



PreCiS

Winter 2024

Bringing Christian faith and science
together

Issue no. 106

Anyone for CAKE?
2023 Winning Student Essay
Online - Oliver Barclay Lecture
Local Group News

**Nathan was presented his certificate by CiS
President Prof Bob White.**
(Nathan with his daughter and Bob in Cambridge)



Mary Browett, Executive Officer - maryb.cis@outlook.com

Gavin Merrifield, General Secretary - secretary@cis.org.uk

Correspondence Address: 78 Ashton Road, Hyde Cheshire SK14 4RN



Prof Meric Srokosz chatting with visitors to the CiS stand

Anyone for CAKE???

CiS holds fortnightly online meetings, attended by a number of UK Christian groups dealing with science. If we could meet in person it would be chatting over a “cuppa and cake”, but with the wonders of technology we meet online as we are spread across the UK. We chat and catch up to support and pray for one another.

Matt and Davinder Gardner manned the Faith Experiment stand



One of the events CiS and other CAKE participants attended in 2023 was the Christian Resources Exhibition (CRE) in Birmingham.

We had stands there for Christians in Science, Believing Science and the Faith Experiment. All three stands were busy across the two days and it was great to be there together. Many of the CRE visitors commented very favourably on the three groups working together and the wider CAKE network. Our most popular flyer by far was the flyer for CAKE that was flying off our stands. Really encouraging.

The flyer (shown below) points to a directory page for our different organisations that Gavin has started to set up. If your group is not on it, let Gavin know (secretary@cis.org.uk) and he'll send you an invite to chat over “CAKE”.

<https://www.believingscience.org/cake>



**2023 CiS Student Essay
Competition**

***“Science and Christian
Apologetics – Help or hinderance?”***

First place winner - Sam McKee

**MSc student in Molecular
Biology (Birkbeck) 2nd year, part-
time PhD student in Philosophy of
Science (Manchester Metropolitan
University) 1st year**

(Disclaimer: Please note that the views expressed in this essay are those of the student author and do not necessarily reflect the views of CiS or any of its officers or members.)

Despite all the changes in academic attitudes to the topic of science and religion since New Atheism became a lesser force, the underlying assumptions of the general public remain at large that science is a significant problem for religious belief and remains the opposite of faith. In my work amongst secondary school students and peers of my own generation, the questions and convictions remain the same: science has made belief in God irrational and



Sam McKee and Prof Paul Ewart

incredible. The cultural challenge New Atheism gave at the beginning of this century has left in its wake a rarely challenged stronghold of stereotypes about the way science and Christian belief relate.

For this reason, science will always be a crucial element of Christian apologetics, with questions about it permanently featuring in any apologetics platform. However, in this essay I will state why I consider evidentialist approaches as a hindrance, with the emphasis instead needing to move to a more polemical approach combating the atheist’s foundations for rationality.

I do believe that the era of claiming varieties of scientific evidence support Christianity is dying, if not already dead, and that

instead the marriage of a better Christian epistemology with good philosophy of science will be far more fruitful.

We will continually have to answer questions, but science and Christian apologetics can only be helpful for this climate when framed as part of the bigger story that Christianity gives to the current western sceptic. My basis for this is an example from a century ago.

In the 1920s and 1930s, following the breakthrough discoveries of relativity, Big Bang cosmology, and quantum physics, the quaker astrophysicist Sir Arthur Eddington released several best-selling books which spoke into the confusion the general public had over how to see the new world.

These include *The Nature of the Physical World*, *New Pathways in Science* and *Philosophy of Physical Science*. He also authored the small but powerful *Science and the Unseen World*. During this period of explosive humanism and inter-war anxiety, Eddington's work was

a revolution and saw him lecturing globally on science and the Christian faith.

The BBC's first ever forum on science and religion had Eddington as its key speaker.^[1] Bertrand Russell hated Eddington for his stance and castigated him in *The Scientific Outlook*. He and others mocked clergy for suddenly going quaker in their views on science and religion, and for probably failing to grasp the sophisticated writings of Eddington.^[2]

Ultimately, Russell misunderstood Eddington's claims for evidentialism when there was no such thing.^[3] After Russell wrote *Why I am not a Christian*, Eddington published *Why I Believe in God: Science and Faith as a Scientist sees it*. He has been credited with saving the faith of hundreds of young scientists who were being forced by the fundamentalists to choose between their science and the Bible.^[4]

This is important from my perspective, as we are in a similar cultural moment. At the popular

level, writers such as Steven Pinker and Yuval Noah Harari look to the near and distant future and urge us to be grateful for the historical value of religion but now to leave it behind for a new enlightenment. The new world of artificial intelligence and genetic engineering has no room for religion. A spacefaring species needs no Bible for where it is going. The sheer speed at which technology is moving has left the modern public dizzy and complacent. All they know from their secular prophets is that religion is a thing of the past and science is the future. Just as with the inter-war west, these revolutions leave the masses wondering what it all means.

Eddington's answer was a long way from the evidentialist natural theology of the nineteenth century. He brought an outlook of a unified reality. Science and religion were not competing explanations for what it meant to be human in this universe, but were a synthesis of seeking.^[5] This was not a NOMA, as with Stephen Jay Gould, nor was it

a categorisation of similar but distinct explanations. Eddington spent the last thirteen years of his life working on a *Theory of Everything*.^[6]

His magnificent effort ultimately couldn't account for the newly discovered constants and subatomic particles that followed his death. But it is unsurprising for a mathematical physicist with a quaker foundation to see science and faith not through a formalised system of evidences that could change with new data, but rather through a spirit of seeking and a larger human quest for truth which had at its heart humans that could be no more reduced than the universe they were studying. Not only was everything stranger than previously thought, it was stranger than could ever have been imagined.^[7]

Eddington declared in 1929 that materialism as we know it is dead.^[8] He was correct then and is still correct now. What a confused world needs now is not more questioning of evolution or

evidence from physics, but perhaps something more akin to Eddington's theory of everything. This touches people's lives and imaginations far more than the former. Atheism sells the general public on the idea that everything has been explained by a rigid reductionism; that material reality is the only reality and we are all merely atomic meat machines subject to the determinations of the laws of the nature. Our story was prewritten and is finished.

Eddington's account not only better matched the real world people lived in, but it was a better story that resonated with the wonder people felt when considering the findings of science or encountering nature. Our story about science and religion needs to grow beyond rigid evidential apologetics into a bigger, unified account of wonder felt inside when seen outside.

Perhaps like Eddington did in his time, we could see hundreds or thousands of new young scientists retain their faith and a hungry

general public rethink their beliefs on science and Christianity.

References

[1] Matthew Stanley, *Practical Mystic: Religion, Science and A. S. Eddington* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 214.

[2] Peter J. Bowler, *Reconciling Science and Religion: The Debate in Early Twentieth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 36. See also, Stanley, *Practical Mystic*, 240.

[3] Alan H. Batten, "A Most Rare Vision: Eddington's Thinking on the Relation between Science and Religion." *Journal of Scientific Exploration*. Vol. 9, No. 2 (1995), 233.

[4] A. Vilbert Douglas, *The Life of Arthur Stanley Eddington* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1957), 107.

[5] Arthur Stanley Eddington, *Science and the Unseen World* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1930), 25.

[6] Sir Arthur Eddington, *Fundamental Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1945).

[7] A. S. Eddington, *Space, Time and Gravitation: An Outline of the General Relativity Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920), 200-1.

[8] Eddington, *Science and the Unseen World*, 31.

Oliver Barclay lecture
online for all to view

29th Jan 7pm

Dr Nathan James

A Higher Calling?

Science as a Christian Vocation



Unfortunately Nathan was unable to deliver his talk at the Autumn conference due to a Covid infection.

We will be screening it online and will be available to all. Please check the CiS website for details and the link nearer the date.



CiS Autumn Conference
Oct 2023

*Big Questions in Science and
the Church: Part 2*

The talks are now available on
our YouTube Channel -
[https://www.youtube.com/c/
ChristiansinScience](https://www.youtube.com/c/ChristiansinScience)

Panel discussion at the end of the conference - Prof Keith Fox (on screen)
sitting left to right - Rev Dr Lucas Mix, Dr Chris Wild, Dr Sharon Dirckx
and Prof Paul Ewart (CiS Executive Chair)

Speaker talks:-

- Rev Dr Lucas Mix - *The book of nature: What science can tell us about God*
- Dr Sharon Dirckx - *Does Neuroscience undermine belief in God?*
- Prof Keith Fox - *Evolution, Friend or Foe of Faith?*
- Dr Chris Wild - *Applying Biblical principles to a Genetic age*

LOCAL GROUP NEWS

BRISTOL

26th January, 7.30pm

Professor Neil Scolding – *Stem cells and multiple sclerosis; ethics and science*

Redland Parish Halls, BS6 7HE

For more information contact Andrew Halestrap ahalestrap@hotmail.com

DUNDEE

For details on events please contact christiansinsciencedundee@gmail.com

EDINBURGH

For more information please email cisedinburgh3@gmail.com

HARROW

For more information, please contact Revd Lyndon North - revlnorth@aol.com

IPSWICH

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

IRELAND

For details please contact Dr Neville Cobbe - neville.cobbe@yahoo.co.uk for more information.

MANCHESTER

For more information please contact sec.cismanchester@yahoo.co.uk

NORWICH

For more information, please contact sfnorfolkl@gmail.com

OXFORD

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

SHEFFIELD

Please contact Dr Jonathan Foster – jona.foster@sheffield.ac.uk for more

If you wish to start a Local Group in your area, please get in touch with our Executive Officer, at maryb.cis@outlook.com



information,

SOUTH WEST

For information on events please email cissouthwest@gmail.com

SOUTHAMPTON

For more information, please contact Peter May southampton@cis.org.uk

ST ANDREWS

For more information about the undergraduate group, please contact Dr Andrew Torrance - abt3@st-andrews.ac.uk

For more information about the postgraduate group, please contact Dr Rebecca Goss - rjmg@st-andrews.ac.uk

TYNESIDE & NORTHUMBERLAND

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

WORCESTER

For more information please contact Kim Stansfield on kimestansfield@gmail.com

YORK

For more information please email christiansinsciencyork788@gmail.com