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## NORTHERN CONFERENCE REPORT

### Science, Christian Faith and the Public

Two dozen people from a range of backgrounds gathered in Newcastle at the end of May for a collection of talks on topics related to education, churches and their leaders, and the media, and for discussion on the issues raised.

Andii Bowsler, Anglican Chaplain of Northumbria University and a CiS local group leader, started us off with a reflection on Genesis chapter 1, not viewed in the context of modern cosmology as it is often considered, but in its original setting alongside and responding to ancient near-east creation myths, such as the Babylonian account of Marduk, which we saw and heard explained in an on-line video. In contrast to their many gods with violent behaviour and humans seen as lowly slaves to serve their selfish needs, Genesis accords us dignity in our creation in the image and likeness

of God and shows through the seventh day how work matters but does not define us. Andii talked about the various meanings of the key words *tohu w'bohu* (formless, void, chaos), pointed out the pattern and symmetry of days 1–3 and 4–6, and commented on the poetic completeness of the chapter, which was not intended as a scientific account; treating it as such means missing the real point.

Phil Wildsmith, a secondary school biology teacher, contrasted the attitude of students to what he says in class and when he leads school assemblies. Teenagers today don't ask the same questions as we did and do. There's a general acceptance of science as 'truth' while religious beliefs are personal opinions, though a small minority from a 'Bible is true' background judge science in the light of a particular fundamentalist way of reading it; most, however, are largely apathetic about science-faith questions. Modern

Speakers include:

**Prof Malcolm Jeeves & Prof Sam Berry** - *Looking Back at the History of CiS*

**Prof Alister McGrath** - *Science and Apologetics: Engaging in Scientific Culture*

**Prof Tom McLeish** - *A Theology of Science*

**Dr Elaine Storkey** - *The Theology of Creation Care*

Plus, workshops and networking opportunities tbc.

**CiS Southern Conference**  
Anniversary conference:  
Celebrating 70 years of  
Christians in Science

**Saturday 1st November, 2014**  
The King's Centre, Oxford,  
OX2 0ES

Booking will open online soon  
(visit [www.cis.org.uk](http://www.cis.org.uk)).

For a paper booking form, please contact  
[secretary@cis.org.uk](mailto:secretary@cis.org.uk)



science teaching materials and the national syllabus encourage serious consideration of the limitations of science, ethical issues in science, 'how science works' methodology, distinguishing 'how' and 'why' questions, and other opportunities for Christian science teachers (and others) to demonstrate the possibility of a synthesis of science and faith. Phil encouraged us to pray for today's young people and their teachers.

Jim Reynolds is training as a teacher, but was previously a UCCF Relay worker in Durham. He spoke about influences on Christian science students, including family, society and the media. Threats come from unhelpful departments and staff, peer pressure, student aversion to anything old (including the Bible), aggressive questions, and misunderstandings of the Bible and Christianity. Limited support is available sometimes from Christian staff, local churches and friends, and also from CiS, UCCF, bethinking.org and the Faraday Institute. There are opportunities for witness, as science students will often come to appropriate CU and other events addressing science-faith issues, and for contributing an informed scientific understanding to churches. Students need to be encouraged to follow in the footsteps of great Christian scientists of the past.

Pete Moore, our furthest travelled speaker, a writer and communicator from Bristol, took his title 'Science and religion as portrayed by the media' and examined what it meant word by word. People consume media for a variety of good and bad reasons. Age profiles differ markedly for use of TV versus online news, for example, and for levels of interest, with a generally shorter attention span for younger viewers. Similarly, there is a variety of motives for working in the media, which include pushing agendas and influencing opinions. Conflict is a major ingredient of the media; journalism and public relations aspects have different objectives. Religion should be broadly understood in ways that don't necessarily include God, and encompasses worldviews such as atheism. Science is often confused with technology in public understanding and in government policy, but they are different. Is 'science and religion' a way of avoiding discussing the more important topic of science and faith? Trying to reconcile them will attract attention and opposition from vested interests. High-profile Christian scientists have an important role as witnesses, countering high-profile atheists. When asked 'Why do people take the media at face value?' in view of recent scandals, Pete said, in reference to TV presenters, 'Who else do you let into your sitting room

when you're wearing pyjamas?'

Sue Wilson and Alastair Macnaughton are both retired local Anglican clergy who have been involved in the development of the Lindisfarne Regional Training Partnership's short course on science and faith for churches. It arose from a concern about prominent science issues in the media at the turn of the millennium – cloning, genetic modification and screening, the 'God particle', euthanasia and abortion, the works of Stephen Hawking and Richard Dawkins – and from a call for material to help clergy and congregations make sense of these debates from a faith perspective. While there are similarities to the Faraday Institute's 'Test of Faith', there is an emphasis on local facilitation, with a team of trained people available to help organise and run the course in churches and groups of churches; it is flexible and adaptable, and includes some 'You can be a scientist too' simple experiments. It addresses ethical issues and science as a form of stewardship of God's creation. Three people who are not scientists and had taken part in the course at one Sunderland church described their experience and what they had learnt.

One of Rebecca Bouveng's roles is as a research fellow in a Templeton-funded project at St John's College Durham, 'Equipping Christian leaders in an age of science'. Unfounded popular views include the science-religion conflict model promoted by some prominent scientists and the portrayal of Christians as opposed to science. A survey of 'Science versus religion: what scientists really think' (by Elaine Howard Ecklund, 2010) explored and debunked this view in the USA. Rebecca's research so far includes an interview-based survey of 14 Christian leaders from a range of backgrounds, concerning their understanding of science and its relation to Christian faith, which she described under the heading 'What bishops really think about science'. The views were generally positive, rejecting both the conflict model and creationist fundamentalism. A key question for many is 'What does it mean to be human?' Three main issues emerged: science fundamentalism (scientism), ethics in science, and the science-faith interaction; the question of good versus bad science was a common theme. Concerns for future developments include artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, and 'saviour siblings'.

Each of the talks was followed by a lively discussion and some penetrating questions, for which there aren't always clear answers. The day's themes were wide-



ranging while closely related, topical and important. The meeting facilities and convenient location of St John's Church, Kingston Park, and the catering from Marks & Spencer just across the road were much appreciated and contributed to a smooth running of the day once again, as last year. A number of people joined the CiS Tyneside & Northumberland local group email list, and all participants went away satisfied, encouraged and challenged. Although the technology may not have functioned faultlessly (mainly user error!), most of the talks should be available on the CiS web site in due course.

*Bill Clegg, a Tyneside & Northumberland CiS local group leader*

### **CIS BOOK SALE**

**We are in the process of selling our excellent selection of book stock before the provision of our book stalls is taken over by a reputable Christian publisher.**

**If you would like to purchase any of the books we have still in stock, please visit the spreadsheet 'Christians in Science book sale' at <http://tinyurl.com/q2gfzt8> which will be regularly updated with stock levels, and send your order and postal address to [DO@cis.org.uk](mailto:DO@cis.org.uk).**

**INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR MALCOLM JEEVES**  
 Prof Malcolm Jeeves has been the CiS President for the past six years. As he comes to the end of his term of office, he tells us some of his story.

We each find our way into science in different ways. My story began during the war when I gained entrance to Cambridge to read mathematics, physics and chemistry. Before I could take up my place I was called up into the infantry and soon after being commissioned went to Germany to join the First Battalion of the Sherwood Foresters in Germany, part of the famous Desert Rats. Fortunately, by the time of my arrival the fighting had finished but still many and varied experiences followed quickly. On one occasion I found myself handing over the second-in-command of Auschwitz concentration camp, together with other war criminals, to our colleagues in the Polish army. Such experiences rapidly widened my

horizons and excluded any unrealistic views of human nature. In the later part of my time in Germany I found time to read in the evenings and became fascinated by books on psychology. I decided that I would like to study psychology at Cambridge. When I arrived there after demobilisation my tutor gave me very wise advice. He said you should complete your degree in natural sciences and then you'll have a secure scientific foundation for any work you do in psychology - so I did that and I have never regretted it.

Once demobbed and up at Cambridge I renewed my contacts with Donald Mackay whom I had met briefly during the war. Quite early on I had the privilege of working with Donald Mackay, Oliver Barclay, Robert Boyd and James Torrance when the then RSCF were asked to produce a series of BBC broadcasts on science and faith. These were subsequently published under the title "Where Science and Faith Meet".(IVP 1953). Donald Mackay's interests were focussing on information theory, psychophysics and brain mechanisms and we found many things in common. His razor sharp mind had a profound effect upon my own thinking. He was always balanced and even handed. Around that time a great deal was being made of the way in which the principle of complementarity in physics might be helpful in seeking to understand the relations between Christian beliefs and scientific statements. Indeed, as Donald himself pointed out, it became so popular that it soon suffered the fate of being abused as much as it was being correctly used and he commented memorably that the concept of complementarity, initially very helpful, was soon in danger of being, "overworked by the Athenians on the one hand and abused by the Laodiceans on the other." (Donald M. MacKay, *The Christian Graduate* (London: InterVarsity Press, 1953, p.153.) I suspect that today the concept of emergence is running a similar risk.

A year spent researching at Harvard in 1953 to 1954 influenced the direction of my later research interests. Part of my time at Harvard was spent doing basic research into learning processes using animals as subjects and part in studying human perceptual and cognitive activity with a focus on their biological substrates. In due course my specialist interest became neuropsychology. In this I was greatly influenced by the Nobel laureate Roger Sperry who though not himself a professing Christian was a great champion of religion and for a while got himself into trouble with some of his less sympathetic colleagues in North America. Sperry



laid great emphasis on the importance of what he called top-down processes as distinct from the biological substrates or the bottom-up processes of cognition, perception and behaviour. In the 1950s his group performed some dramatic operations on animals in which they cut through the

corpus callosum, a structure of some 200 million or more fibres which normally connects the two sides of the brain. When a similar procedure was used on a patient with uncontrollable epilepsy it resulted in what appeared to be two minds within one brain, a left hemisphere mind and a right hemisphere mind.

Not long after that I took up the chair of psychology at the University of Adelaide in Australia and along with my professorial appointment was an appointment at the Adelaide Royal Infirmary. On one occasion a patient was referred to me by my neurosurgeon colleague with a condition I had never met before - agenesis of the corpus callosum. The small boy I was asked to see had grown up without this major part of the brain which normally connects the two cerebral hemispheres. I wondered whether he might show a similar picture to the man who had had his corpus callosum sectioned in adulthood. But superficially he seemed to all intents and purposes very normal. Extensive and detailed testing in my laboratories showed, however, that whilst not showing the major disconnections of Sperry's adult patients, neither was he entirely normal and there were marked differences between his abilities and those of a normal child. Over a period of more than 30 years I studied him and a further small group of children and adults with a similar condition and through this my major interest became that of neuroplasticity - the extent to which the brain can adapt and reorganise itself in the face of injury.

An underlying message from my own research and so much other in neuropsychology was the intimate links between mind and brain. Awareness of this alerted me to two central issues. For a Christian, first, how do innovations in neuroscience impinge on our traditional

portraits of the human person, and specifically some of those within the Christian tradition in which we are seen as being made up of two 'bits': a soul and a body? Second, what implications does this new knowledge have for practices generally associated with Christian life and ministry (e.g. spirituality, evangelism, and pastoral care)?

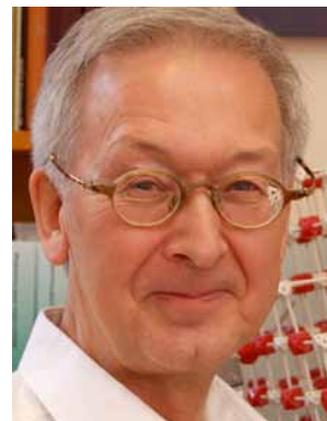
Over the last 20 years I have edited a series of volumes bringing together leaders in the fields of neuroscience, biblical studies and theology to tackle some of these problems. I have at times come away from such meetings feeling what a shame it is that the very helpful and wise words I've listened to could not be shared more widely. For that reason, amongst others, I wrote my most recent book, published by IVP US in 2013, *Minds, Brains, Souls and Gods : A Conversation on Faith, Psychology and Neuroscience*.

### CIS PRESIDENT

We are delighted to announce that Malcolm's successor as CiS President will be Professor Sir Colin Humphreys.

Colin is Director of Research in the Department of Materials, Cambridge and was formerly Goldsmith Professor and a past Chairman of CiS. He has spoken at CiS meetings throughout the UK and his science-faith publications have included books on the miracles of Exodus and on the dating of the Last Supper, as well as articles on the Star of Bethlehem and dating of the Crucifixion.

Colin will assume this role at the AMM at the Anniversary Conference on 1st November.





## LOCAL GROUP NEWS

If you live somewhere that does not have a CiS local group but you wish it did, please get in touch with the Development Officer, ([emily@cis.org.uk](mailto:emily@cis.org.uk)) about starting up a new group in your area. If you are interested in being involved with new groups that may be starting in Dundee, Camberley or the London Universities, please let us know.

### LOCAL GROUPS

#### ABERDEEN

A discussion group runs in Aberdeen. If you would like details of meetings please contact David Ely at [aberdeenlocalgroup@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:aberdeenlocalgroup@yahoo.co.uk).

#### ABERGAVENTNY

We have continued to meet monthly and have started a detailed consideration of issues around the Anthropic principle, looking at Brian Greene's 'The Elegant Universe' DVD series. We are keen to understand in more detail how to have informed discussion with 'new' atheists influenced by Hawking's 'The Grand Design' about M theory removing any 'need for God'. The group size varies from six to ten generally. If you would like to get involved with the discussion group in Abergavenny, please contact Dr Huw Morgan at [jhcmorgan@gmail.com](mailto:jhcmorgan@gmail.com).

#### BIRMINGHAM

If you would like details of future happenings in Birmingham please e-mail [bhamcis@gmail.com](mailto:bhamcis@gmail.com) or join the Birmingham CiS Facebook group [www.facebook.com/groups/ciscbirmingham](http://www.facebook.com/groups/ciscbirmingham)

#### BRISTOL

On Friday 7th November the Bristol group will be welcoming Dr. Peter Bussey, Emeritus reader of Physics, University of Glasgow, to speak on the topic 'God and the Big Bang'. Contact Tina Biggs for more information ([cmbiggs@googlemail.com](mailto:cmbiggs@googlemail.com))

#### CAMBRIDGE

For details of upcoming events in Cambridge please go to [www.st-edmunds.cam.ac.uk/faraday/Lectures.php](http://www.st-edmunds.cam.ac.uk/faraday/Lectures.php).

#### CENTRAL SOUTH

On 8 May Prof. John Bryant gave an excellent talk, followed by Q&A, on the subject "DNA: from

designer babies to databases" to an audience of about 120 people. Recordings of this and all previous events in the Central South group can be found on our webpage [www.cis.org.uk/groups/central-south/](http://www.cis.org.uk/groups/central-south/) Our next event will be on October 23rd when Ernest Lucas will speak on "Can we believe Genesis today?". If you would like more information about the group please go to our webpage or e-mail Peter May on [petergeorgemay@gmail.com](mailto:petergeorgemay@gmail.com)

#### DURHAM

Contact Alan Roberts ([a.w.roberts@durham.ac.uk](mailto:a.w.roberts@durham.ac.uk)) for information about future events.

#### EDINBURGH

If you are interested in taking over running the Edinburgh local group, or would like more details about the group, please email Gavin Merrifield ([g.d.merrifield@gmail.com](mailto:g.d.merrifield@gmail.com))

#### GLASGOW

For details of future events in Glasgow please contact Dr Lawrence Osborn on [lawrence@lhosborn.co.uk](mailto:lawrence@lhosborn.co.uk)

#### HARROW

For details of future events in Harrow please contact Revd Lyndon North ([revlnorth@aol.com](mailto:revlnorth@aol.com))

#### IPSWICH

For information about events in Ipswich please contact Dr John Ling ([jjling@btopenworld.com](mailto:jjling@btopenworld.com)).

#### IRELAND

Details about the upcoming events in Ireland can be found at [www.cis.org.uk/ireland](http://www.cis.org.uk/ireland)

#### LEEDS

On April 29, Professor Nigel Hooper, a member of South Parade Church, gave a talk on defeating Alzheimer's disease. At present there are no drugs available to cure or halt the progression of the disease, a situation that left us deeply concerned.

The speaker at our last meeting on Tuesday May 20th was to have been Rev Dr Rodney Holder speaking about his latest book. Unfortunately a death in the family meant that Rodney could not attend. His place was taken, at a few days notice, by Professor Tom McLeish FRS of Durham University, who gave a very interesting and powerful talk on Faith and Wisdom in Science. At the end there was a long line of people



waiting to buy copies of his latest book 'Faith and Wisdom in Science'. Rodney Holder will now be speaking at our next meeting at 8pm on Tuesday 9th September. His topic again is his latest book 'Big Bang, Big God: A Universe Designed For Life?' Further details of meetings from John Lockwood at [jglockwood1@me.com](mailto:jglockwood1@me.com)

### **LIVERPOOL**

The Liverpool group continues to meet on the last Wednesday of every month in term time at 5:30 pm in the Anglican Chaplaincy, Mulberry Court. Contact Neville Cobbe for more information ([Neville.cobbe@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:Neville.cobbe@liverpool.ac.uk)).

### **MANCHESTER**

Please contact Peter Budd at [peter.budd@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:peter.budd@manchester.ac.uk) if you would like more details about the Manchester group, or to be added onto the mailing list.

### **NORWICH**

Please contact [info@cis.norwich.org.uk](mailto:info@cis.norwich.org.uk) for details about upcoming events in the Norwich area.

### **NOTTINGHAM**

The Nottingham group meets regularly for discussion about science - faith topics. Please contact Geoff Bagley ([geoffbagley@me.com](mailto:geoffbagley@me.com)) if you would like further information.

### **OXFORD**

For information about the Oxford local group, contact Diana Briggs at [diana.briggs@wolfson.oxon.org](mailto:diana.briggs@wolfson.oxon.org)

### **ROYAL HOLLOWAY**

The recently formed group at Royal Holloway are encouraged by initial meetings, and are planning their next event for the end of the summer term: "Is a Belief in Jesus Rational?". For more information, or to be added to the Royal Holloway mailing list, please contact Aline Porteous on [aline.porteous@gmail.com](mailto:aline.porteous@gmail.com).

### **SHEFFIELD**

The Sheffield CiS group meets regularly for prayer and discussion during the university term. For details about happenings in the Sheffield area or to be added on to our mailing list please e-mail [shefuni.cisc@gmail.com](mailto:shefuni.cisc@gmail.com) or join our Facebook group [www.facebook.com/groups/shefuni.cisc/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/shefuni.cisc/).

### **SOUTH WEST**

If you would like details about future events in the South West, please contact Prof. David Huntley ([dhuntley@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:dhuntley@plymouth.ac.uk)).

### **ST ANDREWS**

For more information about the undergraduate group at St Andrews, please contact Dr Andrew Torrance ([abt3@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:abt3@st-andrews.ac.uk)) or Joshua Sharp ([jas29@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:jas29@st-andrews.ac.uk)). For more information about the postgraduate group, please contact Dr Rebecca Goss ([rjmg@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:rjmg@st-andrews.ac.uk)).

### **SURREY**

Professor John Bryant spoke on 'Embryos & Genes - Issues at the Start of Life,' to a very interested audience at our May meeting. On July 8th, Bishop David Atkinson, who has just retired from Operation Noah, spoke on 'Climate & Covenant.' Looking ahead to November 18th, Sir Colin Humphreys will be speaking on 'The Star of Bethlehem'. For more details about future events in the Surrey area please contact Joy Perkins at [joyeperkins@googlemail.com](mailto:joyeperkins@googlemail.com).

### **TYNESIDE & NORTHUMBERLAND**

On 7 July, local CiS group members Carol Jagger (Professor of Epidemiology at Newcastle University and a researcher in Ageing and Health) and George Proud (retired surgeon and ordained Anglican local minister) described some of their experience and understanding under the heading 'My science, my faith', leading to discussion that included aspects of medical provision and inequality in the UK and across the world, and end-of-life issues. We hope this format will be a regular feature in our future programme. For information from the group in the Newcastle area, please contact Bill Clegg at [bill.clegg@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:bill.clegg@ncl.ac.uk).

### **WEST MIDLANDS**

The West Midlands Group meets infrequently and people should contact Godfrey Armitage if they are local and interested at [g.n.armitage@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:g.n.armitage@warwick.ac.uk) There is no meeting currently planned.

### **WORCESTER**

For information about upcoming events, please contact Kim Stansfield at [kimestansfield@gmail.com](mailto:kimestansfield@gmail.com).