

# Christianity Challenged by Economic Crisis

**A**CADEMICIAN Dmitry Lvov took his campaign to link moral principles to economics to Scotland in July.

He challenged Christians to apply their principles to the economic problems of the world, when he spoke at a seminar at the Open University's Centre for Human Ecology. He gave a personal account of his conversion to Christianity, and explained why Russia had to take the initiatives to re-awaken the moral conscience of the world.

When he heard of Dr. Lvov's intended address, Konrad Raiser, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, issued a communiqué which said: "We are *intensely* interested in working out a new relationship between the Christian faith and the way we order our economic life, and as we are beginning to understand and struggle with the consequences of economic globalisation we see that this is not only a systemic, but predominantly a spiritual challenge".

Dr. Lvov is Head of the Economics Department of the Russian Academy of Sciences. In Moscow, he is one of the organisers of the Science and Religion movement. The corruption of his society in the years following the collapse of the USSR has convinced him that the renewal of Russia will not be possible without re-awakening the moral conscience.

He explained to Scottish theologians that the demographic crisis – Russia's population is rapidly declining in the face of increases in the rate of mortality – was like an expression of the sins of the world being visited on Russia.

While insisting on applying economic principles with scientific objectivity, he does not



Alastair McIntosh presents an icon of St. Andrew to Dr. Dmitry Lvov

see any anomaly arising from heightening people's sense of morality. His comments aroused reflections in the mind of Donald McLeod, professor at the college of the Free Church of Scotland. Professor McLeod wrote his column in the *West Highland Free Press* based on his reflections on Dr. Lvov's themes.

A presentation of an icon of St. Andrew – the patron saint of both Scotland and Russia – was made by Alastair McIntosh, the acting director of the Centre for Human Ecology. Mr. McIntosh had commissioned the icon from a Bulgarian artist who lives on an island off the West coast of Scotland.

## LANDLORDS AND THEIR TENANTS

THE BRITISH government has threatened to withdraw state support if landlords fail to maintain properties.

The abolition of unfit housing is being made an issue in the drive against child poverty – about 2.4 million children live in sub standard properties, two-thirds in the private rented sector.

Environment Secretary Stephen Byers believes it is immoral for the state to subsidise unfit housing by paying housing benefits to landlords.

The government has already committed an extra £1.8 billion for housing in England in the year to 2003-4, but more may be needed to achieve aspirations.

But the threat was attacked by landlord's associations. Some housing specialists fear that the tenants would be penalised – he might be evicted, or the property taken off the market.

£ About 70% of private landlords receive the housing benefit directly rather than from the tenant. The total bill is £11 billion a year.

HIS TENANTS are "scum" according to Nicholas van Hoogstraten, 58, who has been charged with the contract killing of a business partner who was shot at his Surrey home in July 1999.

Out of a fortune estimated at £200 million, built from the rents from tenants in the housing empire which he assembled in the South of England, van Hoogstraten is now building a £40 million mansion which will be his mausoleum.

As an owner of farms in Zimbabwe, van Hoogstraten has sided with his friend President Mugabe in the campaign to appropriate land owned by white farmers.

A WELSH businessman who bought the title Lord of the Manor of a village in the Peat District National Park has told more than 400 parishioners that they must pay for land rights.

Mark Roberts received 400 dusty boxes of documents relating to feudal laws that had not been changed. He now claims that these give him manorial and seigniorial rights over 25,000 acres and thousands of properties on the Staffordshire moor lands.

He claims he has the right to hunt, fish and extract minerals from every common, village green and grass verge in more than eight villages. And he has told villagers that if they want to protect themselves from huntsmen or mineral diggers they can pay him an annual fee of £150 an acre for the lease. In some cases, the annual cost to homeowners could be more than £200.

Mr. Roberts, who paid £10,000 for the title, says that "to cross common land or manorial waste without my permission is actually trespass".

One retired business man has already paid £15,000 in duties on a strip of grass and a patch of lawn outside a house he recently bought in the village of Alstonefield.