



Press Release – 6 April 2006

Education in the 21st Century – a Christian perspective

A conference organised by Christians in Science and the Stapleford Centre

with the Association of Christian Teachers

Saturday 29 April 2006, Christ Church, Herne Bay, Kent

Conference Title: Towards A Christian Framework for Education

Change in the education arena is almost continuous – what then is a Christian perspective and how can this make a difference? Ruth Kelly's Schools White Paper is currently on its way through government, emphasising parental 'free choice' and the 'individual' – qualities that have profound 'spiritual' implications that Christians have something to say about.

So, what constitutes successful education? It is more than acquiring a set of good grades, important and useful though they may be. From a Christian perspective education is, at best, far more about the development of people in the context of community before God. What do grades mean in the absence of a coherent spiritual perspective on life? Education is more than knowledge management. It is also about wisdom. In a rapidly changing world, new generations need to be adequately prepared to understand Christian and other religious values and how to apply them.

Coinciding with the national discussion about the White Paper, key experts will be meeting in Kent on 29 April to look at a specifically *Christian* perspective on education within contemporary culture (see Notes 1 & 2). The conference gathers together teachers, governors, academics, theologians, parents, community leaders and others with a close interest in education.

The conference is organised/sponsored by three collaborating Christian Agencies, all of which are actively involved in education – Christians in Science; The Stapleford Centre; and the Association of Christian Teachers. It includes topical talks, resources and workshops and will address the implications of the Christian message in terms of our relationships to our fellows and within the context of the global environment.

We now understand more about being citizens in a global community. What then are our responsibilities and how do we address Citizenship from a Christian perspective in the 21st Century? Does Citizenship begin or end with specific national priorities or must it, for example, legitimately touch upon the areas of world trade and governance such as those discussed at Gleneagles at the G8 under the British presidency? What do Christians have to say about issues such as the impact of climate change, which is likely to most affect the world's poor? And how should we educate in the light of these challenges?

The conference comes at an interesting time for education, where widespread change is already occurring in GCSE science and where other subjects are likely to follow. Many science teachers but not all, welcome the changes in science. They give an opportunity to discuss the implications and media presentation of science within a scientific framework, yet one that engages with important extra-curricular topics. It also provides examiners with a chance to relate exam questions to current affairs. For example, the OCR *Gateway to Science* scheme has an assessed component called "Science in the News". Pupils are expected to demonstrate an informed opinion based on the development of scientific ideas and concepts, including questions like 'creationism'.

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With the Archbishop of Canterbury recently expressing concern over the teaching of 'creationism' in schools (see Note 3), and atheists like Richard Dawkins frequently attacking religious beliefs, the conference will look at a broader definition of *creation*, covering questions like:

- How does the Christian community best communicate to current generations?
- What does Christian education offer that is distinctive?
- What work has already been done in addressing these questions?

When engaging with the media, the values and perspectives of different faith communities will necessarily be challenged by secular values and assumptions. Further details of the conference are at www.cis.org.uk.

John Ling
Education Secretary, CiS

Conference Speakers

Ann Holt - "**Doing the same things differ-ently: bringing a Christian perspective to the task of teaching**". Ann currently works for the Bible Society (www.biblesociety.org.uk) but has previously worked for CARE in areas of policy and governance.

Nick Spencer - "**We're all individuals: Liberalism and the Gospel today**". Nick works for the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (www.licc.org.uk)

Martin Rogers - "**Science and Religion in Schools Project progress in developing resources for Schools**". Martin Rogers is an experienced educationalist and former Headteacher and will present a summary of the work of the Oxford based Science and Religion Project (www.srsp.net)

Tom Hartman - "**Feathery Dinosaurs. Evolu-tion, the best explanation?**" Tom Hartman is an experienced biologist as well as youth worker.

Conference Discussion Groups

Pete Moore - "**Science and the Media.**" Pete Moore is an experienced author and science journalist

Tom Kempton - "**Science in the Curriculum - Charis Science.**" Tom Kempton has worked for the Stapleford Centre and will present associated material.

Frank Grenfell - "**Science teaching in the classroom.**" Frank Grenfell is a retired physics teacher from Eton.

Christine Wright - "**A Christian perspective on C21st Citizenship.**" Christine is a Citizenship consultant and Youth worker.

Full details of the conference, including accommodation and directions may be found at: <http://www.cis.org.uk>.

Notes for Editors

Note 1. Although the conference has delegates attending from all over the UK, there is local Kent interest. The keynote speaker is Ann Holt OBE, Advocacy and Programme Executive at Bible Society (and an alumnus of Canterbury Christ Church University). The conference has also been supported by the Headmaster, Kent College, Canterbury, a Methodist Foundation School. Conference costs have been kept low to encourage local as well as national participation.

Note 2. The conference has already been top-rated in the UK Google listings for a Christian Education conference.

Note 3. "*My concern is creationism can end up reducing the doctrine of creation rather than enhancing it*" Rowan Williams, The Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, stating his concern over creationism, in The Guardian (21/03/06), Stephen Bates, religious affairs correspondent.

Christians in Science

CiS is an international network of those concerned with the relationship between science and Christian faith, open to scientists, teachers, students and all those with an interest in this dialogue.

<http://www.cis.org.uk>

The Stapleford Centre

The Stapleford Centre (UK) is an independent education centre, focusing on providing training for teachers, resources for schools and research into education. Many areas of the curriculum are covered; from Art through to Science. There is a particular emphasis on spiritual and moral development of pupils through the curriculum, RE and assemblies. The Stapleford Centre is the foremost provider of resources for RE and Collective Worship and for Spiritual and Moral Development across the curriculum. Use the search and browse facilities on the left of the page to explore our wide range of resources.

<http://www.stapleford-centre.org>

Association of Christian teachers

The Association of Christian Teachers (ACT) is a non-denominational Christian membership organisation that provides professional and spiritual support to Christians engaged in pre-school, primary, middle, secondary, special, college and university education in England.

<http://www.christian-teachers.org.uk>

Further details of the conference and contact details for interviewing key speakers from:

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