



# PréCis

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## Southern Conference

**Saturday 2nd  
November, 2019**

**St Paul's Church  
Robert Adam Street  
London W1U 3A**

**More details - please  
see page 5**

## Northern Conference 2019 - Durham

### Stewards of Creation: Christian Perspectives on Environmental Issues

Just under 30 people came together for what was considered a highly fruitful and thought-provoking conference looking at both theological and scientific aspects of current environmental concerns. Thanks are due to the presenters and all those who contributed to the day, particularly in arranging and organising the event.

**Saving the Earth – Why Should Christians Care?**  
*Dr Carmody Grey, Department of Theology and Religion,  
University of Durham*

Prior to answering the question in the title, Dr Grey proposed that we need to consider some further fundamental questions such as: What is the natural

environment? Who does it belong to? Many Christians would say that, although we should be concerned about the environment, it is not a fundamental matter as far as salvation is concerned. The church's work is to save souls, or God is going to dispose of the current order of things at the second coming. Dr Carmody strongly challenged these viewpoints and put the case for the centrality of the cosmos, the relationship of Jesus to the material world, and man's protection of God's creation being part of the virtuous life. It is not secondary. Stewardship is insufficient; a better model is priesthood – bringing creation to sanctity and holiness (Romans 8:19–22).

Environmental psychology indicates that the motivation for people to change does not primarily come from data, but rather from other factors such as relationships, emotions, motivations and intentions. In other words, providing more climate change data, and speaking with louder voices, will not necessarily accomplish change.

### **Whose Earth? Faith and Nature Conservation in the 21st Century**

*Dr Darren Evans, School of Natural and Environmental Sciences, Newcastle University*

The media has given increasing attention to the earth as an ecosystem where each part can affect another, both negatively and positively (e.g. the importance of insect pollinators in the food chain).



More attention is being paid to the provision of green spaces for the support of mental health.

However, those who seek to protect nature rarely make any money out of it, but those who harm it generally do so. Conservation has a value of itself in preserving nature for the next generation.

The Judeo-Christian ethic goes further. Creatures are appropriate subjects for human care and protection (Genesis 2). The Jewish law provided legal protection for the land. The New Testament has a positive view of the Christian's relationship to the natural world and the redemption of all creation. We are therefore not on our own against the forces of materialism and unsustainable development.

### **Mine for Ever? Our Use of the Earth's Mineral Resources**

*Prof David Manning, School of Natural and Environmental Sciences, Newcastle University*

Mining has been an essential part of the history of the planet. Minerals underpin everything in the UK economy. Food draws nutrients from the soil which in turn is supported by mined fertilisers. However, mining needs to ensure that it is sustainable and is not generating harmful consequences for future generations.

Mining is subject to regulation which in turn is determined by society's needs and requirements. The Brundtland Report (1987) included an additional aspect – the contribution that should be made to provide for the essential needs of the world's poor.

Speaking from his perspective as a Quaker, Professor Manning argued that part of the vision for the earth is to recognise that we do not own the world and we need to work to ensure that our

## **Urgently Needed**

### **CiS Membership Secretary**

CiS is looking for a new membership secretary to take over from Fran Armitage, who has been doing a great job in this position for many years.

This is a voluntary and rewarding position, and involves maintaining the membership database, looking after membership renewals and payments and communicating with members as necessary throughout the year. In addition, there are four committee meetings per year in London.

The position would suit someone nearing retirement or wanting a part-time voluntary role with a variable schedule. It usually takes up to 5 hours a week, but can rise significantly for a few weeks in February/March prior to the renewal of annual subscriptions. You can be based anywhere in mainland UK. Familiarity with data-bases, spreadsheets, mail-merge and social media essential.

For more details, contact [secretary@cis.org.uk](mailto:secretary@cis.org.uk) for information in the first instance.

increasing power over nature is used responsibly with reverence for life.

#### **Sustainable Living to Love our Neighbours and Care for Creation**

*Prof Jonathan Leake, Department of Animal and Plant Sciences, University of Sheffield*

Sustainability may be defined as meeting current needs without compromising the future in terms of resource degradation and depletion. Increasing and often unnecessary consumption threatens the sustainability of the planet and has impacts on our global neighbours.

It particularly affects the poorest people who are most vulnerable to climate change and food insecurity, because they live in poor areas with weak protection against changes. Faith groups are reluctant to address the issues because

of the invested interests that many people have to exploit and overpower nature for their own benefit. Action is needed to persuade people to change their behaviour to sustainability.

In addition we had the third conference presentation of the **2018 Oliver Barclay Lecture by Dr Nick Higgs** of The Bahamas, given as a video recording; this has already been reviewed by Ruth Bancewicz on the Science and Belief website - <https://tinyurl.com/yyz4t4uj>

All the talks were recorded and audio files will be available soon on the CiS website, subject to the agreement of the speakers.

Report by Dr Rae Earnshaw

## 2019 Student Conference *The Bible and Modern Science: honouring God's word, exploring God's works*

The journey from my snowcapped Swedish town to a damp and grey Sheffield is a long one, and one I did not think I would make. But I embarked on that journey in the beginning of March, and after the amazing experience at the Christians in Science Student Conference, on the theme of "The Bible and Modern Science", I can happily say it was definitely worth going the distance. I was not the only one who had travelled a long way: there were participants from all over the UK, and from as far as Poland. We were all students, all at different stages in our education, and all from different backgrounds: chemistry, biology, geology, physics, medicine, theology, philosophy. There was a distinctly open and friendly atmosphere, even when opinions clashed. In a climate of public discourse as bitter and polarized as that of today, the openness and willingness to dialogue was a sorely needed breath of fresh air.

After a warm welcome from the organizers over an equally sorely needed cup of coffee, Bethany Sollereeder from the University of Oxford gave a lecture on "Genesis I in Ancient Near Eastern Context". This began with a reading of the text in question by several of the participants, illustrating how the text would probably have been read by several voices in a liturgical setting. The



talk went on to contrast Genesis I with other creation myths from the Near East. The strength of this kind of comparative approach is that it illuminates many of the authorial choices that otherwise go unnoticed: where the text converges with other, older cosmogonies, and when it diverges to convey theological points. What clearly surfaces is the pains to which the biblical account goes to emphasize the goodness and the purposefulness of creation, in contrast to the myths of the surrounding civilizations. These myths envisioned the world being patched together out of the carcass of a slain deity, or humanity arising as an epiphenomenon of the tears of god intermingling with dust.

The physicist Tom McLeish continued the biblical theme, this time looking closely at the book of Job. Professor McLeish challenged a popular reading of God's prolonged speech that views God's stream of questions as endeavouring to "put down" Job. While it is true that Job cannot answer the questions posed by the Lord, McLeish argued, his descendants are nonetheless able to. Many of the queries that echo

# Future Challenges for Christians in the Sciences

## Speakers :

- ◆ Prof Neil Messer
  - *Neuroscience and cognitive science of religion*
- ◆ Hannah Malcolm
  - *Challenges from the Environment*
- ◆ Prof John Wood and Prof Berry Billingsley
  - *Trust in Science*
- ◆ Professor Keith Fox
  - *Challenges from recent developments in genetics*
- ◆ Plus 2019 Oliver Barclay Lecture

Saturday, 2nd November

St Paul's Church, Robert Adam Street  
London W1U 3A

Further details will be available next month on  
[www.cis.org.uk/conferences](http://www.cis.org.uk/conferences)

## 2019 CiS Student Essay Competition

1. How can we wisely use the Bible and modern science to inform and enhance our faith and studies?
2. Extinction Rebellion - how can Christians respond?
3. Could machines ever know God?

**Each year, CiS hosts an essay competition for students to enter, either individually, in pairs or as a group.** The essay competition is designed to encourage promising young thinkers and writers to explore different science-faith topics.

**£500 First prize    £250 Second prize    £100 Third prize**

Deadline is midnight on 30th August 2019. Further details for the competition can be found at [www.cis.org.uk/students/essay-competition/](http://www.cis.org.uk/students/essay-competition/)

out of the whirlwind have found more than satisfactory answers in the science of today. God's speech in the book of Job should not be seen as obscurantist, McLeish argued, but rather as an invitation to do science, which we can heed and appreciate today.

Before lunch, we heard two student presentations. The first, by Seth Hart from the University of Oxford, was on the topic of the historical Adam, and different ways this idea can be understood. Seth argued that, contrary to popular belief, modern science has not necessarily put the issue to rest once and for all. The second presentation, by Paul Rezkalla, a doctoral student in philosophy at Florida State University, criticized popular attempts to "debunk" morality based on evolutionary

psychology. These arguments, Rezkalla convincingly showed, are persuasive only in light of a prior commitment to a naturalist world-view.

In the afternoon, Hannah Malcolm's presentation centred around discussion groups, exploring the relation of the Bible to climate change. Global warming, and the problems it entails, is a specifically modern concern. However, thoughts concerning humans'



*Hannah Malcolm*

relationship to the land they live on, the status of animals, peace and violence, are abundantly present in the Bible. Malcolm selected relevant verses, which spawned a thought-provoking (and sometimes animated) discussion.

Professor Sir Colin Humphreys discussed the concept of miracles and laid out a possible classification of different kinds of miracles. He argued that certain biblical miracles, which have been written off as pious inventions by biblical scholars, actually have plausible scientific explanations. This, however, is not the same as "debunking", or invalidating them: they can still be treated as miracles because of their significance and timing. There are, however, also other kinds of miracles, which cannot be accounted for by scientific means at all; the paradigmatic example of this kind, according to Humphreys, is the resurrection of Christ.

The discussions continued until the official conclusion, and even continued passed the closing! However, the discussions need to be continued, and hopefully, future student conferences will make sure of that.

Report by: Lapo Lappin



*Students at CiS conference*

## LOCAL GROUP NEWS

*Details of all events are available on the CiS App and on our website*  
[www.cis.org.uk/events](http://www.cis.org.uk/events).



*If you wish to start a Local Group in your area, please get in touch with Abigail, our Development Officer, at [do@cis.org.uk](mailto:do@cis.org.uk)*

### BRISTOL

Discussion groups – 1st Friday of each month. (There is no meeting in August)  
Friday 27th Sept, at 7pm: *Science as the new priesthood – what is truth now? Can we dare to admit ignorance?* Speaker: Professor John Wood  
Venue: Redland Church Hall, Redland Green Rd, Bristol BS6 7HE

For more information please contact Tina Biggs ([cmbbiggs@googlemail.com](mailto:cmbbiggs@googlemail.com))

### CAMBRIDGE

For details of events in Cambridge please go to [www.faraday-institute.org/](http://www.faraday-institute.org/)

### DUNDEE

Monday 7 Oct, at 5:15pm *Does Evolution Lead to Love?* Speaker: Professor Jeff Schloss. Location: Main Physics Lecture Theatre, University of St Andrews. For more details on Dundee events contact [christiansinsciencedundee@gmail.com](mailto:christiansinsciencedundee@gmail.com)

### EDINBURGH

For details of future events in Edinburgh, please contact [cisedinburgh3@gmail.com](mailto:cisedinburgh3@gmail.com)

## **HARROW**

For details of future events in Harrow please contact Revd Lyndon North (revlnorth@aol.com)

## **HUDDERSFIELD**

For details please contact Omololu Fagunwa on fagunwaomololu@yahoo.com

## **IPSWICH**

For more information about events please contact Dr John Ling (jjling@btopenworld.com)

## **IRELAND**

Details about events in Ireland contact Dr Peter van der Burgt (peter.vandербurgt@nuim.ie)

## **LONDON**

For more details about the London group please email cins.london@gmail.com

## **MANCHESTER**

For more information, please contact the Secretary on sec.cismanchester@yahoo.co.uk

## **NORWICH**

Monday 14th Oct, 7pm: *Who Controls the Worlds Climate: God, Nature or People?* (SFN Annual Cathedral Lecture) Speaker: Professor Mike Hulme Location: Norwich Anglican Cathedral Nave. For more information on local events, please contact sfnorfolk1@gmail.com

## **OXFORD**

For more information, please contact Diana Briggs at diana.briggs@wolfson.oxon.org

## **OXFORD - students**

For more information on student discussion group, please contact Matthew Patterson (matthew.patterson@physics.ox.ac.uk)

## **READING**

For information on events please email Dave Law at cisreading@yahoo.com

## **SHEFFIELD**

A monthly meeting for Sheffield University staff 1st Wednesday of the month at 11am, in the "Jessops Café". (\*\*\*) Please note change of venue) Join in on the day, or contact Dr Rhoda Hawkins on rhoda.hawkins@sheffield.ac.uk

## **SHEFFIELD - students**

All are welcome! Contact university student Rory McBride (rmcbride1@sheffield.ac.uk)

## **SOUTHAMPTON**

For information on meetings please contact Peter May on southampton@cis.org.uk

## **SOUTH WEST**

Friday 8th Nov, 7:30pm; *Is there a Christian Response to our Biodiversity Crisis?* Speaker: Prof John Spicer, at the Upper Lecture Theatre, Sherwell Centre, Plymouth University. For information on events in the South West, please email cissouthwest@gmail.com

## **ST ANDREWS**

Monday 7 Oct, at 5:15pm: *Does Evolution Lead to Love?* Speaker: Professor Jeff Schloss. Main Physics Lecture Theatre, University of St Andrews

Undergraduate group, please contact Dr Andrew Torrance (abt3@st-andrews.ac.uk); Postgraduate group, please contact Dr Rebecca Goss (rjmg@st-andrews.ac.uk)

## **SURREY**

For more details please contact Joy Perkins at joyeperkins@googlemail.com

## **SURREY HEATH**

For more details please contact John Russell at chynoweth.jw@gmail.com

## **TYNESIDE & NORTHUMBERLAND**

For information please contact Bill Clegg at bill.clegg@ncl.ac.uk (please include CiS in the subject line)

## **WEST MIDLANDS**

For more information please contact Godfrey Armitage at g.n.armitage@warwick.ac.uk

## **WORCESTER**

For information on Worcester events please contact Jim Smith on jgsmith29@aol.com

## **YORK**

CiS York is a new local group. For more information on events please email christiansinscienceryork788@gmail.com