

Christians in Science conference 19th March 2005, Leeds

"He also made the stars"

Abstracts

Prof. Colin Russell

Copernicus and the Bible: lessons for today?

In looking at Copernicus, arguably the founder of modern astronomy, we shall notice several issues in his situation that are still applicable now. They include:

- The origins of scientific theories
- The importance of a world-view
- The influence of the organised church
- The relevance of the Bible.

We shall try to apply our findings to cosmology today and in general to scientific controversies in the 21st century.

Revd. Dr. David Wilkinson

"Christian eschatology and an accelerating universe"

Science looks forward with a degree of pessimism concerning the future. This is reflected in four aspects of current scientific thinking:

1. The destruction of the environment
2. Terrestrial mass extinction
3. The end of the Sun
4. The end of the Universe whose rate of expansion is increasing

This poses a number of questions to Christian theology. What does the end of the Universe as predicted by science mean for the understanding of creation, new creation, the relationship of the Earth to the whole of the created order, providence, hope and apologetics? If a fruitful interaction of science and theology is to proceed, such an integration cannot solely concentrate on the beginning of the Universe, it must take account of the end. Within this interaction, the resurrection is particularly important in any understanding of creation and eschatology which takes seriously the scientific predictions for the end of the Universe.

Dr. Chris Done

'...and He also made the stars': Other worlds and other life?

We now have unambiguous evidence for planetary systems round other nearby stars. While current techniques can only reveal gas giants - planets the size of Jupiter or Neptune - the next generation of instruments should be able to detect rocky, Earth mass planets. Such a planet, at a suitable distance from its Sun for liquid water to exist, could harbour life. Even simple bacteria would show that no 'special' act of God is required for life to form (other than the existence of the Universe governed by physical laws). I will explore the psychological, philosophical and theological consequences of these potential discoveries, and examine how we can respond as Christians to new, exciting science.