

## PROGRAMME 2024

# CHRISTIANITY AND THE LIFE OF THE MIND: AN INTRODUCTION

**Friday 26 - Saturday 27 January 2024**

*Cheng Yu Tung Building, Jesus College, Oxford*

Welcome to DCM's 2024 January Conference: **Christianity and the Life of the Mind, An Introduction!** Our hope is that this weekend will help you to see your personal story and the story of your academic discipline in the light of **God's grand story**.

This grand drama has **four key moments**: It is the story of God's **creation** of a good and beautiful cosmos; of that good world's **fall** into sin and death; of God's **redemption** of the world in history through Israel's promised Messiah Jesus of Nazareth; and of our **great hope** that one day Jesus the Messiah will set all things right, all creation will be restored, and sin and death will be no more.

On Friday we invite you to join us on a journey as Graham Tomlin and Ard Louis challenge us to reimagine our academic disciplines and our academic careers within the arc of this grand narrative through **a vision talk and a vocation talk**. Our panel will then help us think about how this renewed vision might work **practically** in our respective vocational journeys.

On Saturday our faculty speakers will guide us through this **grand Biblical narrative**, encouraging us to **reimagine our fields of study** in the light of God's good creation (Katherine Blundell), the world's Fall into sin and death (Simeon Zahl), a renewed vision of humanity in Christ (Elaine Storkey), and the hope of the world's restoration (Christopher Wadibia). Thank you for joining us.

## FRIDAY 26 JANUARY

*1:30 p.m. Registration, coffee, & tea*

### **2:00 p.m. Welcome & introduction**

**2:10 p.m. Vision Talk: My spiritual and intellectual heroes - and what I learned from them** - Bishop Graham Tomlin (Director of the Centre for Cultural Witness, Historical Theology)

In this talk I want to focus upon a number of figures from the past whom I have come to love and admire. I will reflect on what they have taught me about the intellectual and spiritual task of loving God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength. Each one of them has helped me integrate life, scholarship and Christian faith in different ways and my hope is that this session will help you reflect on those you have learnt from in the past as you seek to bring together faith and the life of study.

**3:00 p.m. Vocation Talk: The calling of Christian postgrad students and academics** - Ard Louis (Theoretical Physics)

Based on his own academic career and experience with postgraduate ministry in several countries, Professor Ard Louis will discuss the main themes of the conference in the light of questions such as: What does our calling to be disciples of Christ mean for our academic vocation (whether temporary as students or longer term as a career)? What are some of the promises and pitfalls of the scholarly life? How can academics and postgraduate students serve and relate to the wider body of Christ (the Church)?

*3:50 p.m. Discussion*

*4:30 p.m. Coffee & tea*

**5:00 p.m. Panel discussion: Faith and scholarship** – Session chaired by Mary Louis (Senior Fellow in Management Practice, Saïd Business School) and includes:

- Lynn Gill (Vice President, Graduate & Faculty Ministries, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship USA)
- Esau McCaulley (Author; Associate Professor, New Testament, Wheaton College)
- Romuald Méango (Associate Professor of Economics, Christ Church, University of Oxford)
- Simeon Zahl (Professor of Christian Theology, Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge)
- Jakob Zeitler (PhD Centre for Artificial Intelligence, UCL; Head of R&D, Matterhorn Studio)

*6:15 p.m. Prayer*

6:30 p.m. *Travel to designated dinner location*

See your name tag for which dinner group you are in (i.e. yellow star). Your dinner location and transportation details will be communicated to your dinner group leader ahead of time.

### **7:00 p.m. Dinner and discussion with faculty hosts**

Dinner will be with a subset of your discussion group and will be hosted by various faculty members within their homes throughout Oxford. Formal dinner and discussion should conclude by 9pm.

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## **SATURDAY 27 JANUARY**

10:00 a.m. *Light breakfast, coffee & tea*

### **10:30 a.m. Explanations & questions; mechanism & meaning** - Katherine Blundell (Astrophysics)

In this talk Katherine Blundell examines the differences between Biblical language and literature, on the one hand, and scientific language and literature, on the other. Situating the Biblical creation narratives in their ancient cultural context and within the wider context of the Biblical canon, she develops a nuanced and literarily sophisticated account of what those narratives were and were not designed to convey. She suggests that the Bible was never intended to be a technical scientific monograph, but rather that Scripture employs a wide range of literary genres—poetry, proverbs, prophecies, and parables to name just a few—in order to powerfully communicate vital theological truths to a wider audience than a technically precise scientific textbook could ever hope to reach.

### **11:30 a.m. What does it mean to be human?** - Elaine Storkey (Philosophy and Sociology)

This lecture discusses how the Christian understanding of the human being steers a course between individualism and collectivism, between fatalism and personal freedom, between materialism and ‘idealism’; and how its personal and communitarian understanding of the human being is grounded in the Trinitarian God.

12:20 p.m. *Discussion*

1:00 p.m. *Lunch*

### **2:00 p.m. Seeking knowledge in a fallen world** - Simeon Zahl (Christian Theology)

In this talk Professor Zahl will reflect on what it means for a Christian to seek academic knowledge in the modern research university. He will present a Christian case for

academic rigour in light of the Christian belief that human beings are fallen creatures who struggle to see the world as it really is.

*3:00 p.m. Coffee & tea*

**3:30 p.m. Understanding Christian eschatology: God's ultimate plan for creation -**  
Chris Wadibia (Global Christianity)

For many Christians, the subject of eschatology (generally defined as how events will play out during the end times, final judgement, and God's establishment of the New Creation) brings to mind feelings of confusion, anxiety, and even fear. However, this talk explains why the eschatological visions outlined in the Bible should instead fill Christians with joy, excitement, and confidence in Christ. The purpose of this talk will be to point out popular myths that Christians unknowingly associate with biblical eschatological ideas, and to explicate why the Christian's career and professional life in this world matters in light of the new world to come.

*4:20 p.m. Discussion*

*5:00 p.m. Prayer*

*5:30 p.m. Drinks reception*

*6:30 p.m. Day closing*