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## STUDENT CONFERENCE REPORT

In February this year, CiS students gathered at the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity for the Annual Student Conference, this year titled "Big Questions, Big Picture". Student Naomi Brehm takes us through the day...

**"I said, 'Let days speak, and many years teach wisdom.'**

**But it is the spirit in man, the breath of the Almighty, that makes him understand."**

**Job 32:7-8**

It is easy to assume that wisdom is proportional to age and knowledge to the number of years lived, and therefore to leave the big questions to the professors, doctors and famous theologians. It is also easy to believe that age puts a limit on understanding, and to use the word 'just' before describing yourself as a student. But, on Saturday 21st February, a group of around 40 students gathered at the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity to prove this wrong. We learnt, discussed and explored the 'Big Questions' and trusted the breath of the Almighty to help us see the 'Big Picture'.

This exciting day kicked off with Dr Gavin Merrifield's brilliant lecture on 'The Big Bang: God and Cosmology'. Dr Merrifield, from the University of Glasgow, discussed biblical cosmology and its comparison to other religions, and gave a brief explanation of the Big Bang theory and Lemaitre's study of red shift. He discussed possible future challenges to theology such as dark matter, supersymmetry and astrobiology, challenging us to "tell the Christian worldview in a way that is both theologically robust and yet scientifically flexible."

Next, we had the excellent Paul Roberts, a PhD student from Oxford. Last summer, Paul

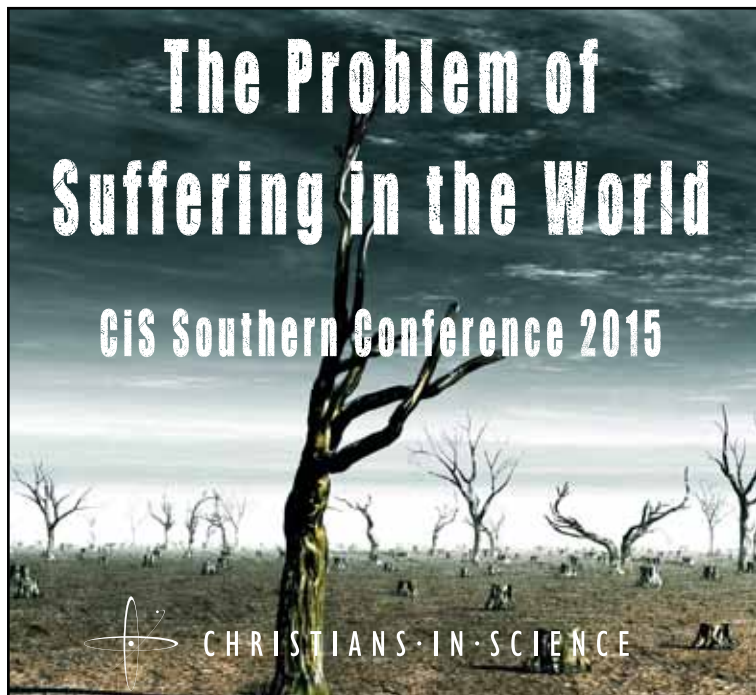
won the CiS Student Essay Competition with his essay, 'How does God Interact with the World?' (published in PréCiS Spring Edition, 75) and we had the privilege of hearing him explain the details of this topic in person. He began by explaining how theism is the best explanation of our world (that God both creates and interacts with his creation), and went on to talk about the nature of God's providence; how he sustains the world, causes action and fulfils his purpose. Paul bravely explored the concept of miracles from a scientific viewpoint and, after considering parts of mechanics and quantum physics, concluded that God doesn't have to break his scientific laws in order to work.

Coffee time! We took a short break to grab a drink, network and chat to other like-minded students. It was a great opportunity to make connections, discuss the morning's lectures and get to know each other better.

After the break, Dr Chris Willmott from the University of Leicester gave an engaging lecture on 'Christians, Science and Bioethics'. He defined







Saturday 24th October, 2015  
The Kings Centre,  
Oxford, OX2 0ES

#### TOPICS INCLUDE:

Philosophical Overview - Vince Vitale  
Suffering in the Biological World -  
Chris Southgate  
Natural Disasters - Bob White  
The Problem of Disease - John Wyatt

More details will follow later in the year  
[www.cis.org.uk/conferences](http://www.cis.org.uk/conferences)

#### BREAKING NEWS

We are delighted to announce that we have appointed a **new Executive Officer**: Mary Browett will be joining us to work full time for CiS, based in Exeter, and will be starting the role at the beginning of July.

#### INTERVIEW WITH HUGH REYNOLDS

Dr Hugh Reynolds has been a fantastic Treasurer as part of the CiS committee for coming up to 10 years. As he looks to step down from this role and hand it over to a new person, we talked to him about his own science-faith journey, his time on the committee, and the future of CiS.

#### What has your science-faith journey looked like?

In my schooldays I was quite a keen Christian – or, rather, chapel-goer. I never had serious doubts about the key historical facts – the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus and his promised return. It was only when I arrived at university and studied the Bible with some fine Christians that, very reluctantly and slowly, I came to realise what I was lacking. I had not appreciated that, to be Lord of all, Christ had to be my own Lord and that I had to commit my life to him. I am so grateful to God for his patience with me, as well as for the patience of my Christian fellow-students (one of whom, John Bryant, was a recent Chair of CiS). I took to chemistry and physics enthusiastically at age 13, but did not study any biology at school. At university I did a subsidiary course in biochemistry and was soon

hooked. This happened to coincide with when I trusted in Christ, and I thought it was wonderful to be able to see what God had made, and how it functioned. I still do – with the added privilege of having been paid to do it all my working life, until I retired six years ago.

#### How long have you been involved with CiS?

Forty-something years, on and off. In Edinburgh there was a group of what was then called the Research Scientists Christian Fellowship (RSCF), where as a postgraduate student I heard interesting and challenging talks from visitors, including Donald MacKay. Bennet McInnes hosted an accessible and friendly study group. Then after four years lecturing in Africa and two as a post-doc in Oxford we moved to the London area and I have been able to attend the annual day-conferences regularly ever since, as well as occasional residential conferences.

#### What has your role as treasurer involved?

It involves overseeing the finances of CiS under the direction of the Committee, and contributing advice when needed. The Committee and now the Trustees (of whom I am one) receive short financial updates at each meeting. Obviously, there are bills to pay, expenses to reimburse, and bank accounts to manage. The Membership Secretary has the big task of handling the subscriptions and most of the donations, while conference organisers handle most of the conference-associated finances. The treasurer's role has become progressively more diverse (and interesting) – payroll for employees, insurance, Company and Charity financial requirements for reporting and accounts,



and the requirements of major grant-giving bodies. So the role, overall, has steadily grown.

**What will the role of the treasurer look like going forward, in the light of the new Executive Officer role?**

A good question! This is very much still being worked out, and is a matter for prayer and wisdom as it will be a developing and ongoing process. The EO will be able to do many of the more regular and predictable tasks, leaving the treasurer with time and space for others. I anticipate that the EO will be able to streamline the administration as a whole, and make it more efficient and effective.

**What have you most enjoyed/ got out of being on the CiS Committee, and of being treasurer?**

Undoubtedly, working with others towards a worthwhile and important set of goals – I found this very satisfying, and humbling. I see at first hand the very generous donations made by CiS members, and also am made aware of the time and effort put in by many people. I have also appreciated being exposed to ideas and people I might otherwise not have come across. And I keep receiving thanks and expressions of appreciation way beyond what I deserve!

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

I have personally never had any real challenges in terms of conflict between science and Christianity, and my work involved few things that I perceived as presenting ethical dilemmas. One regular challenge was to be honest about my results, and not to cut corners or pretend that they were better than they were. This almost always involved temptations within myself, but once or twice (no more), in over 40 years, it involved the expectations of my supervisor. Another pressure, at one stage (when I had a young family), was to work excessive hours (all too common in science).

**What science-faith resources have you found most helpful/ useful/ inspiring?**

Denis Alexander's "Rebuilding the Matrix" was very helpful for giving me an overview of science history and cohesiveness from a Christian perspective. Other favourites, which are good for helping other people, are Ernest Lucas's "Can we believe Genesis today?", David Wilkinson's "The message of creation" and Francis Collins's "The language of God". And if I may mention inspiring people: some have inspired me not just by their knowledge and faith, but also by their humility and godliness: two such were Donald MacKay and Oliver Barclay.

**Where would you like to see CiS in ten years' time?**

In spite of all our work and development in the last ten years, CiS is still relatively unknown among scientists, among Christians and the UK churches in general, and even among scientist-Christians. I would like to see this change! I would like to see many churches equipped with CiS resources that are regularly used in their teaching and evangelism. I would like to see many more speakers raised up and equipped to speak (on invitation) to church, student and school groups. At present we rely heavily on some fine speakers but there are too few of them. I would like to see our Biblical basis more to the fore, and built on, as there are movements that have gained influence in recent years that need to be challenged, albeit with humility and godliness.

**What do you see yourself doing when you are able to step down from being treasurer?**

Spend less time alone with the computer and more with my wife! I would like to get involved more directly in the science-faith debate, as while being treasurer I have consciously avoided this in order to concentrate on my support role, leaving the front line to those better able to serve there.

**CIS VOLUNTEER VACANCY - HONORARY TREASURER**

Hugh Reynolds has overseen the finances of CiS for several years now and would like to pass this role on to another person. The work of the treasurer, for which a modest honorarium is offered, will now be supported by the Executive Officer who will perform the day-to-day aspects of financial administration. If you would like to be considered for this important role, please contact Hugh in the first instance to discuss what it involves at [treasurer@cis.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@cis.org.uk)

## LOCAL GROUP NEWS

If you live somewhere that does not have a CiS local group but you wish it did, please get in touch with the Development Officer, (emily@cis.org.uk) about starting up a new group in your area. Full event details are available at [www.cis.org.uk/events](http://www.cis.org.uk/events)

### ABERDEEN

A discussion group runs in Aberdeen. If you would like details of meetings please contact David Ely at [aberdeenlocalgroup@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:aberdeenlocalgroup@yahoo.co.uk).

### ABERGAVENTNY

If you would like to get involved with the discussion group in Abergavenny, please contact Dr Huw Morgan at [jhcmorgan@gmail.com](mailto:jhcmorgan@gmail.com).

### BIRMINGHAM

It is coming to the end of the academic year so there are no more events planned in Birmingham until the autumn term. If you would like details of future happenings in Birmingham please e-mail [cis@guild.bham.ac.uk](mailto:cis@guild.bham.ac.uk) or join the Birmingham CiS Facebook group [www.facebook.com/groups/cisbirmingham](http://www.facebook.com/groups/cisbirmingham)

### BRISTOL

On Thursday 4th June, Ernest Lucas joined the Bristol group to speak on the Theology of Origins. The next event will be on Weds 4th November at the Wills Great Hall, Clifton, when Prof Alister McGrath will conclude their Origins series, speaking on 'Science, Faith, and God: Richard Dawkins vs C S Lewis on the Meaning of Life'. Contact Tina Biggs for more information ([cmbiggs@googlemail.com](mailto:cmbiggs@googlemail.com))

### CAMBRIDGE

For details of upcoming events in Cambridge please go to [www.st-edmunds.cam.ac.uk/faraday/Lectures.php](http://www.st-edmunds.cam.ac.uk/faraday/Lectures.php).

### CENTRAL SOUTH

If you would like more information about the group please go to our page on the CiS website, or e-mail Peter May on [petergeorgemay@gmail.com](mailto:petergeorgemay@gmail.com)

### DUNDEE

For information about the Dundee group, please email [christiansinsciencedundee@gmail.com](mailto:christiansinsciencedundee@gmail.com).

### DURHAM

Contact Alan Roberts ([a.w.roberts@durham.ac.uk](mailto:a.w.roberts@durham.ac.uk)) for information about future events in Durham.

### EDINBURGH

If you would like more details about the group, please email Gavin Merrifield ([g.d.merrifield@gmail.com](mailto:g.d.merrifield@gmail.com))

### GLASGOW

A discussion was held at the Glasgow group this term about the ethics of healthcare rationing. For details of future events in Glasgow please contact Prof Paul Younger on [paul.younger@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:paul.younger@glasgow.ac.uk)

### HARROW

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

### IPSWICH

For information about future events in Ipswich please contact Dr John Ling ([jjling@btopenworld.com](mailto:jjling@btopenworld.com)).

### IRELAND

The 2015 Walton Lecture, entitled 'Dealing with Darwin: Place, Politics and Polemics in Christian Engagements with Evolution', was held in April, given by Prof. David Livingstone of the School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology, Queen's University, Belfast. Details about the upcoming events in Ireland can be found at [www.cis.org.uk/ireland](http://www.cis.org.uk/ireland)

### LEEDS

On Wednesday May 20th the Leeds group were visited by Elaine Storkey from Tearfund. The topic of her talk was "God's Creation - Our Responsibility". She gave a very powerful talk and people went away feeling greatly challenged. The next meeting will be in September/October, so keep watch for further notices. Further details of meetings from John Lockwood at [jglockwood1@me.com](mailto:jglockwood1@me.com)

### LIVERPOOL

The Liverpool group meet regularly at Saint Philip Neri, Catherine Street. Contact Neville Cobbe for more information ([Neville.cobbe@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:Neville.cobbe@liverpool.ac.uk)).

### LONDON

For more details about the group contact Anna Pearson on [cins.london@gmail.com](mailto:cins.london@gmail.com). Leadership of the group will be taken on by Benjamin Chang in the Autumn term.

### MANCHESTER

The Manchester group successfully co-hosted the CiS Northern Conference during April with the Nazarene Theological College. A full report will follow in a later edition of PreCiS. Please contact the secretary, Alma Budd

on [sec.cismanchester@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sec.cismanchester@yahoo.co.uk) if you would like more details about the Manchester group, or to be added onto the mailing list.

### **NORWICH**

On Mon 20th July Science and Faith Norfolk will welcome Dr Peter Bussey to speak on 'Mystery and ignorance: the boundary of science' at Trinity Meeting Place, Holy Trinity Church, Norwich. They will also be joined by Dr Hilary Marlow on Mon 21st Sep speaking on 'Conflict or Harmony? Historical Perspectives on Science and Religion' at Norwich Cathedral. Please contact [info@cis.norwich.org.uk](mailto:info@cis.norwich.org.uk) for details about upcoming events in the Norwich area.

### **NOTTINGHAM**

The Nottingham group meets regularly for discussion about science - faith topics. Please contact Geoff Bagley ([geoffbagley@me.com](mailto:geoffbagley@me.com)) if you would like further information.

### **OXFORD**

For information about the Oxford local group, contact Diana Briggs at [diana.briggs@wolfson.oxon.org](mailto:diana.briggs@wolfson.oxon.org).

### **READING**

The Reading group meets bimonthly in central Reading. Contact Dave Law for details on [dave@readingatwork.org](mailto:dave@readingatwork.org).

### **ROYAL HOLLOWAY**

This term the RH group has been running "The God Question" series as an informal discussion group. For more information from the group at Royal Holloway, or to be added to their mailing list, please contact Oliver Edy on [Oliver.Edy.2012@live.rhul.ac.uk](mailto:Oliver.Edy.2012@live.rhul.ac.uk)

### **SHEFFIELD**

The Sheffield CiS group meets regularly for prayer and discussion during the university term. For details about happenings in the Sheffield area or to be added to our mailing list please e-mail [shefuni.cisc@gmail.com](mailto:shefuni.cisc@gmail.com), join our Facebook group [www.facebook.com/groups/shefuni.cisc/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/shefuni.cisc/) or see their website <http://sheffieldchristiansinscience.wordpress.com>

### **SOUTH WEST**

If you would like details about future events in the South West, please contact Prof. David Huntley ([dhuntley@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:dhuntley@plymouth.ac.uk)).

### **ST ANDREWS**

This term St Andrews has hosted Dr Rowan Williams on 'What is Consciousness?' For more info about the undergraduate group at St Andrews, please contact Dr Andrew Torrance ([abt3@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:abt3@st-andrews.ac.uk)), Joshua Sharp ([jas29@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:jas29@st-andrews.ac.uk)) or Laura McCullagh ([lsm4@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:lsm4@st-andrews.ac.uk)). For more information about the postgraduate group, please contact Dr Rebecca Goss ([rjmg@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:rjmg@st-andrews.ac.uk)).

### **SURREY**

The Surrey CiS group met at Christ Church, Purley, on June 9th with Professor John Wyatt, Professor of Perinatology and Ethics, UCH, London, speaking on 'What is a Person? Insights from Neuroscience, Artificial Intelligence & Christianity.' For more details about future events in the Surrey area please contact Joy Perkins at [joyeperkins@googlemail.com](mailto:joyeperkins@googlemail.com).

### **THREE COUNTIES BORDERS**

The newly established Three Counties Borders group is based in Camberley on the border between Surrey, Hampshire and Berkshire. Their inaugural meeting will be held on Wed 4th Nov at St Peters Church, Frimley, where they will welcome Dr Rodney Holder who will speak on 'Big Bang, Big God: a Universe Designed for Life?' Please contact John Russell for more info on [chynoweth.jw@gmail.com](mailto:chynoweth.jw@gmail.com).

### **TYNESIDE & NORTHUMBERLAND**

For information from the group in the Newcastle area, please contact Bill Clegg at [bill.clegg@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:bill.clegg@ncl.ac.uk).

### **WEST MIDLANDS**

While this is not a CiS event, CiS members may be interested in the environmental conference that Godfrey Armitage is co-organising at Coventry Cathedral in September. For details, please go to [www.reconcilingawoundedplanet.com](http://www.reconcilingawoundedplanet.com). The West Midlands Group meets infrequently and people should contact Godfrey Armitage if they are local and interested at [g.n.armitage@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:g.n.armitage@warwick.ac.uk)

### **WORCESTER**

More details can be found at the website <http://bibleandscienceworcester.org.uk/> or contact Dr Kim Stansfield at [kimestansfield@gmail.com](mailto:kimestansfield@gmail.com).