

PréCis

God and Pandemics

CiS Online Conference

Prof Bob White

Dr Mirjam Schilling

Dr Simon Kolstoe

Oliver Barclay Lecture

Panel Discussion

10 - 14 August 2020

4pm each day

Free of Charge

More details - please see page 4

The challenge for CiS

“Led by the science.” Whatever one thinks of how this catch phrase currently is being used by politicians across the political spectrum it certainly speaks of an assumed confidence in science as a source of trustworthy guidance. Surveys have shown current trends to increased numbers of people praying or tuning in to online church services. So science and faith are both enjoying a higher profile but the connection between them is not being so obviously made. Bringing the two together is the fundamental aim of Christians in Science and we are planning to make a concerted effort over the coming year to raise the profile of Christians in Science. This is a vital exercise for the long-term sustainability of CiS. This is a time of opportunity.

Whilst recognising the primary aim of CiS to support and enhance the faith of those working in science we exist



Prof Paul Ewart

also to help anyone interested in the dialogue between science and Christian faith. As Christians we

also have a calling to help those outside the Church to understand what it means to have faith in Jesus Christ and to remove any obstacles to faith that science may appear to present. In a culture that is so strongly influenced by a scientific world-view it is vital that the Church acts “wisely to those who are without, making the most of the time.” (Colossians 4:5)

Over the past year we have been considering strategies to ensure the sustainability of CiS and to reduce its dependency upon short-term grant funding. This has involved thinking more about the aims of CiS and its potential in relation to the wider Church. Key to the strategy is expanding the membership and supporting base. The strategy will have three strands; increasing membership, creating a new class of CiS supporter – a Friend of CiS and seeking support of local churches by way of Affiliation.

The current membership, including associate members, forms a sub-critical mass. Without external grant funding this condition will lead to an inexorable decay in energy, output and influence. There are, no doubt, active scientists who are committed Christians who are not members and may not even know about CiS. So a first, and obvious, step is for existing

members to invite Christian colleagues to join. If every current member was to successfully invite two more colleagues to join then we would approach a self-sustaining critical mass. So here is the challenge – can you, as a current member, identify at least two other colleagues whom you could invite to join CiS? Membership, of course, is particularly suitable for those actively engaged in science but this includes teachers of science in our schools. We are particularly keen to encourage Christians who are science teachers to become full members with full access to all the resources and support that CiS can offer.

The second and significant step is to welcome those who are interested in the science/religion dialogue but who may feel that full membership would not be appropriate for them. Nonetheless, such people may value association with CiS and wish to support its work and to receive the benefits of such an association. We have therefore created a new category of Friend of CiS and encourage them to join on this basis. Thirdly, we aim to link more effectively with the wider Church. The approach will be at various levels within the different denominations but aiming for active engagement with local churches. CiS can help

church members to see how science enhances faith and worship. Furthermore, in the secular society that often simply assumes that science and faith are incompatible, CiS can be a valuable partner in mission to the outside world. Future plans will therefore include setting up a mechanism whereby a local church can become an Affiliate of CiS and, by so doing, both receive assistance in its mission and contribute financial support to the work.

In the near future I will be asking every member to help attract new members or friends with the aid of an updated pamphlet about CiS setting out our renewed vision. In the meantime why not draw the attention of potential members or friends to the upcoming, free-of-charge, online CiS Conference, 10 – 14 August 2020? (see website for details www.cis.org) It will be an excellent introduction to CiS and a personal invitation to the conference could be a first step towards their joining. The real key to success, however, lies in prayer. Let us all pray that God will guide us and enable us at this time of opportunity and to meet the challenge. Being led by the science is one thing but let us be led by the Spirit.

Prof Paul Ewart - CiS Chairman

God and Pandemics

CiS Online Conference : 10 - 14 August 2020



**Monday Speaker: Prof Bob White, FRS -
*Plagues and Pandemics: perspectives from
science and faith***

Bio: Bob is Professor of Geophysics at Cambridge University and Director of The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion. His passion is showing that science and Christian faith are two ways of looking at the same world which give a richer and deeper view of it than either on their own. He is thrilled that as a geologist he has been paid to study God's creation as his professional career.

Abstract: Pandemics are frightening. They can spread unseen through a human population with devastating consequences. In the modern, interconnected world, viruses such as Covid-19 travel around the globe at, literally, the speed of a jet airliner. Yet throughout most of history people have lived much closer to death than we do, and much more aware of the fragility of life. At least in the high-income countries today we have developed the hubris of thinking we can control our world, that we are in charge. So when something like the Covid-19 pandemic

hits us, there is almost nothing we can do except isolate ourselves. It's a shock to our whole way of thinking, to our individualistic lifestyles, and it exposes the inequalities and injustices in our world. There is much we can learn from this, and some specifically Christian perspectives that may be helpful.



**Tuesday Speaker: Dr Mirjam Schilling
*-Viruses as part of God's creation?***

Bio: received a PhD from the Institute of Virology, Freiburg, Germany in 2016 and is now working as a Postdoc at the University of Oxford. Her research focusses on the interplay of viruses and the innate immune system. In her free time, she has been studying Theology part-time in Stuttgart, Freiburg and Oxford and is currently working on her DPhil in which she explores the theological aspects of viruses.

Abstract: Ebola virus in 2014, Zika virus in 2015, SARS in 2019 ... Every couple of years there is a virus outbreak somewhere in the world. Once in a while we catch a cold in winter. In the mean time we forget that viruses exist. This year a virus is affecting all

of us dramatically. But what exactly are viruses? Are they as evil and vicious as we like to portray them? Modern technology has begun to open up another universe that we were quite unaware of for a long time. What do we know about the virosphere around us? The role of viruses in our ecosystem? Or how they relate to us?

pandemic has created within this framework. I will consider the processes and attitudes needed for reliable, rigorous and transparent science, and how these can sometimes conflict with wider societal needs. I will reflect on how a Christian world view can contribute to this dialogue.



Wednesday Speaker: Dr Simon Kolstoe
The Ethics of Evidence in a Pandemic

Bio: Originally a Biochemist, I am now a Senior Lecturer in Evidence Based Healthcare with a particular interest in Research Ethics, Integrity and Governance. I chair Research Ethics Committees for the NHS, MOD and PHE, and also sit on the Department of Health's Confidentiality Advisory Group. I was on the CiS committee between 2007 and 2012.

Abstract: Science is broadly concerned with the creation, evaluation, testing and publication of evidence. Historically the Philosophy of Science has been a source of rich theoretical debate, but in recent years the debate has moved on to pragmatic considerations using a framework based upon concepts including research culture, ethics, governance and integrity. Drawing upon recent academic research, and practical work with various ethics committees and advisory groups, I will consider the challenges that the COVID-19

We are pleased to announce Anna Pearson is this year's Oliver Barclay Lecture winner. Anna will be our 4th speaker for our Online Conference



Thursday Speaker: Anna Pearson
Oliver Barclay Lecture

Bio: Anna Pearson in the process of finishing her DPhil and starting a postdoc in Quantum Information Thermodynamics at the University of Oxford. She has a longstanding fascination with quantum mechanics. During her DPhil she did experiments looking at two foundational questions within quantum mechanics “*Do trade-offs pertaining to the thermodynamics of timekeeping, derived in the quantum domain, hold for a larger more complex system?*” and “*Is the gravitational interaction classical rather than quantum?*” When not doing physics she enjoys playing the piano, singing and spending time in nature, preferably with friends.

Abstract: At the time of going to print Anna has only just been appointed to give the 2020 Oliver Barclay lecture (abstract will be available on our website when completed).

2020 Essay Competition is open

The Student Essay competition is open to undergraduate or postgraduate students. An essay of no more than 1000 words on one of the following titles:

- *Future challenges for Christians in the sciences*
- *Can Science explain Religion?*
- *A Christian response to pandemics*
- *How can Science and Scripture inform ethics?*

£500 First prize

£250 Second prize

£100 Third prize.

Deadline: You have until MIDNIGHT on 30th August 2020 to send your entries to secretary@cis.org.uk. Please read to T&C on www.cis.org.uk/students/essay-competition/

The first prize will be announced in the Autumn PreCiS

Dr David Scott

- CiS Membership Secretary

I came to Christ in my teens in a working class church in Birmingham and benefitted from a believing family, the Jesus Movement, and Christian science teachers. Being keen on biology and chemistry, I thought, wrongly, that pharmacy would be a happy mixture of my favourite subjects, as well as something “useful”, and took my degree at Aston University. I enjoyed myself there but during my postgraduate professional training, I realised that most pharmacy practice did not require a lot of those subjects and enrolled for a PhD in the brand new field of High Pressure Liquid Chromatography (so brand new the department didn't have any apparatus; oops). I also enrolled in Research Scientists Christian Fellowship (now CiS).

After three years of drug analysis and mathematics on drug movement in the human body, I was inspired by a missionary talk to head for Africa and so I prepared by working in hospital pharmacy, which led to ... Southern Arizona to study the new field of clinical pharmacy that was to revolutionise my professional life. The profession was moving from focussing on making medicines



David - Appreciating warmth and wildlife

to improving their use in patients, and I was to teach this new approach in joint academic-professional posts until my recent retirement.

Africa did happen eventually; after 25 years in Oxford and Cardiff, I taught for a few years in Nairobi and Malawi Universities where I appreciated the warmth and the wildlife. The Lord works in mysterious ways and as time goes by, I see a little more clearly how He fashioned my life by a series of apparent mistakes and re-directions. In retirement, I sit on research ethics committees for the NHS and each part of my life contributes to my thinking, even the chemistry and biology.

Stephen Thompson **- CiS Education Secretary**

It is a real joy to join the committee of Christians in Science as your Education Secretary. I am very grateful to those who encouraged me to take up this position, and to the very many members who have extended such a friendly welcome to me at conferences over the many years I have been a member. CiS has played a vital part in my personal discipleship journey as I have continued to 'worry away' at the big questions posed when considering the developing account of the world according to science and the nature of life as revealed in Scripture. I was a schoolboy when some of us first met, but the science teacher who witnessed to me did not feel so at home in your company. I have continued to serve young people as a science teacher for thirty years now, and benefitted much from the encouragement of some of the leading voices in our field, including Simon Conway Morris. Many of our founder members came at Science and Religion questions from the perspective of working scientists, but I have grown immeasurably over the last decade by 'diving in' to the theological work



of specialists in Genesis specifically, and Creation more generally. This included a period of postgraduate supervision with David Wilkinson, who encouraged me to continue in my development, and I now blog at commonorgardentheologian.co.uk. I am very excited to join the committee and would ask all of you to consider ways in which we as an organisation can serve our current members who are school teachers, and to help those of us in education to speak to the vital issues which face us in the world today. I believe we have a great opportunity to answer the question, 'What would Jesus do?' in science education, as it relates to the climate crisis and urgent challenges around human personhood. I look forward to your partnership!

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, please
get in touch with Steph, our Development
Officer, at steph.cis@outlook.com*

*Details of all events are available
on the CiS App and on our website
www.cis.org.uk/events*

BRISTOL

For more information, please contact Christina Biggs - cmbbiggs@gmail.com

CAMBRIDGE

For details of events in Cambridge please go to <https://faraday-institute.org>

DUNDEE

For more details on Dundee events please contact christiansinsciencedundee@gmail.com

EDINBURGH

For more information please email cisedinburgh3@gmail.com

HARROW

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

HUDDERSFIELD –students

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

IPSWICH

For more information about future events please contact Dr John Ling - jjling@btopenworld.com

IRELAND

For details on meetings please contact Dr Neville Cobbe - neville.cobbe@yahoo.co.uk

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

Please contact sfnorfolk1@gmail.com for more details.

OXFORD

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

OXFORD - Students

For details please contact Matthew Patterson - matthew.patterson@physics.ox.ac.uk

READING

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

SHEFFIELD

Please contact Dr Rhoda Hawkins on rhoda.hawkins@sheffield.ac.uk for more detail.

SHEFFIELD - Students

For details please contact Rory McBride - rmbcride1@sheffield.ac.uk

SOUTH WEST

For more information on events please email

cissouthwest@gmail.com

SOUTHAMPTON

For information about the group please email Peter May (southampton@cis.org.uk)

ST ANDREWS

For details on the Undergraduate group please contact Dr A Torrance (abt3@st-andrews.ac.uk), Joshua Sharp (jas29@st-andrews.ac.uk) or Laura McCullagh (lsm4@st-andrews.ac.uk). Postgraduate group, please contact Dr Rebecca Goss (rjmg@st-andrews.ac.uk).

SURREY

For details on meetings, 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 Newcastle events, please contact Bill Clegg at bill.clegg@ncl.ac.uk

WEST MIDLANDS

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

WORCESTER

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

YORK

For more information please email christiansinsciencyork788@gmail.com

CiS YouTube Channel



**We have a selection of talks
available**

**[www.youtube.com/channel/
UCXB19JclwnwJldyzRvZW_4A](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXB19JclwnwJldyzRvZW_4A)**