



CHRISTIANS·IN·SCIENCE

PréCiS

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www.cis.org.uk

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MIND, MACHINES & MAJESTY: The Boundaries of Humanity CiS Annual Conference London: 4th November 2006

Recordings of all talks available on www.cis.org.uk

The magnificent surroundings of St Peter's Church, home to the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity, which is located some 50 metres from the bustle of Oxford Street, was the venue for this year's fully booked conference. CiS chairman, Professor John Bryant introduced the day's proceedings before handing over to the first of five speakers, Revd. Dr John Searle, anaesthetist-turned-Anglican vicar and currently involved in theological education. John's talk entitled: *What it means to be made in the image of God*, provided a very helpful introduction to the conference theme. Focussing on the creation accounts in *Genesis* 1 and 2 he explained how men and women who bear the *imago Dei* are much more than a product of their genes and behaviour. Tragically since *Genesis* 3 that image has been corrupted, resulting in all the dysfunctional activities of humankind. However, as Christians we have hope in full restoration, a process that has already begun with the life and work of Jesus.

Dr Calum MacKellar, Director of the Scottish Council on Human Bioethics in Edinburgh, was the next up to speak, his title: *Embryonic, fetal and post-natal animal-human mixtures*. Beginning with ancient Greek mythology and the centaur (half human-half horse) and the minotaur (half bull-half human), he pointed out our long-standing fascination with chimeras. In the near future, with the rapid developments in biomedical technology, the myths could become reality. Unlike an early failure to make a human/chimpanzee hybrid by Soviet scientists responding to Stalin's requirement for *a new invincible human being insensitive to pain, resistant and indifferent about the quality of food they eat*, the techniques to turn such science fiction into fact may already be here. Calum warned us that the ethical debate is lagging some

way behind scientific developments and often all that can be done is to call for a moratorium on particular avenues of research to allow the ethics 'to catch up' (see www.schb.org.uk). The final talk before lunch on *Genetics and humanity* was given by Dr Graeme Finlay, a cell biologist from Auckland. Graeme took us through a number of examples of gene generation (human three-colour vision) and degeneration (loss of function of 60% of our olfactory receptor genes) and related this to the role of God in creation.

The two speakers in the afternoon, in true scientific fashion, conducted experiments on their audience. Professor of Psychology at Birmingham University, David Booth, presented in quick succession 15 random words and asked us to write down all we could recall immediately after the disappearance of the last word from the screen. The total number of people remembering each word was plotted against the order of presentation and it was pleasing to note that we were a normal group who displayed the characteristic inverted U-shaped curve. David used this experiment on memory as a platform for his talk: *Minds, mechanisms and made free*. The final speaker was Professor Bill Newsome (Neurobiology; Stanford University CA) who in *Mechanism, mind and choice* looked at neuroscience's 'hard question' - consciousness. Beginning with the American philosopher Thomas Nagel's most famous quote: *What is it like to be a bat?* [*Phil Rev* 83: 435-450, 1974], Bill described his electrophysiological experiments on visual processing and reproduced one of the tests ('up-down dots tracking') on the screen to see if we were as good as his monkeys. He went on to explain that while our reductionist approach may give a detailed understanding of the biophysics of a single ion channel in the neurone, we know virtually nothing about how that translates into complex behavioural processes and as for consciousness...?

In addition to the questions put to individual speakers immediately after their talks, we had the

CiS Students & Graduates

*To recognise the growing numbers of students and graduates in CiS we have created a column for you! The aim is to provide some useful and inspiring content, especially for those making their way into the scientific world. For starters, **Simon Kolstoe** explains how he got involved in Southampton:*

Sometimes it can be quite intimidating starting a career in science, especially when you find yourself working with the people who taught you as an undergrad or wrote the seminal papers in your field. Moving from student to professional in any field is a social as well as educational progression, but this jump can seem even bigger as one finds themselves becoming a colleague of their teachers. Similarly, walking into a Christians in Science meeting for the first time can also seem rather intimidating, with all these professors and well established scientists. However, recently I have felt things begin to change for me, as I became involved with my local CiS group:

It all started at the CiS London conference in 2005 when Ruth Bancewicz introduced me to a recently retired engineer, Rob Heather, who also lived in Southampton and was interested in starting up a local group. The two of us met up for coffee at the university staff club and drew up a list of Christians we knew who might be interested in forming an organising group in our area. A month or so later we had our first meeting attended by a friendly Professor, a Reader, the university chaplain, our local Anglican vicar, a local GP, three students, myself (a post-doc) and Rob (the engineer). We decided on a program of lectures and seminars, and found plenty of things that the younger members of the group could do – the older members claim to be so busy that it is the students and post-docs who do most of the organising!

Since May we have hosted over 1000 people at two public lectures, organised a successful debate in a church about the intellectual problems of Intelligent Design creationism, seen two of our members interviewed by the BBC, and been able to provide an important point of contact for scientists from different church congregations to meet up and discuss ideas. The professional barrier between students and teachers, post-docs and professors has become less of an issue as we all work towards common goals using the skills and time that each of us can contribute. Our CiS group relies on everyone doing what they can, from giving a lecture, to simply sticking labels on envelopes – no one is too inexperienced to help!

opportunity to quiz them further in the panel discussion. It is difficult to summarise this 45-minute session so I shall just mention the point made by John Bryant, that our science should be about trying to *restore* the divine image of God in all creation, not to *deface* it further. As scientists it is important to investigate problems with humility and respect for these infinitely complex and God-created systems. As Graeme Finlay said in his concluding remarks, Christians know that the true image of God is defined in Jesus. The conference closed with a summing up and prayer from John Searle, whose hope (and ours) was that science will always be used for good purposes.

My thanks to all those who contributed to the discussion, whether from the front or through questions from the floor; to our Chairman for skilfully steering us through the day and keeping us to time and for the excellent organisation by all the ‘behind the scenes’ workers.

*Alun Morinan
Research Fellow, Institute of Psychiatry,
King’s College and SLaM NHS Trust.*

CiS Committee Chair

We are delighted to announce that Prof Keith Fox has agreed to become Chair of CiS, in Sept 2007. Keith is a biochemist at Southampton University, is much involved in the life and ministry of Highfields Church, and very active in the CiS South Central group (see interview, page 5). Keith has been coopted onto the committee for the period between now and next September.

CiS Northern Conference 2007

Big Faith, Big Science - Big Issue: Communication

Sat 10th March 2007
10am - 5pm

St Nicholas’ Church, Durham

Speakers include:

Andrew Griffiths – Security & surveillance
Ian Hore-Lacy - Nuclear Energy

Booking form and flyer enclosed.

Joint CiS-American Scientific Affiliation Conference 2007

New Frontiers in Science and Faith

Pollock Halls, Edinburgh University,

Fri 3rd-Sun 5th August 2007

(Excursions on Thurs 2nd)

Call for papers and flyer enclosed.

Contact Ruth Bancewicz for more flyers, if required.
More details, when available, at www.cis.org.uk

Education

As I sit in the traffic jam in my G-Wiz electric car, it uses no fuel and sits quietly until the cars move. It seems crazy to me to look at the cars around all pumping out CO₂ to no benefit as they sit still. Even when I move, my G-Wiz is emissions free because I recharge it using 100% renewable electricity. Then they have to carry heavy gearboxes (electric engines have a good torque over a large range so don't need to use gears), silencers (my G-Wiz is very quiet) and starter motors (an internal combustion engine needs an electric motor and battery to start it). Think of the millions of tons of metal that are being carried about unnecessarily (perhaps if you are a steel company owner you'd rather not think about it).

You can drive an electric car indoors if the doors were big enough because it doesn't emit any toxic gases, so even garages are going to change. Funnily enough I don't miss those trips to the petrol station, the smell of the petrol or the queues at the till. It is only the work of a moment to plug my G-Wiz in at the end of the day to an ordinary three-pin socket. And when it's a cold morning I use the remote key from the house to warm up the interior off the mains, so it's defrosted and snug when I get in.

So what's the downside? Well mine is the first model and it slows down to 20mph on steep hills, but otherwise is quite nippy enough. Another thing is that because of the range of 30-40 miles you have to keep an eye on the charge meter. The newer one (G-Wiz AC) has more punch and goes a bit further. I advertise my favourite Christian conservation charity A Rocha on the back and get lots of smiles and questions when I'm out in it. I know a bike would be even more eco-friendly, but hey – it's raining and I have a heavy medical bag to carry on the rounds to visit my patients, but on the other hand as I'm sitting in a traffic jam....

There are now more than 500 electric cars in London. Most of them are the Reva G-Wiz (www.goinggreen.co.uk). The G-Wiz is an electric car made in India which, when powered by renewable electricity, is 100% emission free and consumes just one quarter of the energy of the average petrol car. The car only costs £1.64 per day to run (that's less than the bus), road tax is free, and insurance is available at 10% cheaper than the lowest insurance bracket.

Dr Graham McAll, Sheffield GP

[More details about vehicles will be posted on the Education page, www.cis.org.uk]

John Ling discusses the King's School, Canterbury website development with Malcolm Morgan, a sixth former at King's:

www.youngscientists.co.uk

Could you give a brief description of the website?

Young Scientists is an online journal targeted specifically at school-aged students. All the content is written and managed by students. The website has a range of different articles ranging from "quick reads" to full essays. There are also reviews, news nibbles (a digest of the month's science news), forums, games, and themed articles (this issue's theme was What If...?).

How would you describe the main innovative characteristics of this website?

As far as we are aware, this is the only site of its kind. We have found several sites targeted at our age range, but this is the only one that allows content by students. This allows us to focus on what we are interested in rather than having it dictated to us. We are also working on our forum to encourage scientific debate on current issues, once again this will be student led so students will be able to discuss the issues that concern them. We have also just added translation features to our website to encourage international participation.

What benefit does the website bring to the student interested in science?

With time, we will have built up an enormous bank of articles meaning a student will be able to read on any topic he/she cares for. They will also have the chance to share their own work, and, from experience, having published work on the Internet is great for interviews for University and work.

King's School Canterbury has traditionally been strongly linked to the Church of England - in what ways, if any, has the website been used to explore science and Christian expression?

We are keen to encourage people to discuss ethical issues; we already have some articles on such matters, *What if science never interfered with ethics, God and the constants of nature*, etc. Students are free to express their views so long as they are not offensive, and Christian expression is certainly part of this freedom; however we encourage people of all faiths to participate and share their views in friendly discussion and debate.

Details of the full interview will be posted on the CiS Education page, www.cis.org.uk

Charitable status

Christians in Science is now registered at Companies House as a Company Limited by Guarantee. This is the penultimate step in our becoming a registered charity. The final step is approval by the Charity Commission. This is taking longer than originally hoped because, for an organisation that has been in existence for several years before applying for charitable status, much more information is required than for new organisations that seek charitable status from the very start. However, I hope to be able to report in the next edition of Précis that we have been granted charitable status.

John Bryant, CiS Chair

'Reading Genesis After Darwin'

A series of public lectures from Nov 2006-May 2007, and a day conference, will be held in Durham University as part of the new Institute of Advanced Studies.

Lectures in January, 7.30—9.00 pm:

Wed 17th, Prof John Rogerson (Sheffield), 'What Difference did Darwin Make? Genesis in Nineteenth Century Biblical Interpretation'.

Thurs 25th, Prof Andrew Louth (Durham), 'The interpretation of the six days of creation in the Greek Fathers'.

Day conference, Wed 21st Feb 2007, Leech Hall, St John's College.

Details of conference and future lectures from: Stephen Barton, s.c.barton@durham.ac.uk, or David Wilkinson, david.wilkinson@durham.ac.uk

The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion, Cambridge

Excellent multimedia resources

All the lectures at Faraday Institute events are recorded and available in audio or video format, to view online (compressed video), download (audio as mp3), or to buy as DVD/audio CD by mail order via the website.

Future courses - book now to avoid disappointment

Science & Religion in Schools, 30th March – 1st April

God and Physics, 18th – 20th May.

Summer courses, 20th July – 2nd August.

God and Biology, 14th – 16th Sept.

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

Buy books and DVDs online at www.lifesway.net

Paul Marston, CiS member and co-author with Roger Forster of the excellent book "Reason, Science & Faith", has set up online selling of a number of useful Christian resources. Highlights include the helpful film "Encounters" (£3), and the excellent short book "Christianity, Evidence and Truth" by Paul Marston and Roger Forster, for only £5 (156pp).

CiS publications

Does evolution have any religious significance?

Some Christians think that accepting evolution is incompatible with their faith. Some atheists think that any religious faith is incompatible with evolution. This 32-page A5 booklet, suggests otherwise: "as a biological theory [evolution] can readily be accommodated within a robust version of Christian theism". After explaining the meaning of biological evolution, the author deals with the claim that evolution is intrinsically atheistic; "evolution depends on chance"; the origin of life; the origin of species; the origin of humankind; and the problem of pain, suffering, death and the fall. This booklet (recently re-issued in a slightly revised form) will be invaluable to those wanting an authoritative statement from a position which is orthodox in both science and theology.

John Bausor, Publications Secretary

Denis R Alexander, Does evolution have any religious significance?, Christians in Science 2006 (1998), £1.00 (postage £0.30 for single copy).

Other new publications available from CiS:

"*Genesis is literal history*", a DVD of a live debate at Penketh High School, Warrington between Mr John Mackay (International Director of Creation Research) and Dr Paul Marston (University Lecturer and Lay Minister). Published by Scibel 2006. 110 minutes. £3.00.

The Language of God: A scientist presents evidence for belief, Francis Collins, Simon and Schuster 2006, 295pp, £18.

Coming to peace with science, Darrel Falk, IVP (USA) 2004, 235pp, £12.

Matthias Media - The Briefing, special issue:

"*The Design of Genesis*", Oct 2006, 32pp, £1.20.

All obtainable from the Publications Secretary, CiS, 16 Walter Road, Wokingham RG41 3JA, details and forms at www.cis.org.uk.

Submissions for next PréCiS

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

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



An interview with Keith Fox

Keith Fox is Professor of Biochemistry at Southampton University, where he leads research on sequence specific recognition of DNA by small molecules, oligonucleotides and proteins, and is Executive Editor of the journal *Nucleic Acids Research*. He is a lay reader at Highfield Church, Southampton, and has been recently appointed to the CiS committee with a view to becoming chair in September 2007 (see note on page 2).

What have you been doing until now?

As an undergrad at Cambridge I moved from physics to chemistry to biochemistry – a decision that seems to have done no harm! I did my PhD in the pharmacology department in Cambridge, and spent six years there as a postdoc. From there I moved to a lectureship in pharmacology at Southampton University. After several rounds of restructuring in the University, and with five years as a Lister Institute research fellow, I gradually moved up the ranks to become Professor of Biochemistry.

What do you do for fun?

I'm into distance running, which helps to relax the mind, and like to walk when I can – although there are no real hills near Southampton... and I read a huge amount. I am also heavily involved in my local church, where I am a lay reader.

Who have been the most important role models in your life?

Scientifically the person with the biggest influence in my life was my school chemistry teacher. I gained a scholarship to the local grammar school, but my academic career was fairly chequered until a chemistry teacher won my respect and enthusiasm in class. Within a term I moved from the bottom to the top of the class, and academically things began to improve - which shows just how much one person can influence your life. The scientist that I respect most is Fred Sanger – to me as a student he came across as having a huge intellect and a gentle approach to life. Many different Christians have been an influence over the years: youth leaders, colleagues and others have helped me, and I have had the privilege of working with some excellent vicars during my time as a lay reader.

What challenges have you come across as a Christian and a scientist?

I have not come across any great moral challenges in my studies on the physical chemistry of DNA, but I still find the way that people tackle the issue of origins a challenge - I don't see any

contradiction between the Bible and science. I do enjoy the debate, but I find the Christian and non-Christian views at the extreme ends of the spectrum frustrating - and often Christians are the most set in their ways.

How has your faith helped you as a scientist, or vice versa?

I think the two run in parallel – truth and integrity are important to both, and looking at and verifying evidence, and trusting it. Truthfulness in science is paramount, and the vast majority of scientists tell the truth, regardless of their religion – but for Christians this is very important.

What science-faith books have you found most helpful?

I read a lot of science-faith books, so I can't think of any one in particular that was the most helpful – the latest book that I read and liked was Francis Collins' "The Language of God", which was very good. Early on, I remember reading Denis Alexander's first book in the 1970s, "Beyond Science". There are many books by Christians at the science-faith interface, and it's good to be aware of what is out there.

Why is CiS so important?

It's important as a resource for Christians who are scientists, to be able to meet people in the same discipline, and to be thinking together. It should have an important role in developing a national voice, and be a place for different organisations to turn to when they have questions. I'm also very keen on showing that science and Christianity can coexist without conflict, and getting that strong apologetic message out there.

If you weren't a biochemist what would you be?

I am a lay reader in the Anglican church, and I have thought several times during times of departmental restructuring at the University about entering full-time ministry - but I always come back to knowing that I'm called to practice and teach as a scientist.

News from CiS local groups

Cambridge

Stem cells – playing God again?
6th March 2007

Howard Building, Downing College.

A debate between Sir Brian Heap (Cambridge, formerly Foreign Secretary of the Royal Society) and Dr Bill Hurlbut (Stanford, advisor on bioethics to the US President), chaired by Baroness Onora O'Neill.

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

Central South

On 9th Nov Prof Alister McGrath gave a lecture entitled '*Dawkins' God - Genes, Memes and the Meaning of Life*'. Over 700 people attended and heard a courteous but rigorous explanation of the shortcomings of Richard Dawkins' ideas on Theology. See <http://www.cis.org.uk/centralsouth/> for audio (MP3) and slides (pdf).

Our next event will be a seminar on bioethics in on 11 January to be led by Prof John Bryant. Details to follow. For more information e-mail Rob.Heather@gmail.com.

Durham



Clare Parkinson (President), Graham Dowling (Secretary) and Joel Davis (Treasurer)

After hearing a talk by Ruth Bancewicz at the Northern Conference this year, Joel and I decided it would be a really good idea to set up a Durham local group that was also a University Society. We roped in Graham to be a secretary and after many talks with Ruth, the CU and the Students' Union, we managed to get the group up and running. Our main aim is to dispel the myth that there is a conflict between science and religion by holding talks featuring scientists who are Christians. We've been amazed by the amount of interest, and our mailing list currently has over 150 people on it!

The launch event: 'God, the Multiverse and Everything' with Rev. Dr. Rodney Holder was very well attended, with an impressive question and answer session afterwards, and lots of positive feedback. We've found that the format of

talk, questions, and then trip to the pub is quite popular with the students...

Our next event is: 'Evolution: Intelligent and Designed?' with Dr. Denis Alexander (Thursday 30th November, 7.30pm, CG85)

We'd like to say a huge thank you to all the CiS people who have helped us so far. Prayer that people will continue to be enthusiastic and that everything runs smoothly would be very much appreciated!

Ireland

About twenty five members and friends attended the first public meeting of the Irish Branch of Christians in Science at All Souls' Church, Belfast, on 30th Oct. Graeme Finlay of the University of Auckland spoke on *Human Genetics and the Image of God*.

For further information on the Irish Branch and its activities please contact either Scott Peddie (s.peddie@pattersonpeddie.com) or Martin Brown (martin.oldcross@btinternet.com).

Nottingham

A discussion group meets on the first Tuesday of even numbered months. Next meeting is on Tuesday 5th Dec on Consciousness.

Contact Geoff Bagley on 0115 925 8801 or email gbagley@ntlworld.com for more details.

Oxford

Friday 9th February 2007, 7.30-9.30 pm,
St Andrew's Church, Linton Road

Revd Margot Hodson, chaplain of Jesus College and a director of the John Ray Initiative, and Dr Martin Hodson, Principal Lecturer in Environmental Biology at Oxford Brookes University, will speak on "*Climate Change – a theological and practical response*"

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

South West

On Nov 17th, the CiS South West group met at Plymouth University. The BBC had kindly sent a copy of the recent debate between Alistair McGrath and Richard Dawkins shown recently on the Heaven and Earth Show, which we watched before having a brief discussion.

The next meeting is on Jan 26th at the University of Plymouth Chaplaincy, 12.30-1.30pm. Those who have been able to attend the Faraday Institute courses in Cambridge will be feeding back what they have learned. For further details email matfr@mba.ac.uk