

SCIENCE & RELIGION — MAKING MEANING

22nd Annual Conference of Sea of Faith Network (UK)

Registered Charity No. 1113177

The University of Leicester
Tuesday 21st – Thursday 23rd July 2009

SCIENCE & RELIGION ME&NING

After our very successful excursion to Liverpool last year, we are returning to our home ground at Leicester for our 22nd Annual Conference in July. We are fortunate to have three distinguished guest speakers this year who are prepared to take up the challenge of our theme: making meaning from science and religion.

Michael Reiss was in trouble with some sections of the media last year for suggesting that, rather than dismissing as a "misconception", teachers should take the time to explain why creationism had no scientific basis. His



Michael Reiss is Assistant Director and Professor of Science Education at the Institute of Education, University of London, Chief Executive of Science Learning Centre London, Honorary Visiting Professor at the University of York, Docent at the University of Helsinki, Director of the Salters-Nuffield Advanced Biology Project, a member of the Farm Animal Welfare Council, a Priest in the Church of England and editor of the journal *Sex Education*.

views were presented in some reports as lending support to teaching creationism as a legitimate point of view and, although both he and the Royal Society later stated that this was a misrepresentation, he resigned as their Director of Education.



Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell, FRS, FRAS is a visiting professor in astrophysics at the University of Oxford and she has just become the first female President of the Institute of Physics. She has also recently co-edited an anthology of poetry about space and astronomy. These two events have stimulated a flurry of media interest and curiosity. She is a lifelong Quaker, champions women in science and struggles to keep up with the weeds in her garden.

Jocelyn Bell Burnell was a postgraduate student at Cambridge when, in July 1967, she detected a bit of "scruff" on her chart recorder papers that tracked across the sky with the stars. She found that the signal was regularly pulsing, about

once each second. Temporarily dubbed "Little Green Man 1" the source (now known as PSR B1919+21) was eventually identified as a rapidly rotating neutron star – the first radio pulsar.

Tom Shakespeare is well known as an academic, author and broadcaster, he recently wrote: 'Humans seem to have a need to believe in ideas or entities higher than themselves. I assume it's an evolved capacity of mind,



Tom Shakespeare, Research Fellow at Newcastle University, is a social scientist and disability advocate, currently working as a consultant to the World Health Organization. He has written and broadcast widely on issues of disability, science and ethics, and his books include *Genetics Politics: from Eugenics to Genome* and *Disability Rights and Wrongs*. He is a member of the Religious Society of Friends

which makes Dawkins' rage at religion comparable to him being annoyed that humans recklessly persist in walking on two legs. Jung tells us: "You can take away a man's gods, but only to give him others in return." Given this apparent fact of life, perhaps it would be more appropriate to work with religion to develop less polarised and restrictive forms of belief and systems of meaning and belonging which challenge the individualism of the modern world while refusing the toxic simplicity of fundamentalism.'



Don Cupitt, Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge and Honorary Life President of SoF (UK), will, as last year, be reflecting on each day's activities and, on the final day, on the conference as a whole.

Our conference is being held at the Gilbert Murray Conference Centre on the Oadby site of the University of Leicester (www.le.ac.uk/conference). Conference registration opens Tuesday 21st July at 12 noon, the first plenary session will start at 2pm and the final session will end at 1pm on Thursday 23rd, after which lunch will be served. Full details of the timetable and workshop options will be sent out in early July. If at that

time you will not be at the address shown on your booking form please include a note of an alternative point of contact or let us know at the address on the form or email sofconf09@yahoo.co.uk.

As regular attenders will know, the programme includes, as well as the contributions of our main speakers, opportunities for all of us to share in workshops, base groups, early-morning and fringe activities, and just time spent talking with like-minded people. Some workshop and fringe events are already planned, but if YOU have ideas for either, please let us know in the space on the back of the form and we will get in touch. If you haven't run one before there's plenty of help on hand if you need it.



BOOKING

- The booking form may be used for one person or two people at the same address. Please copy the form, if necessary; forms and conference details will also be available at the Sea of Faith website (www.sofn.org.uk).
- Please be sure to read the booking conditions (below) and to write the details of any special requirements you may have concerning accommodation or catering on the back of the form or on a separate sheet.
- Accommodation consists of either standard single rooms with wash basins (other facilities shared) or for a higher charge single rooms with en suite facilities.
- A contribution, however small, to the Bursary Fund, would be most gratefully received. This will help members on low incomes and full-time students to attend. Last year's response was generous and we were able to help all those who applied for bursaries.

Booking Conditions

All conference fees paid to the conference provider, The Sea of Faith Network UK ('organiser') by those attending conference ('attendees') constitute a contract in accordance with the following conditions. These, in part, are conditions of the University ('venue'), which we must pass on as information.

Freedom of Information Act

Attendees making a booking agree to and shall understand that such information that is given may be digitally stored and held on computers by the organisers. The information will not be voluntarily given to any third party, with the exception of information regarding medical conditions, as described below.

Medical Conditions and Allergies

Attendees are requested to advise the organiser of any serious disability, medical condition or allergy (e.g. food or bed linen) that may require attention in arrangements or urgent medical assistance during the conference. Giving such information, the attendee shall have agreed that such information may be digitally stored on computers and shared with staff at the venue, should it affect their organizational or emergency procedures, or with the emergency services, if necessity arises. The attendee should bring necessary medications for foreseeable eventualities (e.g. inhalers). It may be necessary for attendee, venue and organiser to negotiate provision on some appropriate occasions.

Attendees with limited mobility who shall be resident and require a downstairs room are asked to request this of the organisers on the booking form. Please note, no disability, medical condition or allergy shall lead the organisers to reject an attendee's application.

Bookings

As the venue asks for a confirmed list of attendees in advance of the conference, it is necessary that attendees book by the closing date of 27th June. Thereafter places may only be available subject to cancellations. Bookings cancelled by 27th June will be refunded in full subject to a £2.00 administration fee. 60% of the booking fee will be refunded on places cancelled after that date and before 11th July, and 20% on cancellations thereafter.

Rooms

Though the organiser will make every reasonable attempt to accommodate attendees in the room of their preferred choice, this cannot be guaranteed should unexpected numbers apply. Should it be necessary to accommodate attendees in standard or other accommodation, the difference in cost will be refunded.

Programme

Though the organiser will make every reasonable attempt to ensure the smooth running of the conference, in the event of accident, illness or other unforeseen eventuality, they cannot guarantee that all advertised events, conference lectures, seminars, workshops that are advertised in current and subsequent literature can take place.

Those offering workshops are asked to negotiate with the organisers any requirements for electrical equipment as soon as possible.

Loss or damage

The organisers can accept no responsibility or liability in respect of loss or damage to property brought onto the premises by attendees, including cars, or of keys and passes issued by the organiser. The attendee should therefore hold appropriate insurance cover where applicable.

Electrical Equipment

Attendees are asked to ensure that all electrical equipment brought onto the premises (e.g. hair driers) is working in accordance with manufacturer's instructions and is safe.

Liability

No financial or other liability is accepted by the venue or organiser if for reasons beyond its control it is necessary to cancel the conference. All reasonable effort will be made to reimburse attendees, less whatever organizational costs have been incurred.

Security

Attendees shall be required to wear name badges, or have them on their person and be able to show them to security staff on request, throughout the conference.