



PreCiS

Summer 2024

Bringing Christian faith and
science together



**CiS focussing on
yesterday, today and
tomorrow**

Issue no 112

**CiS Celebrating 80
years at our Autumn
conference**

**Interview with David
Wilkinson**

Local groups

Interview with Rev Prof David Wilkinson Keynote speaker at our 80th Celebration conference in October

Can you tell us a little about what you have planned for your talk at the 80th anniversary of Christians in Science in October?

I'm tempted to say I'm not going to give a preview, because I really think it'll be lovely to see you there if you can join us! It'll be a great time. I'm looking forward to it immensely.

I think partly I'm going to give some thanks and some illustrations of how CiS has helped me in my own development, and maybe chart a little bit of where I think some of the big questions are within the science and Christian faith engagement; questions about what it means to be human, about how we engage with scientists and church leaders, and about how the church values, affirms, and supports those who are scientists within congregations.



When and how did you become a Christian?

I became a Christian really at the age of 17. I had been brought up by Christian parents in the Methodist Church, but during my teenage years, while I believed intellectually in God as a Creator, I had no real experience of God. And then three important things happened for me. The first was that I fell desperately in love with a girl in the local Christian youth group and so started to go along to that church. I found amongst that church a number of young people who had experienced Jesus as a reality in their own life. I had



CHRISTIANS · IN · SCIENCE

TM

80th Anniversary Conference

Celebrating Science and Christianity

As we give thanks for our history join us for a series of talks, panels and discussions, exploring the rich and dynamic meeting points between science and Christian belief yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Speakers

David Wilkinson

Nick Spencer

Hannah Waite

David Hutchings

James Ungureanu

...and more!

October 25 - 26th 2024

More information
at www.cis.org.uk

Online or Onsite at
Gas Street Central
Birmingham B1 2JT

not done that.

Secondly, Bob Dylan, whose music I was into in a big way, became a Christian. I suddenly heard Dylan singing about Jesus in a language and in images that made sense to me. It was my context, my culture, and I heard Jesus in that context.

The third thing was that I read the New Testament for myself. I'd never done that before, I'd just listened to what people said about it.

And this all came together in a weekend at my little Methodist Church, which was called a lay witness weekend. A number of layfolk simply shared their testimony of the reality of Jesus in their lives, and at the end of that weekend, during a communion service, I felt I needed to take a step to commit myself into a relationship with the Lord Jesus. And that's what I did.

How did your interest in science start?

I'd always been interested in space and science fiction, but I wasn't that kind of school child that built a telescope at the age of

four. I had a very good physics and chemistry teacher. I enjoyed mathematics. I wouldn't say I was really sold on science, but I knew that I wanted to do some kind of science at University and I thought physics in particular was good because I didn't have to write essays, I could play a bit of cricket. I had an offer to do a physics degree at Durham, which I began just as I'd become a Christian. What was interesting was that as I was learning more about the God that I experienced in Jesus, so my scientific studies into what God had created became more and more interesting.

How long have you been involved with CiS?

I've been involved with CiS ever since I was a young research student. I'd heard about the Research Scientist Christian Fellowship through my involvement in the Christian Union. It seemed a natural thing to get involved in, and it was a joy to encounter and talk with people like Sam Berry and John Houghton. The then-secretary Oliver Barclay spent some time with me and was very

kind in supporting and helping my thinking. I would say that the Research Scientist Christian Fellowship and then CiS had a huge impact on my formation as a Christian disciple and as someone involved in the engagement of science and theology.

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

CiS has a wonderful role in supporting thinking in the area of science and theology, but also in supporting the vocation of scientists who are Christians. I think CiS is a remarkable organization because it recognizes that doing science is as important a vocation as Christian ministry - becoming a pastor or becoming a missionary.

In the early days of CiS, I saw the intellectual engagement of people such as Donald McKay and Robert Boyd; they were folk who really didn't want to live a life where they did science on Monday to Saturday and faith on a Sunday. They saw a vocation to be rigorous in science and rigorous in faith. So, the support and encouragement



Rev Prof David Wilkinson

for younger scientists to see their work as a scientist as a Christian vocation seems to me to be one of the important things for CiS.

Do you have any suggestions for younger members starting out on their science and faith journey?

Yes. Number one, enjoy the science. It's a gift from God. Even if it's at times puzzling and frustrating and difficult, ultimately many of us are scientists because we enjoy it, and I think that joy in the wonder and beauty and elegance of creation, which occasionally you get a chance to see, is something to treasure.

Number two, I've always been a believer that foundations in Christian discipleship are really important. So I pay attention to being a member of a local church, attending and being involved regularly, and exercising service and ministry within a particular local church. This goes alongside a regular rhythm of prayer, Bible reading, and praying for those moments to witness to faith. And those foundations for me of the Christian life are really helpful in terms of the basis of a science and faith journey.

The third thing is that there's a huge amount of resources out there now, both in terms of written books and electronic resources. Part of the challenge is finding a good resource when there are so many! But I think we're blessed by these resources; taking time to learn from others seems to me to be really important.

And I wouldn't neglect the fourth thing, which is find people locally who are fellow scientists or have an interest in science. It might be a local Christians in

Science group, it might be folk in your own church who are interested in such things, it might be a science teacher or someone who's an engineer within the congregation. From time to time perhaps meet with them, to pray for one another and have a cup of coffee and talk about some of the difficult questions.

Who has been the most important role model in your life?

I've had a number of really important role models in my life who've helped me enormously. I've already mentioned Oliver Barclay, former Secretary of the Research Scientist Christian Fellowship, a very considered person in the area of science and faith.

I also owe a great deal to John Houghton and Sam Berry. They were very different personalities, but I saw in each of their areas of environment and genetics their confidence in their Christian faith to stand up to quite difficult circumstances that they were having to deal with in the public arena.

In terms of my Christian faith, a

Methodist leader called Donald English, a brilliant Bible expositor who taught me a lot about Christian discipleship and reading Scripture.

Those have been really important role models. But one person who's really interesting is the former Principal of the college that I became a Principal of, Ruth Etchells. Ruth was an academic in the department of English literature at Durham University, and a lay Anglican evangelical.

Ruth found ways within her own academic work of connecting her English literature interests with her faith. Indeed, Sam Berry once told me that Ruth was important for him in his early thinking about science and religion. Ruth was very kind to me over the years, and I think she was a fascinating role model, because she was gentle but she was also committed to truth. She didn't worry about whether the gospel could cope with the truth of studies in English literature or studies in science. She was passionate about Jesus and therefore all human knowledge was to be brought under his lordship.

An extended version of this interview with David is now available on our website - www.cis.org.uk

Covering further areas such as challenges as a Christian interested in science; what has he been doing until now; what does he do for fun? Enjoy reading!

As David mentioned, we hope to see you at the 80th Celebration conference in October.

REMINDER - THE SEARCH IS ON....

Now is an important time for you to share your memories from 1944 to 2024.

So please, please take this moment to jot down your stories about CiS and send to us - cis.80.info@gmail.com

Your memories of attending events, or conferences and the people you met? Stories about being a member? Fun stories, interesting memories.

If you have any photos please let us know about those too.

Details are on the CiS website.

We wish to have a wonderful display in October.

LOCAL GROUP NEWS

BRISTOL

For further information on Bristol events please contact Andrew Halestrap - ahalestrap@hotmail.com

DUNDEE

For further information on Dundee events please contact christiansinsciencedundee@gmail.com

IRELAND

For further information on Ireland events please contact Dr Neville Cobbe - neville.cobbe@yahoo.co.uk

MANCHESTER

For further information on Manchester events, please contact sec.cismanchester@yahoo.co.uk

NORWICH

Please contact sfnorfolk@gmail.com for further information.

OXFORD

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

SHEFFIELD

For more information please email Dr Jonathan Foster - jona.foster@sheffield.ac.uk

SOUTH WEST

For more information on events in the South West, please email cissouthwest@gmail.com

SOUTHAMPTON

For information about Southampton events please contact Keith Fox - K.R.Fox@soton.ac.uk

Details of all events are also available on the CiS App and at www.cis.org.uk/events.

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



ST ANDREWS

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

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

TYNESIDE & NORTHUMBERLAND

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

WORCESTER

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

YORK

For more information please email christiansinsciencyork788@gmail.com