

The Story: Postgraduate Christian Ministry around the UK

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friends
INTERNATIONAL

No 4

A note from Remi

I hope this letter finds you well! Praise God with me for His faithful, love and care for us. God has been and continues to be at work in the lives of students across the country. Here are some of the things that have been going on!

The Oxford Evangelical Pastorate has been successful in appointing a Graduate chaplain. I have been meeting one to one with several people, for example, a Chinese Canadian visiting scholar to discuss faith and how it relates to her as a person. I also met with a Malaysian Muslim MPhil student, who is considering coming back to Cambridge for a PhD. She hopes to continue meeting with me when she returns. I went to Bath in the South of England and spoke with one of the local Church leaders, the local Friends International worker and postgraduate students about the possibility of forming a postgraduate fellowship.

In March I had another CT scan and it was all clear, I do not have to be scanned again until September. Thanks be to God.

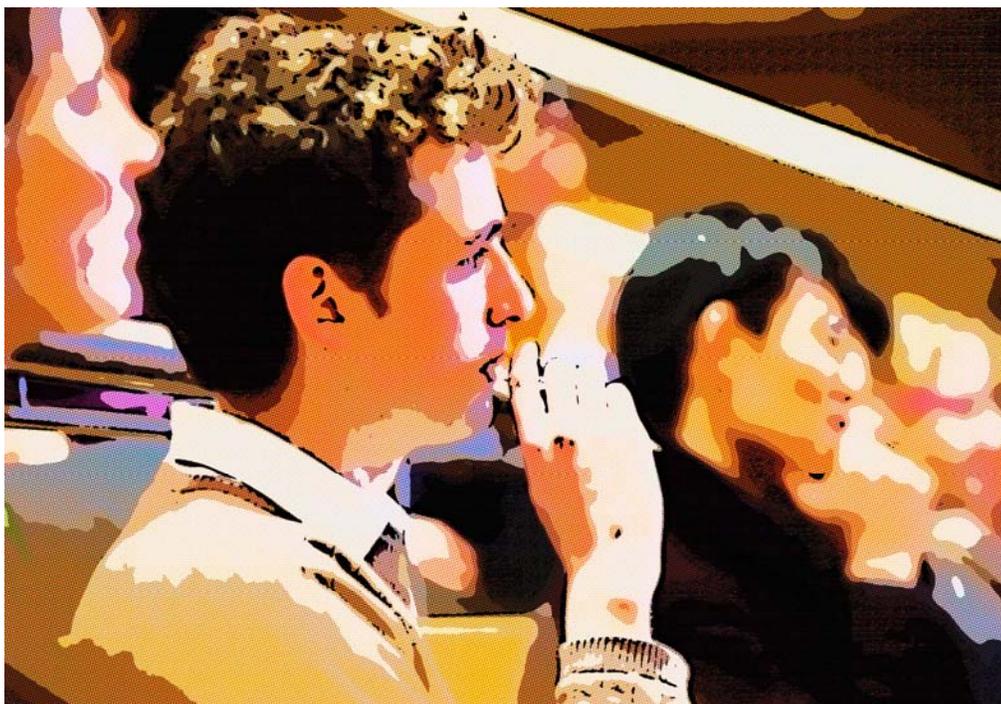
I was in Canada visiting my Canadian Church family and friends, updated them on how the postgraduate ministry is progressing in England and organized a benefit concert for the ministry. It included Classical, Jazz and Gospel music played by professional musicians.

Over the summer, I will be leading one of the Cambridge International Outreach summer teams, visiting Postgraduate groups and continuing my one-to-one meetings.

Veritas at Cambridge: A Retrospective

Eighteen of the graduate students who helped to organize the inaugural Veritas Forum at Cambridge ('Faith in the Public Sphere?') squeezed into the small cottage where my wife and I live for a 'debriefing dinner'. Just as throughout the past six months we had shared in the planning, responsibilities, and challenges of organizing the Veritas Forum, so we now shared a meal and conversations. The evening was a time for celebration and reflection, for analysis and future planning. But most of all, the evening was a time for giving thanks to God for blessing the Forum so richly.

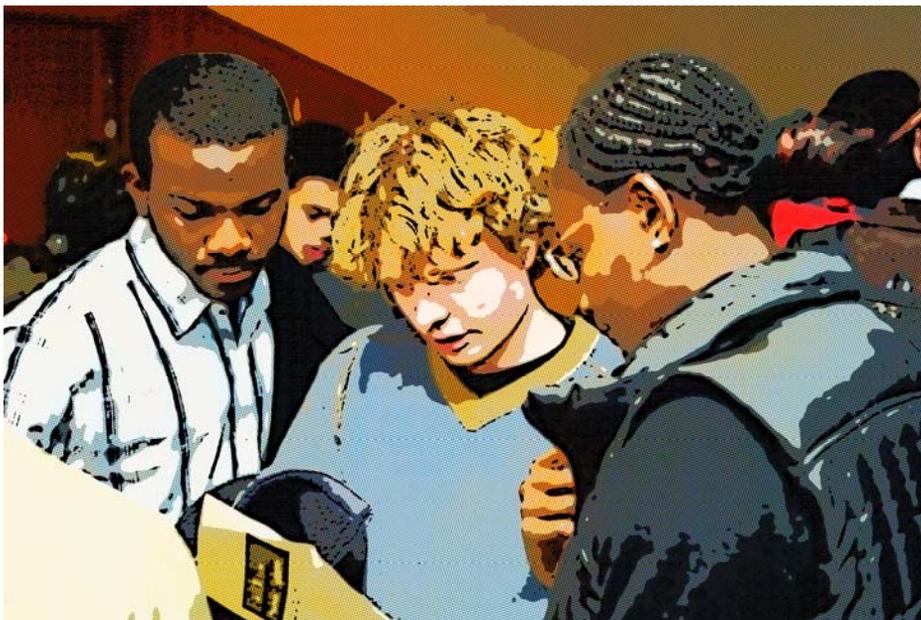
When we began to plan the Veritas Forum, we immediately realized that we had at least two things working against us. First, in a city and university so filled with tradition, novelty does not fare well. Second, Cambridge's intellectual vibrancy manifests itself in numerous seminars, talks, and symposia. The sheer number of events means that it is rare for any single event



to be extremely well-attended. The Veritas Forum, we hoped, would be different from other events in that it would give the participants an opportunity to explore their own commitments and presuppositions while considering life's most challenging and important

questions with others. The Forum was to provide an arena in which one could ask honest questions informed by one's deepest commitments; matters of belief and faith could be discussed freely.

Still, while we hoped this would be a different kind of event, it would still show up on the calendar as one event among many, and a new one at that. With this challenge in mind, we worked very hard to publicize the events.



However, at the end of the day, we realized that the size of the crowds was not in our hands. We trusted in God to draw people to the events, just as we trusted in Him to provide good speakers and sufficient funds.

As it turned out, the speakers were very good and the events were well-attended. We drew over 100 people each for presentations by Baroness Caroline Cox on Friday evening and Sir John Polkinghorne on Saturday evening. Saturday afternoon seminars by Dr. Denis Alexander and David Sandifer also drew about 70 people a piece. The final event, a lecture by Prof. Alister McGrath, was especially well-attended, with well over 200 people in the audience. However, the success of the event is to be judged by the discussions and conversations it provoked, not by mere numbers. To give a flavor of the issues that were discussed, let me briefly summarize the talk by Polkinghorne, thought by many of those in attendance to be one of the best presentations at the Forum.

Polkinghorne, a world-renown physicist who is also a clergyman in the Church of England, discussed the

relationship between science and faith from his background as a mathematical physicist.

He began with an apt saying by the great Cambridge mathematical physicist Paul Dirac, a founder of quantum mechanics and, in Polkinghorne's estimation, the greatest physicist of the 20th century. Dirac used to say that it is more important for an equation to be beautiful than for it to be supported by experiments. Many things can go wrong in experimentation. Moreover, one will often find that with a little tweaking, a beautiful equation will prove correct. However, it is almost impossible for an ugly equation to be right. Polkinghorne explained how the natural human desire for beauty is reflected in the beautiful order of the world, mathematics in particular.

He then explained how the Christian faith is consistent with such beauty. However, he argued, we must not stop with the general deism of a cosmic god of beauty, but must turn to Scripture to get the rest of the story. In the Q&A session, he did a great job of discussing the importance of the miracle of the resurrection and its centrality to the Christian faith.

The second half of the talk was in some ways the inverse of the first: if the first moved from science to Christianity, the second moved from Christianity to science and explored how Christianity possessed the theological resources to guide scientific experimentation. He used embryonic research as an example. He showed that many complex questions are involved in this important matter, and suggested that Christianity, rather than naturalism, possesses the resources to do justice to its complexity, even if Christians disagree about the correct policies to adopt. He left all who attended, Christians and non-Christians alike, with much to think about and discuss. And this was precisely the goal of the Veritas Forum.

In sum, I think that all of our expectations for the Forum were met and even surpassed. As a committee, we are very thankful that God gave us an opportunity to serve in this manner. We are in the process of forming a new committee for next year's event, which we hope to hold in either the Michaelmas or Lent term. To find out more please email veritascambridge@gmail.com.

The Chair, Veritas Forum
At Cambridge

Books: Anscombe review

Years ago in an undergraduate philosophy class, whether by chance or providence, my instructor asked me to introduce the class to a short essay from 1958 entitled ‘Modern Moral Philosophy’. He called it ‘a short, pithy little essay that turned the field of modern ethics upside down’. I was instantly intrigued by the allusion to bravado and brevity. How could someone subvert a whole tradition of moral thinking in less than twenty pages? My instructor added that it was a ‘dense and difficult’ piece and he offered to help me get started. Over the weekend, I spent every waking hour trying to come to grips with the essay’s multi-faceted argument, which was couched in terse and incisive references to complicated debates from the past. Up till that point, I had never read any text with such close attention to detail and made so little progress. Yet, every little bit of headway I made was thrilling and revealed whole new vistas of moral insight. It was my first glimpse into the life and thought of Elizabeth Anscombe (G. E. M. Anscombe in the world of scholarship) and I was hooked.



The essay that first bewitched me, formerly included in a fine collection of Anscombe’s essays entitled *Ethics, Religion and Politics* (1981), can now be found in a new collection of her essays entitled *Human Life, Action and Ethics* (2005). Both of these collections are well worth a look. Anscombe was a devout Roman Catholic and her *oeuvre* provides an outstanding example of Christian engagement with public life in Britain. In particular, I would like to commend the new collection. Though some of the essays focus on technical debates in the field of analytic philosophy many provide penetrating commentary on contemporary debates about the dignity of human life and its implications for family, society, and the field of medicine.

Unfortunately, despite its value to Christians, Anscombe’s work is not as widely known outside philosophical circles as it should be. I say this not as a frustrated and lonely philosopher pleading to the wider public to pay attention to my discipline, for I am training as a historian and have not studied philosophy formally for many years, but as a Christian fascinated and inspired by fellow believers who combine clear thinking with bold living.

For Anscombe was not just a philosopher, but an acute social critic and activist. Indeed, Anscombe was a serious *Christian* and a serious *thinker*. As a young fellow at Oxford in the 1950s she received widespread attention in the press when she protested against awarding Harry Truman an honorary degree because he was responsible for killing innocent human beings (when he dropped atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki) and as an elderly woman she

scandalized philosopher colleagues when she was arrested protesting outside an abortion clinic for similar reasons. In short, her understanding of the truth compelled her to act. She has also left a profound intellectual legacy. It should be emphasized that the more widely known work of Alisdair MacIntyre, Stanley Hauerwas and Karol Wojtyla (who became Pope John Paul II) would be hard to imagine without Anscombe’s recovery of virtue ethics and her penetrating analysis of human action and the human person. In short, if you enjoy the work of MacIntyre, Hauerwas and Wojtyla, I heartily commend to you the writings of Elizabeth Anscombe.

In the introduction to *Human Life, Action and Ethics*, Anscombe’s daughter, Mary Geach, compared her mother’s writing style to the Italian dessert panforte, which is ‘all fruit and nuts and no dough, very chewy and tough’. I would add that Anscombe’s writings and panforte are both uncommon treats for those willing to spend the time chewing.

Todd Thompsom

Transforming the Mind: A beautiful mind

20th to 22nd June 2008

Dovedale House, Ilam, Derbyshire, DE6 2AZ

Romans 12 urges us to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, and not to conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. What does this mean in our academic lives?

This year we will address the importance of intellectual virtues in developing a beautiful mind:

- How can we cultivate a Christian mind?
- How can our research serve God?
- Can our studies help us know God?

How can we integrate the mind and the imagination?

The conference is an annual event for postgraduates whose overall aim is to challenge us to "offer [our] bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God" (Romans 12:1).

Speakers:



Andrew Fellows was born in Canada to English parents. He came back to the UK 23 years ago. Since then he has gained a wife, four children and lots of pets. For seven years he pastored a church in the North of England. For the last thirteen years he has lived and worked at L'Abri fellowship.

Stefan Lindholm is Swedish and moved to England together with his wife, Lois, to work at L'Abri Fellowship in 2005. He has studied Philosophy and theology at Lund University and currently he is doing his PhD in post-reformation Christology at Stavanger school of missions, Norway.



Programme:

The talks will help us integrate academic life and Christian faith. There will be opportunities for group discussion, and worship through music. Dovedale House is situated in beautiful Derbyshire countryside, and there will be some free time to explore. A highlight for many is simply the chance to meet other Christians facing similar issues.

Registration:

The cost of attending the conference is **£65 full board (£10 discount for bookings before 30th April; bookings close on 1st June)**. There is a £10 late booking fee. Some reduced-fee places are available for those in financial hardship.

Venue:

Dovedale House is in Ilam, a picturesque village between the Dove and Manifold valleys in the Peak District National Park. Accommodation will be in shared rooms. There are a limited number of rooms that offer disabled access. Details of how to reach the venue will be distributed to participants once registration is confirmed. Local transport can be arranged from Derby railway station.

Organisers:

A national committee of Christians from the University of Nottingham Graduate Christian Fellowship, Cambridge University Christian Graduate Society and Oxford University Graduate Christian Union.

For more information please see:

www.christianpostgrad.org.uk/ or contact

Dr Mike Clifford

E.mail: mike.clifford@nottingham.ac.uk

"be transformed by the renewing of your mind" Romans 12:2

For Your Information



National Postgraduate Ministry Coordinator

Remi Tobler contact details:

7 Ferry Lane, Chesterton, Cambridge. CB4 1NT remi.tobler@friendsinternational.org.uk www.cpgrad.org.uk



Registration Form

Name: _____

Gender: Male/Female

Details of current study:

University/College: _____

Department: _____

Status: Postgrad / Postdoc / other (please state)

Contact Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Do you have any special requirements (dietary, access, etc):

Please send a completed application form, together with a cheque made payable to **CPCOG** (Christian Postgrad Conference Organising Group) for £55 (or £65 for bookings after 30th April 2008) to:

Debbie Dickson
c/o Chaplaincy, Portland Building
The University of Nottingham
University Park
Nottingham NG7 2RD
email: debnott@gmail.com



Resources for Postgrads: Spotlight on The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion

The Faraday Institute, based at St. Edmund's College, Cambridge, aims to bring academic rigour to science and faith interactions. Too often the debate has been hijacked by extremists who polarise the debate for particular ideological reasons. The Faraday Institute aims to move beyond that kind of unhelpful polarisation in order to carry out a research and education programme that will inform people about the real issues involved.

The Institute provides some useful resources for graduates who wish to explore the interactions between science and Christian faith. Faraday Courses are open to any graduate or undergraduate from any university in the world, of any faith or none, with lecturers on the Courses mostly committed Christians. Students and Post Docs receive large discounts. The Short Courses are held over the week-end so that people who are busy in the lab or in other studies during the week can still benefit from the

Courses. There is also a 1-week Summer Course for those who wish to go a bit more in depth.

The talks are filmed and posted on the Faraday web-site in both video and MP3 formats, along with our other lectures and seminars, generating so far more than 210 items in all, one of the major international resources on science and religion freely available on-line



(www.faraday-institute.org - see the Multimedia Folder).

Another useful on-line resource arises from the termly Public Lectures and fortnightly Faraday Research Seminars held in Cambridge. This past term's Public Lecturer was Prof. John Wyatt from University College Hospital, London, active in the Christian Medical Fellowship, who

spoke on 'What is a Person? Matters of Life and Death'. Recent Research Seminar speakers have included Prof. Alister McGrath from Oxford. Many people worldwide benefit from these lectures and seminars on the web (again see www.faraday-institute.org where there is an RSS feed).

A further Faraday initiative in the public understanding of science and faith is the publication of Faraday Papers, thirteen so far, written by experts for the non-specialist, only four pages long so that they can easily be read on a train journey or wherever else you manage to get some reading done. The Papers are freely available from the Faraday web-site (www.faraday-institute.org), or can be ordered on-line very cheaply in print versions. Translations of the Papers are also being posted at the same site, so far including Chinese, German, Portuguese and Serbian, all available for free download. Many more Faraday Papers on different topics are in the pipeline. Never before have there been so

many resources to help graduates in the area of science and faith. Lets make sure that we make all the use we can of the resources that are there!

Dr Denis Alexander, dra24@hermes.cam.ac.uk is Director of the Faraday Institute for Science and Religion (www.faraday-institute.org) and is on the national committee of Christians in Science (www.cis.org.uk).

Each edition of "The Story (PG)" will focus on a subject grouping or other resource available for post-graduate students. www.cpgrad.org.uk

Supporting us:

We value your continuing prayers and financial support. If you are able, would you please consider giving to this work. You can do so by visiting www.friendsinternational.org.uk. You also can send cheques to Friends International address below. Please mark your gift "For Remi Tobler". Thank you.

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