look at the Western church with love and gratitude for its missionary outreach in past centuries, but also with a degree of bafflement that there is so much in Western Christianity which is corrupted and detrimental to the best interests of the body of Christ. For example, we live with vast inequalities. A quarter of the world's population live on less than a dollar a day, about 25% of those will be Christians - our sisters and brothers. Yet, we are not impacted by this because they live far away.

Your book The Mission of God has caused plenty of discussion academically, within the missionary world and the Christian 'blogosphere'. In it you speak of the big narrative of Scripture and how vital it is for us to understand our mission within the overall mission of God. What are some practical implications for churches and individuals who really 'get this'?
 I'm encouraged that some people have told me that when they read the book it's meant a whole paradigm shift for their Christian faith. I think it has something to do with recognising that if we are not living by the Bible's story we are actually living by some other story which is actually a myth. Because we know that people in other religions, like Hindus and so on, have their gods and we know we don't believe their story, the trouble is that we think that 'I've become a Christian

Continued overleaf.