



A Vacation with Kingdom Purpose Worldview Training in England or Ireland—or Both!

by Thomas S. Heard, Ph.D.

Teaching Fellow, C.S. Lewis Institute

This article originally appeared in the Spring 2009 issue of *Knowing & Doing*.

As the Western World continues to dissolve into a patchwork of religious pluralism and moral relativism, believers are being exposed to and challenged by many different worldviews. The postmodern influence of moral and cultural relativism with its rejection of objective truth is widespread in western culture, even in parts of the Church. The New Age movement (eastern pantheism in a western dress) is flourishing in many guises in the West. And even atheism has found a new voice, zealously presenting its tired and empty reasons for the dismissal of God with a militant and angry spirit, letting emotion drive its arguments. Truth, simply put, is under fire today as never before. In this clash of worldviews, there is an urgent need for believers to become credible witnesses of Jesus Christ and to learn how to give coherent and winsome answers to those who are open to hearing reasons for their faith.

For those who want some solid training addressing worldviews, there are two opportunities coming up this summer. The first is with the Zacharias Trust, the European Office of Ravi Zacharias International Ministries (RZIM), which offers an intensive, week-long summer school to train believers in understanding and engaging with the increasingly secular world. Each year around the first week of July, a group of about a hundred people arrive in Oxford, England, to learn from some of the brightest and most winsome apologists and evangelists in ministry today. Some have attended previously, but come again to be updated, refreshed, and reunited with friends. Most, however, are first-time attendees, arriving with great expectations, and returning home well trained and with new friends, eager to put their learning into God's service. Whether new or alumni, all are better prepared to meet the challenge of 1 Peter 3:15.

The summer school begins mid-afternoon on Sunday as the conferees arrive at Queen's College and are each greeted by the friendly RZIM staff, served tea and coffee, and given a course notebook and conference badge. Michael Ramsden, one of the main speakers and apologists at the summer school, provides a warm welcome to the conferees.



Tom Heard

At 5:00 everyone gathers in the main lecture hall for a quick orientation of the week's offerings, and then all head to the college dining hall for dinner. The breaking of bread in the historic dining hall gives opportunity for conferees to meet each other and develop relationships and is as enjoyable and memorable as the time spent together in the lectures.

A quick glance at the week's schedule shows that the days are very full, starting with community breakfast at 7:30 a.m., and including an average of five lectures, the last ending around 9:15 p.m. Afterwards, some students head out to the Lamb and the Flag or the Eagle and the Child, local pub haunts of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien, where they can relax and discuss the day's talks and how they apply to life and ministry. The days are long, but they are so rich in teaching and fellowship that the time seems to go by too quickly.

In addition to good teaching and fellowship, there is an Oxford tour, a river cruise, and a final banquet dinner, which make for great social events during the week. Free time after lunch also allows one to visit the city on foot, including the venerable Blackwell's bookstore.

Oxford is filled with history, and even casual walks around this university town provide you the opportunity to see places where Cranmer, Wesley, Lewis, and Tolkien

made their marks for Christ. Addison's Walk is also worth the time to experience, as this was the footpath Lewis took with Tolkien and Hugo Dyson that began the good work in him. Bring a comfortable pair of walking shoes to explore the town that is home to the oldest English-speaking university in the world. The university comprises 38 separate colleges, each with its own campus, so there is a lot to see and think about as you walk through the center city, where a college and its chapel are found on almost every street.

Summer school runs in 2009 from June 29 to July 3, with a theme this year of "War of Worldviews." Worldview is a red-hot topic for believers today, and every opportunity should be made to become familiar with worldviews, what they are, and how we can address the worldviews of anyone from atheists to pantheists. Instructors scheduled to teach in 2009 include Ravi Zacharias, Michael Ramsden, Arun Andrews, John Lennox, Tom Tarants, Amy and Frog Orr-Ewing, and Michael Green. Each morning Arun Andrews will teach the first section on the Beatitudes, and John Lennox will spend the mid-morning sessions addressing the topic of the New Atheists. Other lectures will follow in the afternoon and evening, with a total of 38 lectures presented. While the afternoon sessions will offer a choice of different topics simultaneously, all sessions are recorded and will be made available free of charge a few months after the summer school.

As believers face real and sometimes harsh challenges in defending our faith, it is important for us to take heed of what Peter meant in 1 Peter 3:15 when he said to "be prepared." He meant to study and put the time in to give an answer to those who ask about the reason for the hope in Christ that is winsome, cogent, and squares with the life you live. The RZIM Summer School will prepare you to meet that challenge in the historic city that also prepared C.S. Lewis and other great saints like him. For more information visit www.rzim.org.

If Oxford does not suit your schedule or budget, another good option is in Ireland. In 2005, I met the Rev. John Kirkpatrick, with whom I formed an instant friendship. John is pastor of Portrush Presbyterian Church, where he and his family serve this mile-long peninsula community in the beautiful coastal region of Northern Ireland. John is also the chairman for the New Horizon conference that takes place about a week after the Oxford RZIM Summer School. New Horizon started on the Coleraine Campus of the University of Ulster in 1989, and its roots lie in the 1954 Billy Graham Haringay Crusade. New Horizon is a week-long, big-tent (literally) conference that will feed the soul on a range of topics from the emerging church to parenting teenagers. From the opening sessions on Saturday to the final evening event the

following Friday, 52 lectures are offered, and those you cannot attend are available on CD.

To get a taste of the week's offerings from last year, go to www.thefeedtrust.org and click on the talk entitled "In the Beginning God," by John Lennox. You can view Dr. Lennox giving the opening evening celebration lecture and get a sense of his in-depth teaching.

The New Horizon conference for 2009 will be held from Saturday, July 18, through Friday July 24. The theme will be "Enjoying God," with D.A. Carson speaking on Philippians and Ray Ortlund speaking on the Psalms. In addition, a wide variety of other speakers and seminars will help equip you to serve the Lord. As in 2008, Keith and Kristyn Getty will lead the worship. The Gettys' sense of presence, thoughtfulness to what worship is, arrangements of the songs, both contemporary and traditional, and love of the Lord all come together to lead others in common worship that will be remembered for a lifetime. If you have ever sung "In Christ Alone" by Keith Getty and Stuart Townsend, you have an idea of the blessing that awaits you. For more information on New Horizon 2009, visit www.newhorizon.org.uk.

Both New Horizon and the RZIM Summer Schools are rich sources of learning, inspiration, and encouragement that will deeply impact your life and equip you significantly. No matter which conference you choose, you will gain much to enable you to give back to the Lord in faithful and fruitful service. For travel plans from the United States to the RZIM Summer School, visit www.rzim.org. For travel plans for the New Horizon Conference from the United States, email newhorizon2009@cslewisinstitute.org.

Thomas Heard works at the United States Patent and Trademark Office. He teaches in the C.S. Lewis Institute Worldview Program and has a passionate interest in Christian apologetics and theology. Tom is a member of The Falls Church in Falls Church, Virginia.

© 2009 C.S. LEWIS INSTITUTE
8001 Braddock Road, Suite 300 • Springfield, VA 22151
703/914-5602
www.cslewisinstitute.org

C·S· LEWIS INSTITUTE
Discipleship of Heart and Mind

*In the legacy of C.S. Lewis,
the Institute endeavors to develop disciples who can
articulate, defend, and live faith in Christ
through personal and public life.*