

CHURCH TIMES

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GREENBELT
REPORT

Alastair McIntosh's "Island Spirituality" was a journey through theological history, with reference to how it has shaped the physical and mental landscapes of Scotland, and in particular the outer Hebridean islands.

He gave a metaphor of religion as "a man-made trellis up which the vine of life should be able to grow", and said that his aim was to identify how the trellis had been damaged, and where Protestant traditions had become dysfunctional, and how we could redeem them.

The Reformation created divisions socially and theologically between the saved and the damned, he said, thanks to Calvin's theory of limited

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atonement. This mentality had had a pernicious effect on political structures, and the way in which power was used to delineate "us" and "them".

The task of Christianity in the current millennium, he said, was to re-explore the cross as the supreme symbol of non-violence, and find how this might change our image of God, and consequently our societies.

At the beginning of the debate "The End of Politics?", chaired by **Andy Flannagan**, the motion "This house believes the 2015 Election will make no difference to the future of Britain" had the support of about half the packed venue.

An hour later, it had been roundly