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# CHRISTIANS · IN · SCIENCE

## PréCiS

## April 2005

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no. 30

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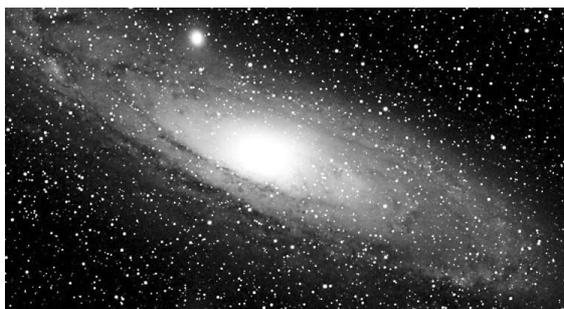
### New publicity materials

We hope you like the new look for PréCiS! Included with this mailing is a copy of the new CiS brochure and membership form. This folds out into a poster that you can put up in your church or department. If you would like some more to give out to friends, colleagues, or students contact Ruth or Caroline.

### FREE Student Membership!

At the last committee meeting it was decided that students should have a year's free membership on joining CiS. This will be an "e-membership", with newsletters and updates sent by e-mail, and online access to Science and Christian Belief. To join, students just need to e-mail Ruth at [ruthb@cis.org.uk](mailto:ruthb@cis.org.uk). Do encourage as many students as possible to make the most of this offer!

### CiS Leeds Conference



'He also made the Stars' attracted around 80 people from all over the United Kingdom to St. George's Church in Leeds.

**Colin Russell**, Emeritus Professor of the History of Science at the Open University, set the scene by suggesting Copernicus is a model we can follow today. Copernicus was unafraid to challenge the accepted dogma of his day even though he had only primitive instruments with which to make his astronomical observations. His theory was probably based initially on 'hunch', an origin for new ideas we should not downplay. He stressed the

need to distinguish world-picture from world-view. Copernicus changed the world-picture from earth centred to sun centred but his world-view, his moral values and belief in the supremacy of God and the teaching of the Bible remained constant. Similarly, our world-picture changes with new scientific discoveries but our world-view, our values and ethics should not. He discussed the support of the Church for Copernicus and showed us a book, written by Copernicus' pupil Rheticus and lost till re-discovered and translated by the late Professor Hookyaas, a great supporter of CiS in its early days. This focused on Copernicus' faith and how he related his science to the teaching of Scripture.

**David Wilkinson**, Research Lecturer in Theology and Science at Durham University spoke next on 'Christian Eschatology in an Expanding Universe.' He outlined the pessimistic outlook for the future presented by the current generation of cosmologists. Environmental degradation leading to an uninhabitable planet, an asteroid hit leading to disaster, or, looking further ahead the death of the sun and the inevitable end of Planet Earth and finally the end of the universe, with still so much of its energy systems shrouded in mystery. He mentioned theories of multiple universes, the views of Dyson and Tipler and 'life in all directions', the pointlessness of life that these views engender. He stressed the opportunity for Christians to bring a message of hope, with the biblical emphasis on the positive side of the end times. He outlined biblical themes: the Creator God; the mutual dependence of the current creation and the New Creation, Transformation, Judgment and Resurrection with the physical being transformed rather than discarded. Here we were at the limits of our understanding, our minds needing to be expanded as well as the universe. It was time for lunch.

After lunch **Trevor Griffiths**, one of the local organizers, gave a fascinating presentation on the recent discoveries about the Saturn moon Titan by Cassini Huygens and speculation from this as a model for planet earth in its formative and pre-cellular life period.

He was followed by **Chris Done**, Reader in Astrophysics in Durham and a consultant for the European Space Agency who researches on radiation mechanisms and extreme gravitational objects such as Black Holes. She reminded us how ignorant we are, even of the nature of matter. Rather than the diminishing 'God of the gaps' she delighted in Dorothy Sayer's dictum: 'If God is eternal reason then any valid reasoning must be a manifestation of him'. There is infinite scope for our understanding of him to expand. The search for other life in the universe must start with a search for stars with planets. She explained how progress on this was beginning. Time spans are enormous: three billion years separate the appearance on earth of fossil bacteria and that of the first multicellular organisms. She acknowledged that we were not really interested in finding mere micro-organisms, but 'proper' life, preferably self conscious and communicating life. She assured those of us able to wait another 20-30 years there was a real chance of knowing whether this would move from 'Star Trek' into fact. Inevitably this raised questions about the impact of 'the Fall' and the efficacy of Christ's death but we agreed that our God is big enough to make these things clear when the need arose. Group discussion of all these mind-stretching ideas followed.

Finally **Richard Dimery**, one of the local team, wrapped up the day with a short epilogue. He reminded us of the wonder and majesty of our Creator God whilst bringing us back to earth by telling us that the next day, (Palm Sunday) he would be walking the streets of Leeds with a donkey. Many thanks to St George's Church for an excellent venue and support, to the five organizers, the speakers for a mind expanding day, and to those, including Sarah Dimery who laid on an excellent lunch for an ever increasing number of participants.

*Caroline Berry*

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## Tools with a mission (TWAM)

Members sometimes complain that CiS is too academic. Here is an opportunity for practical action. TWAM is a charity which collects used tools and machinery, refurbishes them and sends container loads to needy countries. Last year 131 tonnes went, typewriters, carpenters kits, plumbers kits, motor mechanics kits etc. Items to send and practical help are welcome.

For more information contact TWAM, Unit 3 Perry Barn, Burstall Lane, Sproughton Ipswich. IP8 3DJ or see [www.twam.co.uk](http://www.twam.co.uk)

## CiS London Conference 2005

The next meeting is to be held jointly with the Victoria Institute and the John Ray Initiative:

### "A Christian Framework for Sustainability"



St Paul's Robert Adam Street, London W1  
**Saturday October 1st**

Speakers:

**Ghillean Prance:** The non-human creation  
**Brian Heap:** Consumption and happiness  
**Donald Hay:** Sustainable Economics  
**David Bookless:** Theology of Sustainability  
**John Houghton:** Climate change and energy

Plus: small group discussion leaders

**John Wibberley:** agriculture  
**David Stafford:** waste management  
**Tearfund:** Aid /disaster management.

This looks like a challenging and important day.

*Please put the date in your diary NOW*

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## Committee comings and goings

After ten years of service, Ross Williams will be handing over the role of treasurer to Hugh Reynolds this year. Ross took over the CiS finances when we became independent from UCCF in 1995, and has worked hard to keep our finances in shape over this time. If you're a BBC Radio 5 live listener, you may have heard Ross's contribution to a live phone-in, late on Easter Saturday. Hugh is a biochemist at the Institute of Psychiatry, London, and represented CiS at the American Scientific Affiliation (ASA) and the Canadian Scientific And Christian Affiliation (CSCA) joint conference in Vancouver last July. (*Subscription renewal payments should be sent to Pauline as usual.*)

Mike Poole has also stepped down from his position as Education Secretary, and is leaving the committee after 30 years of involvement. Mike has recently been involved in recommending guidelines for teaching about science-faith interactions in the revised national curriculum for schools in England and Wales.



## An Interview with John Ling

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Dr John Ling is a teacher of Chemistry and Physics at Kent College, Canterbury. He has recently taken over from Mike Poole as the CiS Education Secretary.

### **Tell us what you've been doing until now.**

I started off by studying Materials Science at Surrey University (I liked the small and friendly department), followed by a PGCE in Chemistry at Hughes Hall, Cambridge, with subsidiaries in science and selected sports. After some time as a house tutor, sports coach and chemistry teacher at Christ's Hospital, Horsham, I became a company director of my family firm, (engineering and commercial property). This led to a PhD in Surface Chemistry/Properties of polymer films at Nottingham University. After this I became research Manager at British Steel, South Wales. I was transferred and promoted to Corus Group R&D HQ after a company merger. Here I became secretary of UK small project innovation and principal researcher for organic coatings, particularly, but not exclusively for strip steel. I'm currently a Chemistry and Physics teacher at Kent College, Canterbury.

### **What do you do for fun?**

I'm a very keen cricketer, I enjoy most sports, and family outings. When the dynamics are right, teaching is very enjoyable.

### **Favourite luxury?**

My wife (and family) will confirm I have a weakness for a well-made trifle!

### **Who have been the most important role models in your life?**

An understanding of Jesus Christ's life and teaching is so important. My parents have been very positive role models to me. My father was for a while a Methodist minister and his political realism and my mother's sensitivity and tact have witnessed much to me about Christian values (as well as providing theological insights and reading material!). Another important role model has been Michael Hepworth, my former RE teacher and now retired Headmaster of Birkdale School Sheffield. There are many more, some may be reading this article, so thank you!

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

One of the major challenges that I have had to face has been in the industrial work place. During the fairly recent and massive redundancies within Corus Group Plc, I was appalled by some aspects of personnel and general management, health and safety, strategic decision-making and a sense of company paralysis. I sought and made some progress in developing a career that would enable me to address some of these issues. However when my career path became blocked and increasing levels of ossification appeared to be taking hold as the share price plunged towards three pence, I overtly stated my concerns and resigned my post. This was a very difficult path to walk.

### **How has your faith helped you as a scientist, or vice versa?**

The Christian faith emphasises God's grace and redemptive purposes. When everything around you appears wild and uncontrolled, to know, by faith in Jesus Christ, that your personhood is the concern of a loving, creator God is a source of great encouragement and a strong director towards social justice.

### **What science-faith book have you most enjoyed/found most helpful?**

I have found theological and pastoral books most useful. I have particularly valued authors such as Paul Tournier and Jean Vanier, perhaps because I view that the exploration of science is greatly informed by the relational as well as propositional aspects of the human experience. I have also enjoyed reading Paul Tillich and Leslie Newbigin, whose far ranging appreciation of the implications of the gospel is refreshing.

### **What question would keep you debating till four in the morning?**

I would see it as an indication of a badly planned meeting if I was still up at four in the morning... social and political governance, particularly the relationship between the powerless and the powerful.

## If you weren't a scientist what would you be?

A journalist/politician.

## How do you see your role as Education Secretary developing?

I am very excited about taking up this role. Over the last 6 months I have met a number of educationalists involved at the interface of science and education as a preparation.

At some point it would be good to see a conference addressing educational issues particularly exploring social, science and technology policy issues. CiS members, I believe, offer a wealth of experience and knowledge in these areas. I feel we have a responsibility to equip new generations of Christian scientists to be able to engage with the governance of future technological capabilities and social issues.

Over the period of my tenure I aim to:

- Keep up with national reforms (England and Wales mainly) in primary and secondary education.
- Highlight (in PrÉCiS and on website) issues that relate to faith/science dialogue and Science education generally.
- From a Christian perspective, highlight examples of good practice in education.
- Establish links with groups with similar perspectives.
- Encourage and support Christian scientists involved in education.
- Provide and disseminate materials about conferences and resource materials.
- Maintain a broad and international focus, albeit from a UK base.
- Raise issues for discussion and prayer.

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## Communicating Science

Here is a chance to get involved with communicating science to the general public.

“**Cafe Scientifique** is a place where, for the price of a cup of coffee or a glass of wine, anyone can come to explore the latest ideas in science and technology. Meetings have taken place in cafes, bars, restaurants and even theatres, but always outside a traditional academic context. We are committed to promoting public engagement with science and to making science accountable.”

There are now branches in most major cities, including Leeds, Belfast, Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh, London, Exeter and Southampton. Go to <http://www.cafescientifique.org/> for details

## News from CiS local groups

### Leeds

The Leeds local group will meet informally after Easter with a launch in the autumn at which we hope Prof Colin Humphreys will speak. Any interested in joining the local group mailing list should email Richard Dimery at [richard@dimery.com](mailto:richard@dimery.com).

### Cambridge

The next lecture in the CiS-St. Edmund's College series on science and religion will be given by:

*Peter Harrison*, Professor of History and Philosophy, Bond University, Queensland.

**Tuesday 24th May**, Howard Building Lecture Theatre, Downing College, Cambridge  
See <http://www.st-edmunds.cam.ac.uk/cis/> for details.

### Oxford

Students, scientists and members of the public are welcome to learn more about Christian perspectives on science and new technologies.

The next meeting is on **Monday 23rd May**, St Andrews Church, Oxford, when *Professor Stephen Blundell and Dr Katherine Blundell* will speak on the Big Bang.

For further information or to be sent details of future events by e-mail, contact Diana Briggs at [diana.briggs@gmail.com](mailto:diana.briggs@gmail.com)

### Edinburgh

The first of a series of discussions, that will take place once a term, will be held in May, at St Paul's and St Georges Church, York Place.

There will be time for time for discussion, fellowship, and cake!

For more details or to be join a mailing list for future events, contact Cathel Kerr at [clkerr@btopenworld.com](mailto:clkerr@btopenworld.com), or Ruth Bancewicz at 14 Johnston Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 2PW. Tel: 0131 466 6827.

### Forming local groups

If you are interested in starting your own CiS local group, contact Ruth or Caroline for a list of members in your area. You can also request a CiS speakers list.

A paper on forming local groups can be found at [http://cis.org.uk/starting\\_local\\_cis\\_group.htm](http://cis.org.uk/starting_local_cis_group.htm), or a paper copy can be sent on request.

## Future Events

### **DNA Profiling and You: Do genetic databases threaten or benefit society?**

A public debate organised by Progress Educational Trust with Nowgen, the North West Genetics Knowledge Park.

(<http://www.nowgen.org.uk>)

6.30-8.30pm Thursday 21st April 2005  
The NowGen Centre, Grafton Street,  
Manchester M13 9WL

Paul Johnson, University of Durham  
Helen Wallace, GeneWatch UK  
Andrew Read, University of Manchester  
David King, Human Genetics Alert

This event is free to attend. Please register in advance by sending an email to [Kibrahim@progress.org.uk](mailto:Kibrahim@progress.org.uk) or calling on 020 72789 7870

### **Testing Choices**

The ethical implications of embryo testing for late-onset disorders. A public debate organised by Progress Educational Trust and hosted by the BA (<http://www.the-ba.net>)

6.30-8.30pm Wednesday 4th May 2005  
The Dana Centre, 165 Queen's Gate,  
London SW7

Frances Flinter, Guy's Hospital  
John Gillott, Genetic Interest Group  
Josephine Quintavalle, Comment on Reproductive Ethics

This event is free to attend. Please register in advance by sending an email to [events@the-ba.net](mailto:events@the-ba.net) or calling 020 7019 4938

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Two lectures at the **London Institute for Contemporary Christianity**, London W1:

**Dr Kenneth Boa**, President of Reflection Ministries in the USA.

1. Monday 6th June 6.45 pm  
Intelligent design – the Modern Challenge to Darwinism. Rev.Dr. Ernest Lucas, review editor of *Science and Christian Belief*, will provide a response.

2. Monday 13th June 6.45 pm  
Unravelling the Da Vinci Code.

Tickets £6 at the door.

More information at [www.licc.org.uk](http://www.licc.org.uk)

## New Developments...



I've been so encouraged this term by invitations to take part in many different events. I've been given a really warm welcome by the UCCF staff, and invited to join their training and bible studies. I've just come back from the "Word Alive" week of Spring Harvest, in Skegness, where I was on the student team. Part of my role was to be involved in the lunchtime forum for science students. We encouraged the students not to be put off by supposed science-faith conflicts, but to serve God through their studies. I keep meeting students who say that they were nearly put off genetics because of the ethical difficulties. Thankfully they've recognised that we need Christians to be represented in all areas of science.

I have also been involved in several University Christian Union missions. I was invited to be part of a "grill a Christian" panel at Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, and came away unscathed! I spent a couple of days at Dundee University, and also visited Imperial College, London, where they held a lunchtime talk on atheism as part of their mission. At all these places the students were keen to talk about science, creation, and the place of faith in relation to science. Cheap copies of Real Science Real Faith were well received, and they were pleased to hear that we have more resources on the website.

Earlier in the year I took my CiS display stand to the Oxford University Missions Fair, where we fitted in quiet well with the cross-cultural theme. I encouraged students that science can be a good way to work abroad, or among people from other cultures. While I was at the Leeds meeting, Donald Bruce of the Church of Scotland Society, Religion and Technology project was kindly manning our stand at the Eco-Congregation Scotland Celebration in Dunblane. I've heard that this was a really encouraging day, with about 200 people attending the exhibition and workshops.

In the next few months I will be running a workshop at Imperial College CU, attending the European Leadership Forum in Hungary, and representing CiS at the first Christian Careers Conference for school pupils at Manchester University. I still have spaces in my diary, so drop me a line if there's anything happening in your area and you'd like me to get involved!

*Ruth Bancewicz*

## Lectures at St. Andrew's University



CiS member and Editor of *Science & Christian Belief*, Denis Alexander, spent a few days at St. Andrew's University lecturing on science and faith in February. The chaplain at the university has been running a discussion group at the university for believers, agnostics and atheists over the past year at which they have been discussing Dr Alexander's book *Rebuilding the Matrix*. At 20 pages per meeting on a 510 page book, the pace has been steady but thorough!

The first talk was to the theologians at St. Mary's College at a seminar hosted by Prof. Alan Torrance, who holds the chair of Systematic Theology. After a general overview, the discussion centred on questions of theodicy arising from evolutionary biology. The strongly biological slant on the question was not received equally warmly by all present, but a lively discussion ensued on this difficult topic. It is a subject which needs the active engagement of scientists and theologians in partnership, and the occasion provided a good opportunity for such a dialogue.

The following day he addressed the regular weekly colloquium of the School of Physics and Astronomy on the subject '*Science and Faith*', and there was standing room only in the packed lecture theatre with about 150 in attendance. Hosted by Prof. Eric Priest FRS and by the professor of theoretical physics, Ulf Leonhardt, the lecture focused on the degree to which parallels can be made between scientific and religious knowledge. A good time of questions and discussion ensued. One of the professors in attendance remarked later that he was of the opinion that about half the faculty in his department had some kind of religious faith.

A lunch-time lecture the same day in the Dept of Biology was attended by around 100 people, this time largely undergraduates. The theme on this occasion was the striking contrast between the 'conflict model' of the relationship between science and faith as compared to the 'complementarity model' that proposes a more harmonious relationship. Dr Alexander reminded the audience of the deeply Christian convictions of many of the founders of the modern discipline of

biology. Many stayed behind afterwards to discuss further and, inevitably, evolution featured largely in the questions on this occasion.

The university sermon on the Sunday morning was again given on the theme of science and faith. The chaplain, Dr. James Walker, is eager to present a regular diet of balanced talks on this topic to his congregation.

A striking impression of this visit was the very open and sympathetic response given to a judicious presentation of the science/faith debate within the context of regular departmental activities, in the sciences as much as theology. Such events underline the high level of interest that there is at present in such issues. Also the book-sales were consistently higher at each lecture than predicted by the organisers – so if you are running any talks on science and faith, make sure that your bookstall is well stocked from John Bausor's excellent list ([www.cis.org.uk](http://www.cis.org.uk)). People will always buy what is readily available!

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## The Science and Religion Forum

Are celebrating the centenary of the publication of Einstein's seminal papers with a weekend conference in St Anne's College, Oxford.

Title: **Einstein, God and Time**  
Date: **12th - 15th September 2005**

Speakers: Dr Harvey Brown, Prof Chris Isham, Prof Antje Jackelen, Prof Jürgen Moltmann, Prof Russell Stannard and Dr John Polkinghorne. See <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~theo0038/conference05.html>

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## Subscription renewals

Subscription renewal forms will be sent this month. Please return them as soon as possible.

All subscriptions will now be renewed each April. Those whose membership renewal was due in or after September 2004 have had FREE membership until now. *Donations to cover the costs of this are welcome.*

If you have any concerns about subscriptions, contact Caroline Berry at [cberry@pncl.co.uk](mailto:cberry@pncl.co.uk)  
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