

# PréCis

**Connect:-**  
**Issue 6**

*In the latest edition of Connect, now available online, we're exploring the topic "Origins". We have 3 different aspects of Origins, an interview with Prof Chris Done and a report on a student event in Cork.*  
[connect.cis.org.uk](http://connect.cis.org.uk)



**Cara Parrett**

## Southern Conference

**Saturday 2nd  
November  
10:00 to 17:00**

**St Paul's, Robert Adam  
Street  
London W1U 3A**

**More details - please see  
page 3 and 5**

### **An interview with Cara Parrett Winner of the 2019 Oliver Barclay lecture**

***Do you have any thoughts on what your lecture may be about?***

As a marine conservationist I look forward to diving into some of the challenges Christian conservationists face, and some questions I have faced through these experiences. Many people view marine biology as a romantic career full of swimming with dolphins. The reality I have come to face is that successful conservation on the 'frontlines' has much more to do with engaging with the human heart - our own and those of the populations we are approaching - than physically getting involved with the animal. I am on a journey of discovering how God provides us not only the

motivation and hope to continue this challenging work, but also guidance on how to do so.

### ***When and how did you become a Christian?***

I was blessed to grow up in a Christian household. I think I was always convinced that God had created me and that he loved me, but my journey with God became a personal conviction and firm decision when I was on a Christian camp as an early teenager. These camps are full of great teaching and fellowship with mature Christians. It was during the singing of a song – I wish I could remember which – that I had the realisation that if this was true, it was the most important thing in the world and I should want to share it. It has been a journey since then, but mercifully God has held me close, even during periods where I might not have been holding on very tightly to him.

### ***What were the things that spiked your interest in Marine Biology and Zoology?***

Do you know, I can't remember a time when I didn't want to be a marine biologist. It may have been an overactive dolphin phase which never truly passed, combined with nature documentaries and a general love of all animals. Growing up in South Africa I had a rich animal world to tap into and I just wanted to be around wildlife and to help in any way I could. Before going to University to study Marine Biology and Oceanography I spent a gap year saving up to volunteer in Madagascar. In Madagascar I learned to scuba dive and so properly entered the underwater world for the first time... and it was amazing! This further fuelled my desire to study marine ecosystems further.

### ***What challenges do you see for Christians and caring for marine life?***

I think in our current day and age it can be very easy to get disheartened as a marine conservationist. The ocean truly connects the 'four corners of the Earth', and so oceanic-level threats can feel particularly large and daunting – take, for example, plastic pollution and increases in sea temperature. You can start to doubt the difference your efforts can make. This can be a big challenge for Christians who feel deeply convicted of the mandate to wisely steward God's creation.

Another challenge can be how to approach lovingly those people, communities and powers who hold different and opposing opinions and values.

### ***How do you view studying science in relation to God?***

Unfortunately, for most of my studies, I subconsciously viewed them as being quite separate. We don't have an organisation mirroring Christians in Science in South Africa. I was the only biologist at church and the only Christian on my course (that I knew of). So this has been a big journey for me. For a time, evolution was a sticking point. I am not sure why, but I think I had absorbed a common perception that Christians couldn't accept evolution as a method of creation, and so I kept quiet and boxed things up in my mind. I was forced to open and examine these two boxes together during a rather uncomfortable philosophy of science lecture in my fourth year. Luckily I then came across Francis Collin's book 'The Language of God' which brought me to such a liberating position of being able to hold firmly to my relationship to God, his extraordinary power and care in creating the Universe as well as the freedom to explore

# **2019 CiS Southern Conference**

## ***Future Challenges for Christians in the Sciences***

***Saturday, 2nd November  
Registration starts at 10.00am***

***St Paul's, Robert Adam Street  
London W1U 3A***

***For more information and to book  
please go to Eventbrite -  
<https://tinyurl.com/y6pmh3gc>***

***Early bird tickets available till 20th Oct***

the world around me and the mechanisms which make it tick. Rather than presenting a firm conclusion about how to hold these things together, the book gave me various options that take both the Bible and science seriously, and this is exactly what I needed. After working in the field I was then blessed to get a job at the Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge where I had the opportunity to meet wise Christians and scientists who have helped me move beyond the idea of science and faith just ‘fitting together’, to appreciating how they can positively interact to bring me a richer understanding of both my relationship with God and my relationship with, and care for, the rest of creation. I am now able to approach my conservation work not in a bubble, but as an outflowing of my love for the creation which God also loves and values.

### ***What has been the most interesting thing you have worked on in your career?***

After University I was lucky enough to get my first job in the Republic of Maldives, running a marine conservation programme for coral reefs and endangered sea turtles. Based on a local island, rather than a resort island, I was able to experience life from within a small community completely dependent upon the ocean. The country lies

an average of 1.5 m above sea level, and it took 30 minutes to walk around the island’s circumference... talk about living close to the ocean. I worked there for a year, during which time I learned a lot from living in the community. The work rehabilitating and releasing sea turtles was rewarding, exhausting and fascinating. I could say so much here, but I think some of the things that struck me most about working with these animals is how vulnerable they are at every stage – nests were being fully raided, juveniles are tiny and defenceless, adults rely on diets in shrinking habitats and as air-breathing, beach-nesting animals they are inextricably linked to the human realm of the Maldives. An active effort is needed to minimise the extinction risk of these species - species which have been on this planet much longer than humans.

### ***What is your major interest outside of work?***

I love to sing. I sing in a church worship band, so I spend a lot of my time outside of work singing and practising. Other down time activities include doing pilates in the garden and I am trying to get into the habit of park runs every Saturday. People tell me it will start getting easier soon... so I will keep trying. Our local park run is organised in the Wimpole National Trust Estate which is beautiful, so if I get too tired I can pretend I am stopping to watch the swans/cows/lambs – perfect!

### ***If you could chat with a scientist from the past, who would it be?***

It may sound a little predictable, but I would love to chat to Jacques-Yves Cousteau, the ocean explorer who not only inspired people to care for what is under the waves, but also helped people dive under for themselves - and I know there are few greater wonders than entering this world for yourself! I have



**Cara at a turtle rehab centre - Maldives**

always heard his name spoken with such reverie from those who grew up watching his underwater films. What I didn't know was his credential as the 'father of scuba diving'. I recently attended a talk in the David Attenborough building, Cambridge given by his son Philippe, and I was fascinated. Jacques-Yves and French engineer Emile Gagnan re-

designed a car regulator into a demand regulator which would supply divers with air upon demand, (this was the beginning of what was to become the Aqua-lung system) paving the way for the diving ability from which I have benefitted. His passion seems to have been so strong. I think it would be a great conversation. Cont on Page 6

### **Southern Conference Speakers:-**

**Prof Neil Messer** - *Neuroscience and cognitive science of religion*

Neil works at the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Winchester. His research interests concern the intersections of theology and ethics with the biosciences and health care and in particular, bioethics and neuro-ethics.

**Prof John Wood and Prof Berry Billingsley** - *Trust in Science*

**John** has a background in Materials Science. He is Chair of the ATTRACT project advisory committee, a former consultant to CERN and the EC and former Secretary General of the Association of Commonwealth Universities. He is Chair of the Trustees of CiS.

**Berry** is Professor of Science Education at Canterbury Christ Church University. She leads the LASAR (Learning about Science and Religion) research team and her interests include engagement in science, and the communication of science and technology news in the media.

**Prof Keith Fox** - *Challenges from recent developments in genetics*

Keith is Associate Director of The Faraday Institute and Professor of Biochemistry at the University of Southampton. His research interests concern DNA structure and its recognition. He is a former chairman and trustee of CiS and is Editor of Science & Christian Belief.

**Cara Parrett** - *2019 Oliver Barclay Lecture winner*

Cara is a marine researcher with communication experience in the field and the academic environment. She is the Centre Coordinator for EPSRC Centre for Innovative Manufacturing in Large Area Electronics - University of Cambridge.

**Dr Hilary Marlow** - *Future challenges for the environment and creation care*

Hilary is a Lecturer in the Faculty of Divinity, Girton College, Cambridge. She is a Trustee of A Rocha and a Director of the John Ray Initiative. She speaks widely on environmental issues.



Cara scuba diving

### ***Where is life taking you now?***

I am currently working in communications within the University of Cambridge Engineering Department. Here I hope to improve my science communication and leadership skills while gaining experience communicating at the interface between science and government/policy. As conservation is quite a 'human-facing' branch of biology (as a source of both threats and solutions) I then hope to use this communications training to make a difference through scientific research and effective communication tailored for decision makers and the public.

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***In February 2019, Christians in Science visited University College Cork to give a talk at their CU. Abi Oyeyemi provides an account of the event.***

### **Science as a Christian Vocation**

Starting university in Cork, Ireland, I entered through a general science degree and specialised in Chemistry of Pharmaceutical Compounds. I also got involved in the Christian Union. Though I love college I've always wanted to use my talents in science for God's purposes, so working with

Christians in Science (CiS) was really an answer to prayer.

I was connected to Abigail Patterson through our Christian Union staff-worker. I was informed of all the great work CiS do, so I was enthusiastic to host an event with them. After a few weeks working with CiS to book rooms, print posters and advertise to students, the day of the talk came: Science as a Christian Vocation, given by Andrew Halestrap, Emeritus Professor of Biochemistry at the University of Bristol, and current CiS chairman. It was a great success, with many attendees, both student and staff. The refreshments afterwards provided a safe place to chat or ask questions.

It never ceases to amaze me what God can do. He reaches us where we are and calls us to serve him with what we have in our hands. I have always been told to use the talents God has given me to glorify him, and what we can do in our everyday lives to glorify God and spread his word can be subtle and powerful. Whether it is through shepherds, fishermen, tentmakers or scientists, God is a God of all people. Though it seemed like a small step, booking a room, sourcing refreshments and starting that conversation, it made a difference; it planted seeds.

Hearing about various Christian scientists and how their passions were driven by their faith was amazing. It was such an encouragement that their love for their subject was complemented by their love for God. I learned that it was not just in what I study but in how I act in my studies that I could glorify God. Being genuine, truthful and upfront in research and maintaining integrity in all my work is something small but powerful I can do to show God's love. I wasn't the only one to be touched by the talk. We received feedback that people were

encouraged to explore Christianity and their faith knowing others in the same profession could confidently say their faith went hand in hand with their chosen career path.

It never ceases to amaze me what God can do. He reaches us where we are and calls us to serve him with what we have in our hands.

Though I only acted as a small part of God's big plan, seeing the fruit spring forth from the event has been a blessing. God planted seeds in the lives of so many that night and encouraged me not to keep God and science separate but to integrate them to serve him with my whole self and in all areas of my life. No matter what area of science I follow, I know God is with me as he was with Robert Boyle, Michael Faraday and many more.

It was a pleasure connecting with Abigail and Andrew to organise this event. The support, encouragement and resources they provided were amazing.

Lastly, I would like to encourage anyone thinking about getting involved with CiS. No matter how big or small you want to start it's all about that first step, so do get in touch with them, ask questions, start small and see what God will do.

'For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose'  
Philippians 2:13

**Andrew Halestrap (CiS Chairman) will hold two similar events, as shared by Abi in the above report, in mid October. These are with the Christian Unions at Keele and Lancaster.**

If you wish to start a Local Group in your area, please get in touch with Abigail, our Development Officer, at [do@cis.org.uk](mailto:do@cis.org.uk)



## LOCAL GROUP NEWS

Details of all events are also available on the CiS App and on our website [www.cis.org.uk/events](http://www.cis.org.uk/events).

### BRISTOL

Friday 1 Nov, 7:30 pm: *Discussion Group*.

Friday 13 Dec, 7pm: *The poetry and music of science – comparing creativity in science and art*

Speaker: Professor Tom McLeish FRS Venue: Redland Church Hall, Redland Green Rd, Bristol BS6 7HE. For more information or discussion group locations, please contact Christina Biggs [cmbbiggs@gmail.com](mailto:cmbbiggs@gmail.com)

### CAMBRIDGE

For details of events in Cambridge please go to <http://www.faraday.st-edmunds.cam.ac.uk/>

### DUNDEE

Monday 7 Oct, 5:15pm: *Does Evolution Lead to Love?* Speaker: Professor Jeff Schloss. Location: Main Physics Lecture Theatre, University of St Andrews.

For more details on Dundee events please contact [christiansinsciencedundee@gmail.com](mailto:christiansinsciencedundee@gmail.com)

### EDINBURGH

For more information please email [cisedinburgh3@gmail.com](mailto:cisedinburgh3@gmail.com)

## **HARROW**

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

## **HUDDERSFIELD**

For details please contact Omololu Fagunwa on fagunwaomololu@yahoo.com.

## **IPSWICH**

For more information about future events please contact Dr John Ling (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) or contact Dr Peter van der Burgt (peter.vandenburgt@nuim.ie)

## **LEEDS**

Further details of meetings please contact John Lockwood at jglockwood1@me.com

## **LONDON**

For more details about the London group please email [cins.london@gmail.com](mailto:cins.london@gmail.com)

## **MANCHESTER**

For more information on up coming events please contact the Secretary on [sec.cismanchester@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sec.cismanchester@yahoo.co.uk)

## **NORWICH**

Monday, 14 Oct, 7:00pm: *Who Controls the Worlds Climate: God, Nature or People?* Speaker: Prof Mike Hulme. Location: Norwich Cathedral, Norwich NRI 4EH. Please contact [sfnorfolk1@gmail.com](mailto:sfnorfolk1@gmail.com) for more details.

## **OXFORD**

For more information, please contact Diana Briggs at [diana.briggs@wolfson.oxon.org](mailto:diana.briggs@wolfson.oxon.org)

## **OXFORD - Students**

For details please contact Matthew Patterson - [matthew.patterson@physics.ox.ac.uk](mailto:matthew.patterson@physics.ox.ac.uk)

## **READING**

For more information please contact Dave Law at [cisreading@yahoo.com](mailto:cisreading@yahoo.com)

## **SHEFFIELD**

There is a monthly meeting for staff at Sheffield University, on the 1st Wednesday of every month, in "Jessops Café". (Please note change of

venue). If you are interested in joining, feel free to turn up, or contact Dr Rhoda Hawkins on [rhoda.hawkins@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:rhoda.hawkins@sheffield.ac.uk)

## **SOUTHAMPTON**

For information on meetings please contact Peter May on [petergeorgemay@gmail.com](mailto:petergeorgemay@gmail.com)

## **SOUTH WEST**

Friday 8th Nov, 7:30pm: *Is there a Christian Response to our Biodiversity Crisis?* Speaker: Professor John Spicer

Location: Upper Lecture Theatre, Sherwell Centre, Plymouth University.

For more information on events please email [cissouthwest@gmail.com](mailto:cissouthwest@gmail.com)

## **ST ANDREWS**

Monday 7 Oct, 5:15pm: *Does Evolution Lead to Love?* Speaker: Professor Jeff Schloss. Location: Main Physics Lecture Theatre, University of St Andrews

For details on the Undergraduate group please contact Dr A Torrance ([abt3@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:abt3@st-andrews.ac.uk)) Postgraduate group, please contact Dr Rebecca Goss ([rjmg@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:rjmg@st-andrews.ac.uk)).

## **SURREY**

For more details please contact Joy Perkins at [joyeperkins@googlemail.com](mailto:joyeperkins@googlemail.com)

## **SURREY HEATH**

For more details please contact John Russell at [chynoweth.jw@gmail.com](mailto:chynoweth.jw@gmail.com)

## **TYNESIDE & NORTHUMBERLAND**

For information on Newcastle events, please contact Bill Clegg at [bill.clegg@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:bill.clegg@ncl.ac.uk)

## **WEST MIDLANDS**

For more information please contact Godfrey Armitage on [g.n.armitage@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:g.n.armitage@warwick.ac.uk)

## **WORCESTER**

For more information please contact Jim Smith on [jgsmith29@aol.com](mailto:jgsmith29@aol.com)

## **YORK**

For more information please email [christiansinscienceryork788@gmail.com](mailto:christiansinscienceryork788@gmail.com)