



# CHRISTIANS·IN·SCIENCE

## PréCiS

## April 2006

www.cis.org.uk

Ruth Bancewicz, Development Officer, 127 Catharine Street, Cambridge CB1 3AP. Tel: 0781 687 3515. ruthb@cis.org.uk no. 35  
Caroline Berry, Secretary, 4 Sackville Close, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3QD. Tel: 01732 451 907. cberry@pncl.co.uk



### CiS Northern Conference 2006 Design and Purpose in the Universe

On Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> March, almost 100 people gathered at St Nicholas Church, Durham, to address the issue of “Design and Purpose in the Universe”. Dr Peter Bussey chaired the morning session, and opened by reminding us all how relevant this topic is in the light of recent discussions in the media surrounding the teaching of “Intelligent Design” in schools. What follows below is a brief summary of what was said, but please note that *you can find the presentations on the CiS website*.

Rev Michael Roberts opened the conference with a helpful “**Short History of Design**”, from Plato through Paley and Buckland to Dembski. He put forward the idea that seeing design in biology is more like appreciating an impressionist painting than minutely studying a photograph.

Rev Dr Rodney Holder then described the latest thinking on “**Design in Cosmology**”, based on his recent book, “God, the multiverse and everything” (Ashgate, 2004). He covered the evidence for the big bang and fine-tuning in the origin of the universe that led the atheist Sir Fred Hoyle to remark that it seems that “A common-sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a superintellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature.” Evidence for other more complex models such as the multiverse theory, is scanty – and still ignores the question of ultimate cause.

Dr Denis Alexander addressed the question of “**Design in Biology?**” He distinguished between the “weak” idea of design meaning a sense of purpose and beauty in creation, and a “strong” design argument that uses specific examples of “evidence” for the existence of God. What followed was an in-depth look at the place of evolutionary biology in a “robust Biblical Christian doctrine of creation”, and how this contrasts to the Intelligent Design movement. He focused on the idea of naturalism, and stressed the point that Christians don’t have to be “methodological naturalists” in the lab, a phrase that suggests that their faith is left outside the lab.

There was an opportunity before lunch for CiS members to describe their activities locally. Eric Middleton, a retired scientist, described his experiences as a college chaplain. Having experience in science brings unique opportunities to discuss spiritual matters.



Dr Simon Kolstoe described the activities of the newly formed CiS South Central group, and how people in the local church and university are working together to organise events.

The afternoon began with three short papers on various aspects of design. Jon Reynolds presented a summary of “**Design in the Thought of James Jeans**”, a mathematician and writer of popular science books in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Dr John Lockwood gave an overview of “**Design and Purpose in Climate Change**”, and how ideas of design relate to this more chaotic system. Dr David Tyler, discussed the question “**Is Design Part of Science?**”, and proposed that Intelligent Design should have a place in scientific debate and education.

The final talk of the day was “**Design Arguments and the Scandal of the Evangelical Mind**” by Dr Ard Louis. He discussed the different cultural influences among both evangelicals and scientists, and how these cultures interact over the issue of design. He highlighted evangelicals’ unhelpful (scandalous) advocacy of immediacy, anti-traditionalism and populism. The primary challenge here is to communicate apologetic arguments at the right level for non-scientists to understand, but without going beyond the scientific evidence.

At the end of the day all four main speakers were part of a panel, discussing questions that focused on the difference between design arguments in biology and cosmology, evidence for design in biology, and theodicy.

Rev Tom Moffat gave an epilogue on a Celtic theme, with Psalm 19 - “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands”. It is important to keep hold of the Celtic sense of coherence of all things, involving both our faith and our search for knowledge.

Thanks go to all the speakers, and everyone who was involved in making the day run so smoothly, including several local helpers who served tea and coffee all day! Feedback so far has shown that this was a very helpful look at a complicated and topical issue. It has been so encouraging to see the northern conference grow so much over the last few years, and we hope that this will continue.

*Ruth Bancewicz*

### Charitable Status

The procedure for CiS to become a registered Charity is moving forward steadily. The committee have agreed the ‘Objects of the Charity’ and a System of Governance. These are steps towards the legal requirements. It is now necessary for the constitution to be approved by the membership. The papers are enclosed. We will hold a brief Extraordinary General Meeting during the lunch break at the Education Conference on April 29<sup>th</sup>. The members present can vote to agree the constitution. For those unable to be present a postal vote form is included among the papers. This should be signed and returned to the Secretary, 4 Sackville Close, Sevenoaks, Kent. TN13 3QD, by 25<sup>th</sup> April. Once the constitution is approved by the membership our application can be submitted to the Charity Commissioners.

*John Bryant, CiS Chair*

## Future CiS Conferences

Christians in Science and the Stapleford Centre with the Association of Christian Teachers

### ***Towards a Christian Framework for Education***

Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2006, 10.00am - 4.00pm  
Christ Church, Herne Bay, Kent

Accommodation available – see website for details.

Speakers:

**Ann Holt:** Doing the same things differently - bringing a Christian perspective to the task of teaching.

**Nick Spencer:** Thoughts on hidden liberal and libertarian challenges to the Christian message.

**Martin Rogers:** Science and Religion Project for Schools – progress in developing resources for Schools.

**Tom Hartman:** Feathery Dinosaurs. Evolution, the best explanation?

Discussion groups including:

**Pete Moore:** Science, Meaning and the Media

**Tom Kempton:** Science in the curriculum – Charis Science.

**Booking form enclosed**

### CiS London Conference

### ***Mind Machines and Majesty – The Boundaries of Humanity***

Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> Nov 2006, 9.30am – 5pm  
The London Institute for Contemporary Christianity,  
Vere Street, W.1

Speakers:

**Prof. David Booth;** Psychology Dept., University of Birmingham; “*Minds, Mechanisms and Made Free: the scientific study of human life, in gratitude to the Creator*”

**Dr Graeme Finlay;** Dept. of Medical and Health Sciences. Auckland University, New Zealand; “*Boundaries between Homo Divinus and other primates*”

**Dr Calum MacKellar;** Scottish Council on Human Bioethics; “*Embryonic, Fetal and Post-natal Animal Human Mixtures: An Ethical Discussion*”

**Prof. Bill Newsome;** Neurobiology, Stamford University, California; “*Boundaries between Choice and Determinism*”

**Revd. Dr John Searle, OBE;** co-author of “Life in our hands”; “*What does it mean to be made in the Image of God*”

**Subscription Renewals** are due on April 1<sup>st</sup> (!) Apologies that the form was not mailed to you sooner. We had problems sorting out the system for paying through credit cards. It is being sent separately this time as there are differing arrangements for different members. Please return it promptly, and we encourage you to make use of the standing order form so that you do not have to take any action in future. Please note that the subscription rate has increased so please update your standing order if you already have one.

## Education

A big focus for those involved in CiS education has been the CiS/Stapleford Centre/ACT conference “Towards a Christian Framework for Education” Herne Bay, April 29<sup>th</sup> 2006. The conference unites these three different Christian groups.

In a previous PreCiS, you have read about the Stapleford Centre and, below, Rupert Kaye explains a little about the Association of Christian Teachers (ACT). We are also delighted that the environmental group A Rocha, [www.arocha.org](http://www.arocha.org), will now also be present at the conference; we hope to encourage other Christian organisations to attend too.

It looks to have the makings of an excellent conference, feedback from all over the country has been positive. It would be good if as many CiS members as feel able, come and support this event.

### The Association of Christian Teachers

There are four Associations of Christian Teachers in the UK – one for each of the home nations. ACT, ACT Scotland, ACTW and NIACT are non-denominational membership organisations. Each provides professional and spiritual support for Christians working in schools, colleges and other educational settings.

ACT seeks to help Christians live out their faith in the workplace. On the one hand, this involves helping teachers, teaching assistants, headteachers and governors consider what it means to teach science ‘Christianly’; to offer pastoral support to students ‘Christianly’; to nurture links with the local community ‘Christianly’. On the other, it involves providing opportunities for Christians in education to meet and share together in prayer and fellowship by organising evening meetings, training days, weekend retreats and conferences.

ACT also strives to influence policy makers, politicians, the media, the Church and all those with an interest in education, by proclaiming a loving, biblical Christian response to contemporary educational issues. <http://www.christian-teachers.org.uk>

### ***Creationism in our Schools***

On March 10<sup>th</sup> 2006, The Times newspaper published an article by Tony Halpin. His article was published under the title of “Creationism to be taught on GCSE science syllabus”. The subheading read “Exam board is accused of confusing pupils by including religion”.

But is it true that the inclusion of religious ideas in science lessons should necessarily lead to confusion? Does that not depend on the quality of teaching and learning?

I took more than a passing interest in this story. Creationism is a highly contentious subject. Many Christians who are scientists reject seven day creationism (Young Earth Creationism, YEC) as

unscientific and unbiblical. Yet there are others that do not take this position.

Illustrating the tension in the Christian Church over this issue, Keith Ward, Regius Professor of Divinity at the University of Oxford, published an article in the Church Times (20/1/06) where he stated:

*“Creationism clearly conflicts with modern astronomy, cosmology, geology and biology. It has no reputable scientific basis, and so it is perfectly reasonable to rule that it should not be taught in schools as science”*

Yet Sylvia Baker, a Christian involved in the New Independent Christian Schools Movement recently wrote in ACT NOW (The Association of Christian Teachers magazine) an article arguing for a different position. She argues that the theory of evolution is a fraud and those scientists who accept the theory of evolution are on the same side as scientists like Richard Dawkins, basically accepting an intrinsically atheistic idea.

The article by Sylvia is part of an on-going conversation in ACT NOW. Sylvia’s position represents one position in a conversation. But Sylvia also claims something else; she claims that Young Earth Creationism (YEC) is scientifically valid and that the evolutionary theory has many problems that will eventually lead to its collapse and exposure. That is a bold assertion and it is also one that projects a religious interpretation of a particular passage of scripture as a means of understanding the world about us. Is this a valid position to take?

GCSE science in schools is changing from 2006. The OCR *Gateway to Science* scheme that Tony Halpin writes about is an example of such a change. It is a change that many science teachers welcome. It gives opportunity to discuss the implications and media presentation of science within a scientific framework, yet one that engages with important external issues. It also provides examiners a chance to relate exam questions to topical issues. The OCR *Gateway to Science* scheme has an assessed component called “Science in the News”. Pupils are expected to demonstrate an informed opinion based on scientific ideas and concepts.

Before writing this article, I contacted the OCR concerning the Tony Halpin story. Several points were made:

- Science criteria require the consideration of how uncertainties in scientific knowledge and scientific ideas change with time,
- the Times article was a little sensational,
- there is no intention to examine the topic in exam papers,
- creationism could appear in “Science in the News” as an optional item.

YEC could then be manifest at least in some form within UK GCSE science. Is that a bad thing though? Could it, for example, open up discussion

about the meaning of the word creation? It is often claimed that evolution and creation are incompatible, whereas what is really meant is that “special creation” and evolution are incompatible. Creation is God bringing into being and providing sustenance and this is not so often in question. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, states his concern over creationism in a Guardian article (21/03/06) by Stephen Bates, religious affairs correspondent:

*“My concern is creationism can end up reducing the doctrine of creation rather than enhancing it”*

I am not aware that Christians in Science has historically spent much time responding to the YEC arguments on scientific grounds. Perhaps that is because some in CiS would argue that the scientific evidence against the YEC position is overwhelming. But is that the position of the whole school population? How well equipped are school children to deal with these issues, especially when religious and emotional loyalties may be at stake?

#### **Volunteers required!**

I would be interested to hear from CiS members prepared to write short summary articles for GCSE and Sixth form pupils. These articles should address in simple terms the scientific argument for the position they take on the above issues. It might be helpful if these could be related to religious belief, but this need not necessarily be the case.

Dependent on your responses and by agreement, my intention would be to use our newly developed website to provide schools and places of higher education across the world access to these articles, at no cost.

Please send any articles or comments to John Ling at [jjling@btinternet.com](mailto:jjling@btinternet.com)

#### **Prayer request**

On April 29<sup>th</sup> 2006 there are two education conferences. These link together many aspects of Christian education in Britain.

Firstly, there is the CiS/Stapleford/ACT conference in Herne Bay, as above. Members may also wish to remember in prayer those involved in “Christian Education in Schools” which is a conference to be held at Stirling North Parish Church at exactly the same time, see [www.socu.org/conference](http://www.socu.org/conference) for details.

*John Ling, CiS Education Secretary*

#### **\*\*Summer courses at the Faraday Institute for Science and Religion, Cambridge\*\***

Booking is now open for residential summer courses, to be held over two weeks in July. Speakers include Revd. Dr John Polkinghorne, Prof. Roger Trigg, Revd. Dr David Wilkinson and Prof. Colin Humphreys. *Substantial discounts are available for students and postdocs.*

Go to <http://www.st-edmunds.cam.ac.uk/faraday> for more details, or call or 01223 741281

### **Christian Workplace Forum meeting at Houses of Parliament**

The Christian Workplace Forum was established in 2003 to network together and support all the professional groups and workplace associations in the UK, and now represents more than 80 groups.

On 7<sup>th</sup> March, more than 60 leaders of Christian Workplace groups met with Alister Burt, MP, and other members of the Parliamentary Christian Fellowship. This was an encouraging opportunity to discuss how workplace groups can have an impact on society, and will be followed up with a further meeting in October.

For details go to <http://www.cwf-uk.org/> or contact Ros Turner: [cwf04@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:cwf04@tiscali.co.uk)/01767 641 005

### **CiS Members in Action**

**Tues 25<sup>th</sup> April**, Two lectures on ‘Dawkins, evolution and design’. British Army Chaplains’ Conference, Hanover. *Dr Denis Alexander*

**Sun 7<sup>th</sup> May**, Preaching at St Andrews University Chapel. *Prof Colin Humphreys*

**Mon 8<sup>th</sup> May**, ‘Science, Spin and Sales Pitches - Ethical Issues in Science Communication’, Exeter Café Scientifique. *Prof John Bryant*

**Mon 15<sup>th</sup> May**, Teaching on Science and Christianity at Cornhill Training Course, London. *Prof Bob White and Dr Denis Alexander*

**Sat 20<sup>th</sup> May**, ‘Beauty in Science’, Chipperfield Mens Breakfast. *Dr Denis Alexander*

**Mon 5<sup>th</sup> June**, ‘The Historical Background to the Science-Religion Debate’, Templeton Foundation Journalists Course, Cambridge. *Dr Denis Alexander*

**Mon 12<sup>th</sup> June**, Nottingham Café Scientifique; subject to be arranged. *Prof John Bryant*

**Wed 14<sup>th</sup> June**, ‘Who’s designing your genes?’, St Philip and St James, Ilfracombe. *Prof John Bryant*

**Sat 1<sup>st</sup> July**, ‘Pilgrims’ Travels to Sinai’, Association for the Study for Travel in Egypt and the Near East, Oxford. *Prof Colin Humphreys*

Please let us know of any events that you are involved in over the next few months.

#### **CiS Press Officer**

Bob Carling has recently been nominated as the CiS press officer, and will be aiming to raise the profile of CiS events in the media in the coming months. We welcome his support.

## News from CiS local groups

### Cambridge

The CiS – Faraday Lecture Series in Science and Religion:

Prof Ronald Numbers  
(University of Wisconsin-Madison)

"Myths and Truth in Science and Religion: A historical perspective"

5.30 p.m. Thursday, May 11th 2006  
Howard Theatre, Downing College

For further details, and previous lectures go to  
<http://www.st-edmunds.cam.ac.uk/cis/>

### Nottingham

A discussion group meets on the first Tuesday of even numbered months. The next meeting will be on Tuesday 4th April at 8.00pm, and will be a review of the Northern Conference.

Contact Geoff Bagley on 0115 925 8801 or email  
[gbagley@ntlworld.com](mailto:gbagley@ntlworld.com)

### Oxford

"Has biology killed off God? Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, and the meaning of life"

Professor Alister McGrath of Wycliffe Hall  
Monday 8 May. 7.30 – 9.30pm

St Andrews Church, Linton Road, North Oxford

Contact Diana Briggs to join the mailing list for future events ([diana.briggs@gmail.com](mailto:diana.briggs@gmail.com)).

### Edinburgh

Physicist, Prof. Paul Wraight will speak on  
Mon 24th April,  
St Paul's and St Georges Church,  
Flat at 40 York Place.

Contact Cathel Kerr for more details  
([clkerr@btopenworld.com](mailto:clkerr@btopenworld.com)).

### Irish Branch Off To A Good Start

The inaugural meeting of the newly formed Irish branch took place at Bloomfield Presbyterian Church in Belfast on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> March. Participants came from a wide range of backgrounds and denominations and took part in an informal debate on the subject of 'Evolution, Creationism and Intelligent Design'.

Branch members then discussed options for future meetings and topics for further debate. The branch agreed to run face-to-face meetings in Belfast on a six weekly cycle, together with an e-mail discussion group for members from further afield.

Next meeting: 3.00pm, Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> April at Bloomfield Presbyterian Church. Rev. Dr. Ron

Eldson will present a paper for debate entitled 'Claiming Back Genesis From the Creationists: Reading The Bible From An Environmental Perspective'.

For further information on the Irish Branch, please contact either Scott Peddie tel. 028 9335 1379 ([s.peddie@pattersonpeddie.com](mailto:s.peddie@pattersonpeddie.com)), or Martin Brown ([martin.oldcross@btinternet.com](mailto:martin.oldcross@btinternet.com)).

### CiS Central South

Central South CiS Inaugural Lecture:

Denis Alexander: "Beyond Belief? Science and Religion in the 21st Century"  
Boldrewood Lecture Theatre 1,  
University of Southampton  
Monday 8th May 2006, 7:30pm

If you would like more information about this group please email Rob Heather ([robandanneuk@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:robandanneuk@yahoo.co.uk)) or Simon Kolstoe ([skolstoe@soton.ac.uk](mailto:skolstoe@soton.ac.uk))

### Forming local groups

If you are interested in starting your own CiS local group, contact Ruth or Caroline (contact details on page 1) for a list of members in your area. You can also request a CiS speakers list. A paper on forming local groups can be found at:  
[http://cis.org.uk/starting\\_local\\_cis\\_group.htm](http://cis.org.uk/starting_local_cis_group.htm)  
or a paper copy can be sent on request.

### Get Chatting about science and faith!

Did you know that Christians in Science runs an email discussion group? It's a lively group of CiS members who have debated a range of topics, including: Miracles; Sin and Evolution; Biblical Interpretation; Should Christians be in favour of GM Crops?; How does one reconcile scripture and science?; Does God Intervene in Nature?; Intelligent Design; etc. etc.

It is also a way of letting members of the discussion group know about stuff that's going on in the news, meetings, books that have been published, and so on.

Come and join us - add your pennyworth to the discussions and get up to date with what's going on...

How do you join? There's details tucked away in the Resources section of the CiS website - where you can either add your email and click on the button, or you can send an email to [christians\\_in\\_science\\_subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:christians_in_science_subscribe@yahoogroups.com). Or, if you're already familiar with Yahoo Discussion groups, just toddle off to their website and join there.

*Bob Carling, CiS Press Officer*

## Web-watch . . .

Channel 4 recently broadcast Richard Dawkins' "The Root of All Evil" in two episodes: "The God Delusion", and "The Virus of Faith". Many CiS members may have seen this series, and talked about it in the tea-room or pub with friends and colleagues.

CiS journal editor and Faraday Institute director Denis Alexander published a response in the 03 February edition of the Times Higher Education Supplement. A longer version of his article is available at

[www.cis.org.uk/resources/articles/article\\_archive/DawkinsArticle210106.pdf](http://www.cis.org.uk/resources/articles/article_archive/DawkinsArticle210106.pdf)

Madeleine Bunting wrote a witty comment in the Guardian entitled "No wonder atheists are angry: they seem ready to believe anything":

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,3604,1681002,00.html>

Dawkins' fellow Oxford professor Keith Ward critiqued Dawkins' black and white view of the world in the Tablet:

<http://www.thetablet.co.uk/cgi-bin/register.cgi/tablet-01133>

and even Michael Rosen, who, together with Philip Pullman (of "I hate Narnia" fame) appears in the Why Atheism? resource for schools, called Dawkins to task for damaging the cause: [http://www.socialistworker.co.uk/article.php?article\\_id=8141](http://www.socialistworker.co.uk/article.php?article_id=8141)

We have collected a number of other responses to Dawkins on our CiS website:

<http://cis.org.uk/resources/dawkins.shtml>

and recommend "Dawkins' God: Genes, memes and the meaning of life" by Alister McGrath (Blackwell 2004) for a more thorough (but very readable) discussion of Dawkins' views on religion.

*Ard Louis, CiS International Secretary*

### Lectures at LiCC

'What about Adam?'

Rev Dr Ernest Lucas, **Mon 12<sup>th</sup> June**

'What about Darwin?'

Dr Denis Alexander, **Mon 19<sup>th</sup> June**

Lectures begin at 6.45 pm, Vere Street, London W1  
Details from [www.licc.org.uk](http://www.licc.org.uk), or phone 020 7399 9555

### Submissions for next PréCiS

Items for the next PréCiS should be submitted to Caroline Berry at [cberry@pncl.co.uk](mailto:cberry@pncl.co.uk) or 4 Sackville Close, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3QD

## Committee comings and goings

Ernest Lucas has been Review Editor for Science and Christian Belief for seven years and many of us will have received books for review from him, a good incentive to read a book that might otherwise have passed us by. He is now handing the baton on to Rodney Holder who is Course Director of the recently formed Faraday Institute. Many thanks to Ernest for all his hard work over the years. Although reviews have sometimes appeared very late in the journal, the backlog is now cleared and Rodney takes over a clean slate. Books for review should be sent to a forwarding address:

The Revd Dr Rodney Holder, European Business Centre, Riverside View, Thornes Lane, Wakefield WF1 5QW.

### **\*\*Webmaster wanted\*\***

You will hopefully have been making the most of our new website, which is full of useful articles and information on current events. We urgently need a webmaster to keep this up to date.

We are looking for someone with knowledge of HTML, who has time every week to make the necessary updates.

Please contact [ruthb@cis.org.uk](mailto:ruthb@cis.org.uk) for more details.

### Changes at UCCF

Christians in Science is one of several professional groups allied to the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship. Most of these groups, including CiS, began life as part of that organisation. CiS became a separate group in 1996. Since then there has been an annual meeting, organised by UCCF, at which the various professional groups up-date one another and liaise with UCCF through staff worker Alan Hewerdine. Sadly this arrangement is coming to an end and the Professional Groups are to be fully independent of UCCF. This change should not have any great impact on CiS but does mean that it will no longer be possible to donate money to CiS via UCCF.

*Caroline Berry, CiS Secretary*

### Change of address? Graduated? New e-mail address?

If any of your details have changed, please contact Tom Moffat at:

The Manse, Culross, Dunfermline, Fife,  
KY12 8JD. Tel. 01383 880 231

E-mail: [subscriptions@cis.org.uk](mailto:subscriptions@cis.org.uk)