

## Speaker Abstract and Bios - Autumn 2023



### ***Keith R. Fox - Evolution – Friend or Foe of Faith?***

#### **Abstract**

Mention of the word 'evolution' can provoke antagonistic responses from both Christians and non-Christians. Some scientists use the mechanism of evolution to argue that this removes any need for God. As Richard Dawkins wrote, "Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist". Others are genuinely surprised to find Christians who accept the basic facts of evolution. In contrast some Christians consider that this is contrary to their interpretation of scripture and invoke various forms of 'creationism', or variously overlay evolution with concepts of 'Intelligent Design'. Anyone defending a creator God who has worked through evolutionary processes can be 'piggy-in-the-middle' and questioned from both sides. How then can we respond with gracious integrity? I will also consider some of the questions that are posed by evolution. Why is it so wasteful and full of suffering and death? How does God act in biology? Where do humans, made in the image of God fit?

#### **Biography**

Keith Fox is Emeritus Professor of Biochemistry at Southampton University.

Professor Keith Fox studied Natural Sciences in Cambridge, specialising in Biochemistry and completed a PhD in the Department of Pharmacology in 1980. He moved to Southampton in 1987 as a lecturer in Biochemistry and Pharmacology and became Professor of Biochemistry in 2000. His research interests concern DNA structure and its recognition, and his scientific work has been published in over 200 papers and articles. He was Senior Executive Editor of *Nucleic Acids Research* from 2008-2021. He is a former chairman and trustee of *Christians in Science* and is Editor of *Science & Christian Belief*. He was Associate Director and the director of The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge and is a licensed lay minister (Reader) in the Church of England. His book with Alexander Massmann *Modifying Our Genes: Theology, Science and "Playing God"* was published in March 2021.



### ***Dr Sharon Dirckx - Does neuroscience undermine belief in God?]***

#### **Abstract**

Imaging studies over the last few decades have shown brain networks to be highly active in different kinds of religious endeavour. How do we make sense of data from this kind of research known as Neurotheology? Does it undermine Christian belief or not necessarily? What insights do we gain into the human person?

#### **Biography**

Sharon Dirckx is an independent speaker and author and an adjunct lecturer at OCCA, The Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics

Sharon Dirckx has a PhD in brain imaging from the University of Cambridge and has held research positions in the UK and USA. She speaks and lectures on topics such as science and theology, 'mind and soul', human identity and the problem of evil. She has also appeared on several BBC programmes in the UK including Radio 2 *Good Morning Sunday* and Radio 4 *Beyond Belief*. Sharon is author of an award-winning book on suffering, entitled *Why?: Looking at God, evil and personal suffering* (2013), and a book on human consciousness and identity, entitled, *Am I just my brain?* (2019). Her new book on natural disasters, entitled *Broken Planet*, was released in February 2023.



### **Rev Dr Lucas Mix - *The Book of Nature: What science can tell us about God***

#### **Abstract**

Science has long been an important part of Christian faith, as we learn about the Creator through the Creation. But how does science fit with reason and revelation? Lucas will talk about the joys (and perils) of natural theology and his own journey as a Christian biologist.

#### **Biography**

The Revd Dr Lucas Mix, SOSc is Project Manager and Co-Director of Equipping Christian Leadership in an Age of Science. ECLAS connects Christian leaders with world-leading science and scientists to work for a better world. ECLAS holds conferences for leaders, conducts research into how they use science, provides grants for science in congregations and seminaries, and science resourcing for policy makers.

Lucas has a PhD in biology from Harvard University and consults for NASA on interdisciplinary communication in the search for life beyond Earth. He is also a priest in the Episcopal Church, USA, where he has worked as an inner-city pastor and college chaplain. In addition to facilitation work with ECLAS and NASA, he studies definitions of life at the intersection of biology, philosophy and theology. You can find out more about him and his work on his blog.



### **Prof Chris Wild - *Applying Biblical Principles to a Genetic Age***

#### **Abstract**

Genetic advances are permeating many and varied areas of life. These include topics such as genetic selection of human embryos, germline genome editing, creation of synthetic human embryos, gene editing of crops to combat climate change or for control of pests, national genetic databases in health and criminal justice systems, patenting genetically-modified organisms and so much more. In the face of these challenges, it is important to apply a biblical framework that allows their consideration in a structured manner. This presentation will summarise how genetic advances are changing our world irreversibly and look at how the Christian faith, rooted in scripture, has a valid role to play in shaping the future.

## Biography

Chris Wild is Emeritus Director, World Health Organization International Agency for Research on Cancer, IARC.

Chris Wild obtained his PhD in Oncology at the University of Manchester in 1984. He has worked for IARC, WHO from 1984-1996 with one year at the Netherlands Cancer Institute in 1986-87. He was Professor of Molecular Epidemiology, School of Medicine, University of Leeds (1996-2008) and Director of IARC, WHO (2009-2018). His research has centred on cancer etiology and prevention, mostly focused on low and middle- income countries and he was responsible for developing the concept of the "exposome" to complement the genome.



## Dr Nathan James - *Oliver Barclay Lecture: A Higher Calling? Science as a Christian Vocation*

### Abstract

During the Scientific Revolution, Christians debated the merits of scientific research – whether science is a good idea and how it should be done. Many argued that science is a God-honouring profession and uniquely special because, like priests, we have the privilege of receiving divine secrets and revealing those secrets to the wider public. In this way, science represents a higher calling. Four hundred years later we find ourselves in a very different world. Gone are the days of the gentleman scientist funded by his inherited wealth. Modern science is cut-throat, poorly paid, and still relatively inaccessible for women, the working class, and many others. Short-term contracts and publish-or-perish are the name of the game. Is science still a higher calling? Or is the very idea of a higher calling responsible for the problems of modern science? And how can we approach these problems with Christ as our focus?

## Biography

Nathan James is a postdoctoral scientist at the MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology and hold the Mays Wild Research Fellowship at Downing College, University of Cambridge.

Nathan James studied Natural Sciences and completed his Ph.D in Biological Sciences at Cambridge University. He has worked at the Departments of Biochemistry in the University of Oxford and Cambridge and the MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology. He has been very active in science outreach and educational activities. In his spare time, he is researching Francis Bacon and the interaction of science and religion in early-modern Europe.