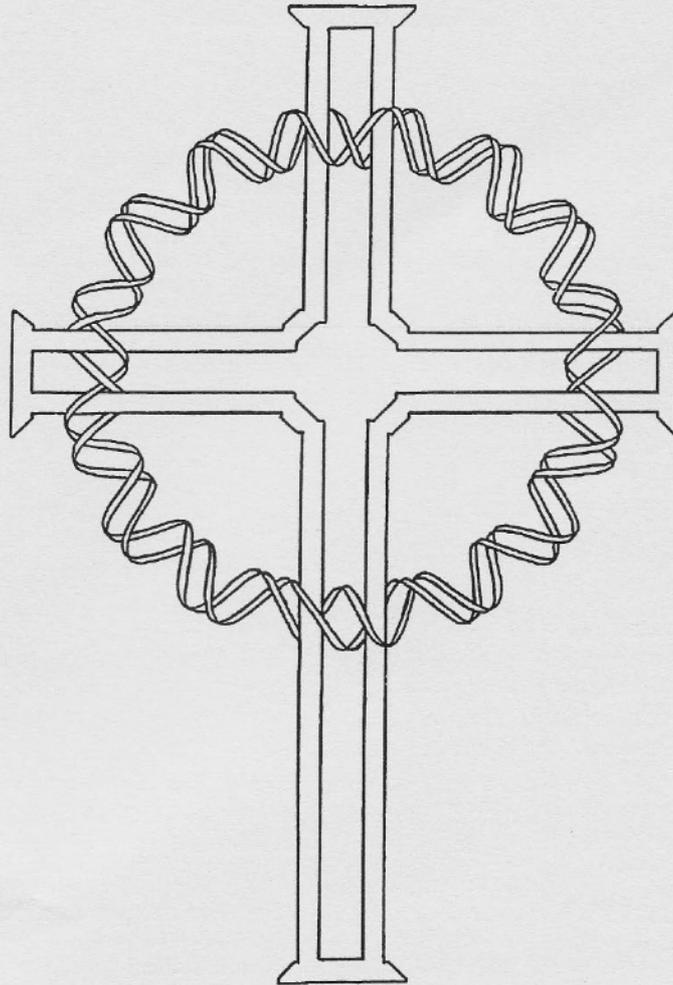


**SOCIETY OF
ORDAINED SCIENTISTS**



BULLETIN

Autumn 2025

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EDITORIAL

I am pleased to be able to present an Autumn/Winter Bulletin for 2025. This year our Gathering was held at Hinsley House in Leeds, and had a somewhat different format in that we had no guest speaker leading us in the 'retreat' part of the Gathering but instead discussions as to a way forward for the Society. You will find a sermon preached at the Closing Eucharist by the Warden, Lucas Mix, as well as details of the new Altar Cross by Mark Siddall, together with the Prayer of Blessing, written by Robin Sims-Williams used at its Dedication. David de Pomerai has written a reflection on the 'Ascension and the Society Cross'.

Mike Kirby has contributed an article 'Leadership within Science and the Church' based on his own experience of having a foot in both camps. We congratulate him most warmly on his appointment as President of the British Institute of Radiology.

There is also an interesting and fascinating article, contributed by Roger Pullin on 'Manx Crosses: Messages in Stone'. Lee Braford has contributed a useful and interesting piece on 'Generative AI Today'.

Please keep articles, book reviews and other information that members will enjoy coming into my e-mail box. It is your Bulletin and without your contributions the Society Bulletin has no future.

Maureen F Palmer

Lucas Mix, Hinsley Hall, Leeds - Sermon Society of Ordained Scientists Annual Gathering

Collect

O God, the King of glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven: Do not leave us comfortless, but send us your Holy Spirit to strengthen us, and exalt us to that place where our Savior Christ has gone before; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in

glory everlasting. Amen.

Isa 42:5-12

Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it: I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.

I am the LORD, that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to idols. See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them. Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise from the end of the earth! Let the sea roar and all that fills it, the coastlands and their inhabitants. Let the desert and its towns lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar inhabits; let the inhabitants of Sela sing for joy, let them shout from the tops of the mountains. Let them give glory to the LORD, and declare his praise in the coastlands.

Mt 10:7-16

Jesus said to the twelve, "As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food. Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. As you enter the house, greet it. If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

“See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.”

Sermon

The world upsets me right now. I wish the wars would stop. I wish the US government could be part of the solution, instead of always seeming to be part of the problem. I wish the Episcopal Church, and the Church of England, and the Anglican Communion could get over themselves and do the work we are called to do.

I want these things to change, but I know they are not mine to change, nor are they entirely someone else's. That's the challenge. I am part of the world at war. I am part of the US. And I am part of the church. What am I to do? There's something truly frustrating, if that word is strong enough, something angering, disempowering, soul-crushing even, about being in the middle space.

God grant me courage to change the things I
can, Serenity to change the things I cannot,
And the wisdom to know the difference.

What do we do with the middle space, Where we cannot
summon the energy to act nor the emotional distance to accept?
That, for me, is the Climate Crisis in a nutshell.

Then we get the passage in today's Gospel:

“As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has
come near.’ Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers,
cast out demons. You received without payment; give without
payment.”

And I must confess to a bit of petulance. Give me a break, God. You
ask for the impossible. I cannot cure the sick, raise the dead,
cure the lepers, or cast out demons. Who am I, that God asks
these things?

I am tired, I am old, I am weak. I think this is true even for those of us
in their teens. It's the time we live in. Give me a show of hands. Does

this feel like it applies to you as well?

I am grateful for the opportunity of a three Eucharist retreat. It gives me the space to inhabit discomfort in a way that I would never dare in a single sermon. It lets me name the weakness and acedia that creeps up on us.

I went to a seminar recently with Dr. Caroline McCalman, a social scientist at the University of Birmingham. She shared her surprise that, upon interviewing Climate Activists – people she had identified for their environmental work – they uniformly denied that they were, quote, environmentalists. They felt their work was not having a big enough impact, that they had not sacrificed enough to identify that way. Or, to use the language of religion, they feared their sacrifice was not worthy and, therefore, their sacrifice was not accepted, and, therefore, they were not sanctified by the act. They did not know how to make an acceptable offering.

I think this is what trips me up. When I read Matthew 10, I hear, Go out and do these things – you are responsible for the consequences. But that is not Good News in this time and place. Perhaps it was for the original hearers of Genesis and Leviticus. I do not know.

The Good News for the Psalmist was something different “the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise” (Psalm 51:17).

And for Micah: “He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8).

I could leave it there, and say something like this: Go out and try to do good – God is responsible for the consequences. There is truth to that as well, but it is still not Good News, I think. It is duty without reward, noble and grand, but ultimately fruitless.

So, I turn to Mark 4 and First Corinthians 3. We water and plant, but God gives growth. And God does give growth. I was doing some

research lately, and just a very brief search turned up interesting results. The Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences at Berkeley was founded in 1981. The Ian Ramsey Centre at Oxford was founded in 1985. The Faraday Institute at Cambridge was founded in 2006. I found Science and Religion courses at Edinburgh, London, Oxford, and Leeds, with modules at Cambridge, Durham, and countless others. Looking more closely at ecotheology, I found courses at 24 universities in North America, alongside Edinburgh and Oxford, here in the UK. There are also quite recent masters' courses at Sarum, Nazarene, and St Augustine's, training people for ministry; not to mention modules in most mainline and liberal seminaries across the ecumenical spectrum. For a field of study and an area of ministry barely heard of 50 years ago, that's a remarkable change. Theology is different than it was. The Church changed and the world changed. Looking around this room – and thinking about the Society of Ordained Scientists – we played a major role in that.

I do not have power, but we do. And, connected to communities of science and faith, as we are, we have more power than most. It is not perhaps, as decisive or autonomous as we would wish, but it is power. There is authority and grace in that power, when we look for it. There is something of God.

And so, perhaps, we can read today's passage in a different way. "As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment." Perhaps, it looks more like this: Go out and do these things – and witness what happens. Perhaps it looks like an experiment. What have you done that did have power? With whom did you work? With what lever did you change the world? That is the question. We are here because we, together have power. It is not perhaps, as decisive or autonomous as we would wish, but it is power. There is authority and grace in that power, when we look for it. There is something of God. I can't tell you

exactly where it lies, how it works, or what we are called to do with it. That is the work of the coming year.

This, then, is the Good News, and this is the invitation. Let us go forth and experiment, in prayer and in action. Let us ask God, what we are called to do, in expectation of an answer. Let us act in the world, in expectation of making a change and watch closely for the results. Let us come to the table, in expectation of being fed, of being strengthened, of being healed, and growing and changing and bearing fruit.

Leadership in Science and the Church: a reflection

Mike Kirby

It's highly likely that much of what I'm about to write about will resonate in some way with everyone reading this; and perhaps continue to encourage SOSc members to share our own stories. In some sense, this reflection stems from my recent appointment at our oldest Radiological Institute, the British Institute of Radiology (BIR) – but considering one's leadership in both Science and the Church applies to many instances we've all had...these are just a few of mine.

Having undertaken, in succession, bachelors, masters and doctoral degrees in various forms of Physics, my first professional role started at the Christie Hospital in Manchester, 37 years ago. I started as a basic grade Radiotherapy Physicist and worked my way 'through the ranks', so to speak, to Consultant and Head of Service roles over the following 22 years. But scientific leadership began before I was in my formal leadership roles – through my R&D alongside my clinical work; back then in the fields of portal imaging and dosimetry; how to use imaging to apply more accurately our external radiation beams during treatment delivery...a field I now publish on, known as Image-guided Radiotherapy. Some of my work was pioneering – the first to use commercial systems to go beyond imaging and begin to measure doses delivered to patients.

My clinical work progressed into more formal leadership through a move to Royal Preston Hospital, as part of the team to set-up a cancer center from scratch. As deputy head and then Consultant physicist, responsibility came for service development for our patients there....all the time through faith, for me, my work seemed the embodiment of loving one's neighbour. But although I was active in my local church, mostly through music and serving, the spark of formal calling to the priesthood was still 'under the hood'!

But we lead by who we are and what we can do – and so my output was not only how the Radiotherapy service developed, with the solid scientific background needed for that, but also in publishing research and leading national reports and guidance documents for how we commission Radiotherapy equipment, quality assure the networked equipment and establish the first clinical guidance for image-guided radiotherapy in the UK. My role expanded further to become a head of an NHS service and help to develop the first two Satellite Radiotherapy Centers in Manchester.

At the same time, I continued a professional involvement, through membership of UK, European and American Professional bodies – formally on committees in the UK in leading and organizing scientific meetings and conferences; most notably for the BIR. This was alongside my regular service in church, both for me being my work of faith....but with an obvious, growing call to make my church work something further still.

And so, as we've all done, I answered that formal call from God...to do more in service to God, Jesus and all in this beautiful, created order. Resignation came....in the sense that I had to respond somehow to the call but also resign from my clinical work – before I was formally accepted to train for the church! Looking back, it was a leap of faith. So I went to Cambridge, to Westcott House, fulltime for two years – and servant leadership continued through being a lead chapel musician, and the joys

of teaching sung compline to those who never felt able to!

My title was served at Blackburn Cathedral – a new calling there, but also simultaneously into a job in the academic world; teaching and researching at Liverpool University. At the cathedral, my calling brought a lead in starting a healing ministry, and my first series of science and faith lectures...which continued at both Chester and Liverpool Cathedrals, where I am at present. [Lectures](#) I wrote about in our 2023 bulletin; but which have evolved to the holding of science panel evenings on science and faith; and the first particle physics masterclass in the cathedral in 2024. In 2020, I had the honour of being appointed onto Chapter (something progressive in itself for a self-supporting minister in the CofE), with the title of Canon Scientist. But as well as leading in science and faith work, my calling within the church has continued to evolve – with a new ministry in being a pastoral ear for many seeking advice and prayers for their own health and often cancer-related journeys. Definitely servant leadership through my science, but in the faith environment...something which continues now in all the churches I serve in.

But that servant leadership has also grown beyond the church institution walls – in my academic and professional science roles; with my students and colleagues in answering questions of science and faith, but also being that listening ear in times joyful and sorrowful. I feel that calling to be the priest in the environments where one does not expect to find a priest...a servant leadership in the university and other Radiotherapy roles, through my different professional leads within the British Institution of Radiology (from committee chair, to Trustee and Council member, to now being President-elect). Leading in this way, opens opportunities in mission and faith – ones which help me understand that my calling is still very much to be active as both scientist and priest. This became most obvious when I first became a committee chair at the BIR, and the Institute wanted a media release more about my priestly role than my Radiotherapy one! My scientific work has always taken me to scientific meetings

and conferences – but now, in my professional capacity, I go as scientific leader who is also a priest; at conferences and meetings in a clerical collar, which opens up many different conversations and even prayers. My future role will call me to be so in the UK, Europe and the USA, through many different collaborations.

One could regard much as being leadership – but they are the delights of a calling to be who we are, the wonderful individuals made in God’s image, to serve others through the science God has placed within our created order; and through faith to be there for all people; in the name of him who came to serve all people, Jesus Christ our Lord.



Mike has just been made President-elect of the British Institute of Radiology, whilst being an Honorary Lecturer at Liverpool and Manchester Universities. He continues to serve in Liverpool Cathedral and with PTO for Blackburn Diocese.

<https://www.bir.org.uk/media-centre/news/2025/october/bir-appoints-mike-kirby-as-president-elect.aspx>

An Altar Cross for the Society

Background

In his book concerning the story of the Society of Ordained Scientists, Keith Suckling writes:

“The Society’s logo offers a visible expression of our identity. There were several suggestions for a logo in the early years, many drawing on the frequently used icon of chemistry, the benzene ring. What was finally adopted was, I think, an inspired design. I have often shown it to people who did not know about SOSc, either as a lapel badge or a small pectoral cross and asked them what they could see. Naturally everyone recognized the cross and many saw that it resembled a Celtic design, but very few could see that the cross was circled by a ring of double-stranded DNA and, more deeply still, that the ring representing life and creation was penetrated by the cross. This is a profound insight and symbol. Much of science is expressed in words, equations or, most opaquely, as acronyms, so it is wonderful for us to have so much of our identity captured in one visible, and, in various forms, touchable image.” (Suckling, Keith. *We are the data: The story of the Society of Ordained Scientists* (p. 46) Kindle Edition).

The cross that was finally accepted was conceived by John Kerr from an idea of Cyril Chalice and drawn by his late son (p.61). Since that time the cross has appeared on the Society Altar silverware and stoles (p.46-47).

A natural progression of the Society's use of this cross as a devotional object to aid prayer and meditation has been to commission an altar cross in the same design. During the Society Retreat in 2024 at Launde I was asked to have such a cross commissioned with a budget in mind of a few hundred pounds. The Gloucester and Stroud areas where I live are a mix of creative and light manufacture with a great many sign painters to serve the Gloucester-Sharpness canal and related industries.

I was fairly confident I could achieve the cross given the abundance of skilled folk in this area. Little did I know on setting out on this particular journey to the cross!

The Structure

In October 2024 I began by commissioning our local Mens' Shed to cut out the basic shape and structure in plywood using their Computer Numerical Control (CNC) laser cutting machine. The first challenge was how to capture the double helix in a physically realized object. The helix itself would be too fragile for materials that are in the price range we had in mind and so we opted to paint the helix onto a 'donut shape' familiar to Celtic crosses. The height was taken from an existing cross owned by Jenny Zarek that the Society had used for a number of years and is 86cm. This seems adequate to be a useful focus for prayer from the back of a typically sized chapel while also being transportable.

With the basic shape in hand I approached first sign painters and graphic artists before eventually receiving the advice that a 'scenic painter' was the appropriate craftsperson to approach. The first quote was approaching £1000 and was a joy in itself because the artist really ran away with his craft in working out how to approach the challenge. Suffice is to say that we would have had a Cathedral-grade cross but that was not perhaps what was needed. The next quote was for £100 from Kat Bryan-Merrett, much closer to what we had in mind and so with the counsel of the Society's Officers I commissioned Kat for the work.

Kat approached the challenge with passion and curiosity, beginning a number of conversations about the Society as she worked on the project. One obstacle was the background 'donut' on which the double helix would be painted. There was a real challenge to work out what colour would not draw the eye. In the end we settled on eggshell white which sets off the silver and gold of the double helix while almost disappearing into the

background. She has used silver leaf for the cross itself with 'coup d'oeil' techniques to give the impression of relief. Sadly the use of this silver leaf, though beautiful, led to a dilemma. The paint used for the helix does not take on the silver leaf and so the theologically significant inter-leaving of cross and helix was not achievable in this iteration of the Society's altar cross. Partly because of these complications the cross took much longer than she had anticipated and so the final price was £230 and for that Kat took significantly less than the £50 per hour she usually charges. My reflection is that, although sometimes church life can feel beleaguered, there are so often times when folk are ready to give more and even of themselves as they sense a Kingdom presence in at least some of what we do as Church in His Name.

Presentation at the Society Gathering and Commissioning

I travelled to the 2025 gathering with the cross covered in bubble wrap and inside a bag designed for folding bikes, which just happened to be the correct dimensions. Warden Lucas Mix had made the very welcome suggestion that we commission the cross at the evening Eucharist on the first day and Robin Sims-Williams put together the words for the blessing. The Society visitor, Bishop David Walker commissioned the cross using the blessing below. The cross then became a devotional focus for the rest of our time together.

Reflection and Ponderance - The part the Society plays in making the cross

Something I took to the 2025 gathering was this, I confess, rather self-centered question:

'Can this object become a significant devotional object to aid reflection and prayer given my own part in making it?'

There were two obstacles for me.

First, I had to relinquish this object. The act of creativity

involved with this was not like a published paper or article. This is a single object in itself, not the concept of it. It was not for dissemination and could not be easily reproduced, as evidenced by my efforts over the last year. My involvement in its making gave me a strong sense of ownership of it. I had to relinquish that sense of ownership and pass on this object into the care of the Society, who would need to accept it, along with all the unforeseen graces of its imperfection.

Second, that same sense of ownership prohibited me from receiving any grace in prayer and reflection provoked by it.

Happily the commissioning of the cross was an entirely appropriate and necessary step in my relinquishing and the Society accepting this cross. The grace of that blessing at once allowed me to relinquish any ongoing sense of care born out of my involvement with its making and released me to draw on it for prayerful provocation towards grace.

And so finally I was able to reflect on this very beautiful, imperfect object. The light shines on it and almost through it as it gathers light and reflects it, dispersing it in all directions from which we might gaze in it. Like the cross, or the science of human hands for that matter, it is by definition and by observation imperfect. The callous execution of Jesus is also imperfect and perhaps the least perfect act humankind can ever participate in. However, in the same instant the self-sacrifice of Christ is the ultimate perfection. I reflected on the gap between our concepts and their realization. I reflected on my sin of wanting my own perfection (in a perfectly realized Society cross) when it is God's perfection that we are called to seek. Finally I wondered if this particular sin, seeking perfect truth in our own striving and not in God's truth, is shared between us as sisters and brothers in science. Therefore I asked myself.

'If as a Society we are proud enough of these dual vocations to write

our own Collect, are we not obliged also to examine ourselves and write our own mutual confession?

It is hard to be part of making a cross for a Society and not reflect on the part of that Society in the making of the original cross! Dietrich Bonhoeffer certainly thought so in 'Living together', his writing on the rule of life for his seminary community at Finkenwalde:

"... the call within the Christian community to mutual confession and forgiveness goes out as a call to the great grace of God in the congregation.

In confession there takes place a breakthrough to community. Sin wants to be alone with people. It takes them away from the community. The more lonely people become, the more destructive the power of sin over them. The more deeply they become entangled in it, the more unholy is their loneliness. Sin wants to remain unknown. It shuns the light. In the darkness of what is left unsaid sin poisons the whole being of a person. This can happen in the midst of a pious community. In confession the light of the gospel breaks into the darkness and closed isolation of the heart. Sin must be brought into the light." (Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. Life Together and Prayerbook of the Bible: Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works Vol. 5 (pp. 109-110). Fortress Press, Kindle Edition.)

Bonhoeffer understands mutual confession as an essential part of being a Society and so we might ask ourselves this:

'Is it possible to have a Society cross without a Society confession?'

19 June 2025 Mark Siddall

Blessing of the Society Altar Cross

ALMIGHTY GOD, Creator and Redeemer of all that is, source and foundation of time and space, matter and energy, life and consciousness, who chose to humble yourself in becoming fully human and dying upon the cross, bless + this cross, as a reminder to us who study the mysteries of your creation to offer our understanding of science to the church and to offer our faith in you to the scientific community. Let it be the support of faith, an encouragement to good works, the redemption of souls; and let it be consolation, protection, and a shield against all that would harm us; through Christ our Lord.

AMEN

Robin Sims-Williams

Ascension and the SOSc Cross.

The Holy Spirit was frequently invoked at our recent Gathering at Hinsley Hall in Leeds, but at that time liturgically we were still in its anticipatory prelude, the all-too-brief season of Ascension-tide – just 10 days sandwiched between the Ascension (40 days after Easter) and Pentecost (50 days after). What, as scientists as well as ordained ministers, do we make of this rather neglected Christian festival of Ascension? I offer below one possible interpretation that may also shed a light on that potent symbol of our Society – the empty Resurrection cross haloed and wreathed in a circular double helix of plasmid DNA.

Recently (June 14th) we celebrated the Feast-day of the Cappadocian Fathers – Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa – notable chiefly for their formulation of Trinitarian doctrine, though Gregory of Nyssa was also an early exponent of universal salvation, and Gregory of Nazianzus wrote much about the dual nature of Christ as both fully divine and fully human. He is credited with the aphorism '*What is not assumed [by Christ in his incarnation] is not redeemed*' – in other words, our salvation as human beings (however realized)

ultimately depends on the full humanity of Christ: flesh of our flesh, and indeed DNA of our DNA (as Arthur Peacocke has argued). What seems to me to be distinctive about the incarnation is that the Second Person of the Trinity – God the Son, Eternal Word – ‘*emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness*’ (Phil.2:7), becoming one *of* us, one *for* us, one *with* us. The Father and the Spirit are also presumably involved, in some mysterious perichoretic sense, but they cannot be said to become **incarnate**. That *kenosis*, that servanthood, and that sacrifice pertain to God the Son in Jesus Christ alone – ‘*therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him a name that is above every name*’ (Phil 2:9) and ‘*every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*’ (v. 11).

Today (June 16th), one of the SEC lectionary readings for Morning Prayer was Luke’s account of the Ascension (Acts 1:1-11). Traditionally, the humanity that Christ assumed at his incarnation is seen as becoming incorporated into the Triune life of God through the Ascension – conferring on some or all of humanity the possibility of resurrection life in God’s eternal presence. Peter Manley Scott, in his forbiddingly titled “*Anti-Human Theology*” (2010, SCM Press, pp. 70-71} suggests that it is not only human nature but also animal nature (and indeed technologically altered nature – whether bionic or GM) that participates in the shared life of God through the Ascension. Indeed, on p. 71 he asserts that ‘*this Jesus is constitutive of the history of all creatures, human and non-human.*’

The fossil record bears fragmentary (but often eloquent) testimony to that evolutionary ‘*history of all creatures*’, but this can also be read in coded format in the DNA that unites all life-forms on our planet – with an extension to RNA (a closely related molecule) so as to include both RNA viruses and the likely ancestors of modern (DNA-, RNA- and protein-based) cells that may have utilised RNA alone. True enough, the vast code-books of genomic DNA do not directly specify the traits that individual creatures will exhibit – they are more like a recipe book whose read-out also depends in part on circumstance and

environment (Philip Ball, *How Life Works*. 2025, Picador). There is thus a sense in which the near-infinite (you know what I mean!) possible permutations of DNA sequences encompass not only all extant life, but also all life that ever has existed or ever could evolve in the future. So, as a biologist and avowed universalist, I would see the Ascension as inaugurating God's new realm in which **all** life is redeemed. Jurgen Moltman, (1990, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, SCM, p. 303) writes of *'the divine tempest of the new creation, which sweeps out of God's future over history's fields of the dead, waking and gathering every last created thing.'* This in his view *'comprehends the redemption of evolution itself, with all its ambiguities'*. Amen to that, say I, at least in my more hopeful moments... Or is that just me reading far too much into our distinctive SOSc cross? Notably, no sequence is specified on our plasmid!

David de Pomerai.

MANX CROSSES: MESSAGES IN STONE

Introduction:

Small islands have played big roles in the spread of Christianity. Iona and Lindisfarne are prime examples. At the center of the northern Irish Sea, the Isle of Man, hereinafter called the Island, became part of Celtic Christendom in the 5th century and was entangled for centuries thereafter in the power struggles among its neighbouring Kingdoms. This complex history has many uncertainties over dates, names and narratives, but it produced Manx crosses that have left important messages in stone about the Island's Celtic and Viking Christians.

The term Manx crosses includes standing stones, cross-slabs, sculptured crosses and their fragments. Kermode (1907) catalogued and numbered 116 Manx crosses, 71 pre-Scandinavian and 45 Scandinavian, with dimensions ranging from 2.5 to 8 feet high, 1.25 to 2 feet wide and 2 to 4 inches thick. All were made from

local stone, mainly Manx clay-slate. Almost all were grave markers, now removed from their original locations to church premises or the Manx Museum for safe keeping and study. Many were retrieved from misuse as building materials or unearthed from the sites of keeills (early chapels), church lands and farmers' fields. Despite much damage, their beauty and power remain.

This short paper summarizes the Island's early history of Christianity, from Celtic saints to Viking settlement. Manx cross shapes and styles, inscriptions and images are reviewed, followed by a discussion of their messages and a list of references and additional sources. The numbers assigned to crosses are from Kermodé (1907). All photographs are by the author unless otherwise stated.

Celtic Saints and the Island

St. Ninian (c. 360-432) was possibly the first Christian missionary to the Island, making the short crossing from his monastic community at Whithorn, Galloway. St. Ninian's Church and High School in Douglas are named after him. St. German, a follower of St. Patrick in Ireland, is said to have arrived on the Island in 447. He became the Island's first Bishop c. 466 and established his small cathedral on St. Patrick's Isle, Peel. Its ruins are still a place of worship. The Island's present-day cathedral, St. German's, is also in Peel.

The Island became part of the Diocese of Sodor and Man, also called Man and the Isles. Wolf (2015) reviewed its early history, which included links with York and papal assignment to the distant Archbishopric of Nidaros (Trondheim), Norway in 1154. The name Sodor refers to the Sudreys (Latin, Sodoreses), which are the western Scottish islands. The name Man derives from Mon, which the Romans used to describe the Island as mountainous, when viewed from the sea. The Island's name is written as "*Maun*" or "*Man*" on the 10th century cross (101) made by the famous cross sculptor Gautr (see below, Inscriptions).

It is not known whether St. Patrick ever visited the Island. According to Manx folklore, he crossed over the sea from Ireland on his white horse or by walking. Various stones of unproven provenance and purpose have been proposed as his bed, chair, footprints and pillow (see the compilation by Miller, 2019). Kirk Patrick and Parish and keeills and wells are named after him. The village name Ballakilpheric means the place of St. Patrick's keeill. Bride Church and Parish and the former Nunnery near Douglas are named after St. Brigit. St. Columba is also well celebrated across the Island and with a village fete in the Parish of Arbory on his feast day, Laa Columb Killey in Manx.

The Island's Patron Saint is St. Maughold (pronounced Makuld, original Irish name Maac Cuill, d. 488). Woolf (2015) retells his legend, citing the Book of Armagh (c. 807). Maughold was an Irish "*bandit chief*". He asked St. Patrick to bring back to life a gang member who was pretending to be dead. This stunt was exposed when St. Patrick found that the man was really dead. Maughold repented and was converted, but the angry St. Patrick expelled him from Ireland. He was put out to sea in a coracle without oars and rudder and with his legs tethered. He drifted to the Island, landed at what is now Maughold Head and was welcomed by two Christian missionaries, Romilus and Conindrus. Maughold became the Island's Bishop. The Maughold community became a Christian crossroads. As Wilson (2018, p.10) put it: "*...the monastic community of Maughold...was caught up in them middle of the vibrant cross-cultural Christian traffic between Northumbria, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.*"

St. Maughold's name lives on as Kirk Maughold and Parish and in artworks. Charles Guard MBE, the Island's renowned musician and historian, composed music to accompany his narration of "*The Legend of St. Maughold*", which was first performed on the Island in 2018. Sue Harrison, a highly accomplished Manx musician and singer, composed in 2024 the Manx song "*Kirree Beg*" about a child in Maughold "*with ice blue eyes...a gifted one*". She is drawn to the crosses and has visions as she touches

them daily and eventually dies in their company. The Maughold Cross-House is in the grounds of Kirk Maughold and is open to the elements - a thin place for spiritual connections.

Rushen Abbey in the Parish of Malew was the Island's largest monastic community. It was founded in 1134 as a Savignac-Cistercian subsidiary of Furness Abbey under Norway's first Christian King Olaf I and became the burial ground for the Kings of Man. It was dedicated to St. Mary in 1257 and was the last British Abbey to be closed under Henry VIII's 1539 Act of Dissolution.

Viking Settlement

At the close of the 8th century, Norwegian Vikings began raids around the Irish Sea. The pagan raiders terrified the Island's peaceful farming and fishing Celtic Christian communities. A Celtic lament, "*On the Hill of the Morning Watch/Cronk ny Arrey Laa*" (Pullin and Douglas, 1968), imagines the fear as Viking boats approach: "*On the hill of the morning watch; I could see that our prayers had failed; when the sun drove the mist away; and I saw those terrible sails*"; "*Er yn Cronk ny Arrey Laa; honnick mee cha row'nphadjer mie; tra va'n bodjallyn goll ersooyl; va ny lhuing atchimagh cheusthie*".

During the 9th and 10th centuries, Viking raids on the Island evolved into trading, settlement and rule, reflecting the surrounding power struggles. Godred Crovan from Viking Ireland is thought to have spent his early life on the Island. He was among the Vikings defeated by Anglo-Saxons at the Battle of Stamford Bridge in 1066. He took refuge on the Island where he rose to power c.1075. His forces defeated the Manx at the Battle of Sky Hill, Ramsey c. 1079. He spared their lives because of his own experiences of Island life. Godred was then King of Man until 1095 and all its subsequent Kings until 1265 were his direct descendants.

Many of the pagan Viking raiders and early traders and settlers who came to the Island would have encountered Celtic Christianity elsewhere, especially in Ireland and Scotland. Some would have been converted by the Manx, but Viking paganism first suppressed Christianity on the Island and became its main religion until the Viking Christian settlement took hold.

Scandinavia converted to Christianity by royal decrees; c. 960 in Denmark, 1000 in Iceland and from 969-1000 in Norway during the reign of King Olaf I. Some of the Island's Viking Christian settlers married Celtic Christians. Old gods were still remembered. Prayers for safe voyages and wellbeing were likely offered to Thor, Odin and others as well as Christ. The outcome was relative peace and harmony at home, despite the harshness of life.

Shapes and Styles

The shapes of Manx crosses include short and tall cross-slabs, wheel crosses, slender sculptured crosses and parts of their shafts. Images of Maughold crosses are available at: sketchfab.com/manxnationalheritage/collections. Earlier cross-slabs have incised cross shapes, often only on the front face. Sculptured crosses have solid or perforated cross-heads. Later cross-slabs and sculptured crosses are often styled with beautiful interlaced patterns, which originated from ornamentation styles on wooden crosses in Scandinavia. Wilson (2018, p.84) lists as follows their overlapping main styles and dates: "*Borre c.850-950; Jellinge c.900-975; Mammen c.960-1000/25; Ringericke c.1000-1075*".

In summary from Wilson (2018, p.84-95), the Borre style is found widely on Manx crosses as a ring-chain and as a knot. Cross-slab 101 at Kirk Michael has both. The pure Jellinge style is rare but overlaps greatly with the common Mammen style, which has snake-like animals intertwined with tracery. The pure Ringericke style is found on only three Manx crosses (116, 117 at Kirk Michael and 122 at Maughold), but also overlaps with the Mammen. Figures 1A and B show examples of Manx cross shapes and styles; for detailed descriptions and illustrations, see Kermode (1907), Cubbon (1971) and Wilson (2018).



Figure 1A. Manx cross shapes and styles, L-R: 7th/8th century Bishop Irneit's cross-slab (47), Maughold, the upper roundel encloses a hexafoil, two lower cut crosses have upper arm extensions to represent Chi-Rho's; early 9th century Crux Guriat cross-slab (69), Maughold, with hemispherical bosses made by tooling down the entire front face; 9th/10th century wheel-headed cross-slab (73), Lonan Old Church, with Celtic interlaced knots and plaiting; 10th century cross-slab (101), Kirk Michael, in the Borre style.



Figure 1B. Later Manx cross shapes and styles, L-R: late 10th/early 11th century Thorleif Hnakki's cross (135), Braddan Old Church, with perforated cross-head and dragons in the Mammen style; details from the remaining shaft of the 10th century Odd's cross (136), Braddan Old Church, with interlaced animals in the Mammen style; incomplete runic inscription on Odd's cross; 10th century Dragon cross (117) Kirk Michael, animals below the cross-head are in the Ringerike style.

Inscriptions

The Island's 6th century stone grave marker from Andreas (5) has the Ogham inscription "*Imbcatos the son of Ricatos*" and the Latin "*Ammecatus the son of Ricatus*" and is regarded as the Island's earliest Christian monument. Thirty-four Manx crosses from c. 925-1020 bear personal names carved as Scandinavian runes, which Barnes (2019) summarized as follows: mostly Scandinavian, about one quarter Irish; three quarters or more male, only eight as the person commemorated, two fathers, three sons, two unclear and one commemorating himself; 10 females, six wives, two mothers/foster mothers and one daughter.

Many inscriptions are incomplete through damage and/or weathering. Examples are given here as approximate English translations, rather than attempting to reproduce them exactly from Manx Norse. Most name the person who commissioned and/or made the cross and the rune carver if different, the deceased and sometimes other family members, as in these examples:

Cross 101, 10th century, Kirk Michael - "*Máel Brigti son of Áedacán, the smith put up this cross for his own soul. Gautr made this and all in Man*";

Cross 106, 10th century, Ballaugh Old Church - "*Aleif Ljótolfsson erected this cross to the memory of Ulf his son*";

Cross 131, 10th century, Kirk Andreas - "*Sandulf the black erected this cross to the memory of Arinbiörg his wife*";

Cross 132, late 10th or early 11th century, Kirk Michael - "*(Joalf) son of Thorolf the Red erected this cross to the memory of Frida his mother*"; Cross 136, late 10th century, Braddan Old Church - "*Odd raised this cross to the memory of Frakki his father, but Tho(rbjorn)...(incomplete)*";

Cross 142, 11th century, Maughold - "*Heðinn placed this cross in memory of his daughter Hlíhildr. Arni carved these runes*".

The following inscriptions indicate harmonious aspects of family life,

including fostering and intermarriage, and one record of a moral failing:

Cross 130, 10th century, Kirk Michael - "*Máel-Lomchon put up this cross in memory of his foster Máel-Muire, Dubgall's daughter, whom Aóisl was married to. It is better to leave a good foster-son than a bad son*"; Cross 135, late 10th or early 11th century, Braddan Old Church; "*Thorleif Hnakki erected this cross to the memory of Fiac his son, brother's son to Hafr*", with "*Ihsus*" (Jesus) under the cross-head; the father and uncle have Norse names; the son, and presumably the mother, have Irish Celtic ones;

Cross 138, 10th century, Braddan Old Church states "*Hrossketill betrayed the trust of a man to whom he was bound by oath*".

Images

Images on Manx crosses relate to spiritual matters and practical needs, which were considered interdependent, especially food security. There are images of animals and mythical beasts, which are depicted as snake-like animals and dragons (see Figure 1B). Images of snakes must be mythical and/or of snakes in other lands, as the Island had no snakes.

Figure 2 shows the two clearest examples of images of Christ. The 9th/10th century Calf of Man Crucifixion cross-slab (61) is the Island's most important item of early Christian art and is thought to be from an altar panel. Now in the Manx Museum, it was found during wall building on the Calf of Man, the Island's southern islet. The crucified Christ is depicted as robed in Celtic Irish and Byzantine style and flanked by a spear bearing soldier. From comparison with similar works, its missing side would have shown a sponge bearer. According to Kermode (1907, p.23) Christ's feet are depicted exactly as in the Book of Kells.

The 10th century cross-slab at Kirk Michael (129), which bears the incomplete runic inscription "*...of Grim the Black*", has a front face

image of Christ with open arms, flanked by snakes bound in rings and with upper images of a cockerel and an angel. Clague (2021, p. 20) discussed speculation that the cockerel might refer to the Apostle Peter's denial of Christ and that the whole scene might represent either the Ascension or Christ's Second Coming. The opposite face is less clear. It depicts a small figure which, as discussed by Clague (2021, p.21), could either be Christ ascending or a figure being carried off by a bird of prey. Kermode and Herdman (1904, p.82) considered it to be "...the wind-giant, *Hræ-svelgr*, corpse-devourer, in the form of a war-eagle or vulture tearing the body of some hero unknown." If so, it is an example of Christ and a Norse pagan deity appearing on the same cross, as in other Manx crosses (see below).



Figure 2. Images of Christ on cross-slabs: L, the 9th/10th century Calf of Man Crucifixion altar panel (61), Manx Museum; R, front face of the 10th century cross-slab (129) at Kirk Michael.

Manx crosses are all Christian structures, but some have Norse pagan images. As discussed by Wilson (2018, p.97-105) and Cubbon (2017, p. 26-29), parts of the story of Sigurd, regarded as a distant descendant of Odin, Regin the dwarf smith and Fáfnir the serpent, are represented on five very damaged

crosses. Crosses 119 at Jurby, 120 at Malew and 121 at Andreas show Sigurd killing Fáfnir. Cross 121 also shows Fáfnir's heart being roasted on a spit. Cross 122 at Maughold shows a sword pommel and a horse, assumed to be Sigurd's Grani, as well as tools and scattered gold assumed to be Regin's. Cross 127 at Jurby shows a figure thought to be Heimdall the gods' watchman blowing his horn to summon them to the last great battle at Ragnarok (see Cubbon 1971, p. 31; Wilson 2018, p. 109).

The most important Manx cross bearing Christian and pagan images is the 10th century cross-slab fragment (128) known as Thorvald's Cross (Figure 3). According to Wilson (2018, p.106-108), its Christian front face has "...*Christ the harbinger of a renewed life after the end of the world...risen and trampling a snake underfoot.*" For Cubbon (1971, p. 33) and Steinforth (2021, p. 26-42), however, the figure is taken to be a Christian man, with a cross, a book and a fish, which he might be catching though no fishing line is shown. The fish looks like a salmon. A fish is a Christian symbol and could also represent food security.



Figure 3. Both faces of the remaining 35cm fragment of cross-slab (128), Thorvald's Cross, found at Andreas. L. the Christian face;

R. the Norse pagan face. Source: originally published in Kermode (1907) and reproduced here from the facsimile published in 2010 as a Public Domain Reprint. Nabu Press, Charleston, S. Carolina.

The opposite pagan face depicts Odin with his spear and raven, accompanied by snakes and being devoured by “*a dog-like animal*” (Steinforth, 2021, p.21), which Cubbon (2021, p.32) and Wilson (2018, p.106-107) identify as the all-devouring wolf Fenris/Fenrir. The scene is Ragnarok after which all life perishes, including the wolf, the home of the gods is burned up, and a new world can emerge.

These Christian-pagan juxtapositions have been interpreted as encouragements to conversion. Odin and his world have been destroyed and Christ is triumphant. Steinforth (2021, p.66-67), however, gave the following interpretation, which is more in tune with the present author’s (see Messages below): “*‘Thorvald’s Cross’ surely neither is (sic) the result of a religious revolution on the Isle of Man, nor was it the means of spiritual violence. It is rather an attempt to facilitate the change by turning it into a natural transition or even continuity...the residual pagans among the Manx Vikings came to terms with the Christian God as well as with the island’s indigenous population. ‘Thorvald’s Cross’ is a powerful symbol of both spiritual re-orientation and social rapprochement between the two ethnic groups that formerly would have been bitter enemies.*”

Messages

Manx crosses demonstrate the belief, creativity, dedication and skill of their makers. In common with all crosses, they are reminders of Christ’s life on Earth, death and resurrection. The Manx crosses that bear mixed Celtic and Norse names and/or combine Christian and pagan imagery have also left the message that tolerance and partnership are better than fighting. As Wilson (2018, p.59) put it, Manx crosses: “*...show a relatively relaxed interpretation of*

Christianity by the incomers who, if not already Christian, gradually converted. All this might suggest that Norse takeover of the Isle of Man was a gradual process, and that the integration of Scandinavian and native was, although brutal in its early stages, not totally uncomfortable for native land owners or for any slaves taken or made as the new order settled in.”

In other words, the Celtic and Viking ‘us-and-them’ on the Island became a new ‘we’. This Manx cross message has shone down through centuries of religious and ethnic strife around the world and was never more important than it is today. The doctrines of peace at the heart of most religions, including Christianity, are often set aside and ‘us-and-them’ becomes violent conflict, spurred on by leaders seeking popularity and power. Christ preached that all humans should be loving neighbours. Christian and pagan images on Manx crosses echo that message.

The Island’s graveyards today have thousands of headstones dating back hundreds of years. Most are simple stone slabs with personal dedications and biblical texts. There are few cross images and very few free-standing Celtic crosses. But the timeless beauty of the Celtic cross lives on in the Island’s war memorials (Figure 4) Like all crosses, they are powerful reminders of the temporary pain of death and the promise of resurrection and eternal life.



Figure 4. Celtic cross war memorials on the Isle of Man, L-R: St. German's Cathedral, Peel; Kirk Braddan; Tynwald Hill, St. John's.

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Roger Pullin

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Generative AI Today: Benefits and Harms

In the last couple of years, Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) has emerged as a potentially transformative force, being sold as a technology that will reshape the way people communicate, create, and learn. This article explores the promises and challenges of GenAI with a focus on Christian understandings of personhood, aiming to offer thoughtful guidance for Christians and for all who care about the intersection of technology and human value.

GenAI refers to a class of artificial intelligence systems designed to produce new content—such as text, images, music, or code—based

on patterns found in vast amounts of human-generated data. Unlike traditional software that follows explicit instructions, GenAI models “learn” (that is, fit a probabilistic, mathematical model) from massive datasets. These models randomly generate outputs from the modeled probability distribution of words, pixels, or sounds that are usually new, contextually appropriate material. This enables them often to appear strikingly human-like and sometimes creative. Christians believe that every human being is made in the image of God. Being created in God’s image is not merely a status but a calling—one that invites gratitude and is expressed through Jesus’s Greatest Commandment: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” This love for neighbor also reflects love for God, in that it recognizes that the neighbor is also formed in God’s image.

As GenAI systems display sophisticated abilities—writing essays, composing music, translating languages—it is tempting to attribute to them qualities of personhood. This tendency, known as anthropomorphizing, risks blurring the essential distinction between human beings and artificial systems. While GenAI can simulate aspects of human communication and creativity, it remains a mathematical construct— algorithms trained on human-authored data. GenAI is not made in the image of God; rather, it is a co-creation of human ingenuity and God’s provision of intellect and resources to humans. Though GenAI may serve as a useful tool and even a creative partner, it does not possess consciousness, moral agency (or more problematically moral judgement), or the spiritual capacity that defines human personhood. It remains a clever guess based on very large samples.

Despite these differences, GenAI holds considerable promise for enriching human life. Notable benefits include:

Improved communication between people: GenAI assists with writing, translating languages, and illustrating ideas, helping people

express themselves more clearly and bridge cultural divides.

Aid to learning: Self-directed learners can access tailored explanations, study aids, and creative exercises, making education more accessible and engaging.

Amplifying creativity: GenAI enables users to generate art, music, and stories, sometimes empowering those with limited technical skills to realize their creative visions—for example, someone with physical disabilities can compose music or write poetry using AI tools.

Aid for spiritual and theological growth: Through supporting Bible study or helping to craft prayers or theological reflections, GenAI might become a new tool for helping individuals deepen their faith, articulate their love for God, and discern how to act out of that love. **Fostering empathy and understanding:** By improving communication and offering new perspectives, GenAI can help people better understand their neighbor, laying a foundation for empathy and loving action.

Love of neighbor also involves preventing harm to our neighbor. In the present state of technical development, every positive promise of GenAI has a corresponding misuse that potentially harms our neighbor.

Improved communication can be misused for misinforming and manipulating others.

GenAI aided artistic expressions have the misuse of creating false, misleading, and damaging images.

The use of GenAI to provide bridges for improving empathy has the misuse of being used by the GenAI creator or some parties using the GenAI to emotionally manipulate other users.

Recently published studies give evidence that overuse of GenAI for personal learning and growth can result in reduced cognitive skills. This effect has been observed even in highly trained and usually cognitively highly functioning people such as physicians.

Overreliance on GenAI-based chatbots for personal conversation simulating emotional support can create emotional dependency, stepping away from human relationships. Although more research is

needed, there are numerous reports of such overreliance deepening existing mental illness and claims that GenAIs have supported suicidal ideations.

GenAI has costs in money and environmental impacts arising from power and cooling water consumption and new building of data centers that are hidden from users.

Many leaders in the tech industry and government are arguing for the continued unimpeded deployment of GenAI because this would be best for rapid innovation which, it is argued, is in the best national and commercial interest. However, Christians need to look seriously at the misuses and harms and decide whether to support, as consumers, donors, and voters, mitigations of the harms through regulations, laws, and professional best practices. If effective mitigations prove impossible for some GenAI uses, those use cases may need to be prohibited.

The field of GenAI has been characterized by unexpected improvements in capabilities, speed, power consumption, and cost. As ordained leaders and people perceived as having scientific expertise, members of the society have the responsibility of monitoring these developments so we can help others explore how they will use or respond to them in the public square.

Lee Barford, SOSc

From: Robin Sims-Williams Website Moderator

You may have noticed some changes to the Society Website (ordsci.org). These are mostly organisational rather than design and are an attempt to make the website a little more user friendly for both members and those visiting our website to find out more about the society. The main menu at the top now has drop down menus, so that under 'About' you can quickly find information about the aims of the society, the office holders, the society cross and so on.

Perhaps most significant in the changes is the way events and news are organised, so that the most recent sermons or events are visible when you visit the page about chapters or gatherings and retreats, but you can also find out about past events or historic sermons by clicking on one of the automated 'Load more posts' buttons. I hope you find it easier to navigate. You can find out about upcoming (and past) events either through the 'Chapters', 'Gatherings and Retreats' or 'Events' pages - whichever you find easiest.

What hasn't changed is the Prayer Card (or PC) page, the password for which you can find out by contacting me. What we do need is more photographs for this page - so that everybody has their picture to help those of us who remember faces better than names to pray for you. So if your photo isn't there (or you would like a more up to date one with your most recent hair style!) then do send them to me.

The pages will continue to change and be updated as I receive content for them and do a bit of design work, but most important I would like to know from you if you find it easy to find the information you are looking for on the webpage or if there is something you always wish you could find. I can't work miracles, but I can try and see what the tech will allow me to do.

robin@cantab.net

Review of 'Good God' by Michael Brooks

Good God is an attempt to reconcile two tensions that cause intellectual conflict, emotional distress and spiritual distress. The first tension is provided by the Epicurean trilemma; the syllogism that god is either incapable or uninclined to prevent suffering; and is therefore not worthy of either worship or praise, with the Christian understanding of an all-powerful and loving God. The second tension is the apparent contradiction between the Christian [Nicene] statement of faith of creation,

rebellion and redemption, with the discoveries of modern science.

The reconciliation of suffering and a loving God is the problem of theodicy, the justice of God. Most theodicies commence with the consideration of how humanity is currently placed. The theodicy in *Good God* commences with an eternal perspective, the Christian hope of heaven in which earthly suffering becomes irrelevant. This is the 'Pauline' theodicy and the book attempts to answer the main problem with this theodicy; if heaven is so good, why does earthly life exist at all?

The second section of the book is a description of the intricate and miraculous nature of the cosmos as described by science, in particular physics and biology. For some the very existence of such creative effort is evidence that the Creator has deemed it necessary for the cosmos to exist. Some of the benefits of an eternal existence preceded by an earthly existence are proposed.

The origin of evil is discussed in the third section; firstly, the moral evil that is a consequence of human sinfulness and secondly natural evil; the disease, disaster, degeneration and death that affects all living creatures.

The question of why God did not foresee the catastrophic consequences of human freedom is answered with the proposal that the incarnate and revealed God of the Judeo-Christian tradition is not the same as the classical understanding of divine perfection. As such it is possible that God, on account of the holiness of God, could not foresee the malign consequences of human freedom.

The necessity of natural evil to balance moral evil is described. The random and non-prejudicial distribution of natural evil is described based on a cosmos that has both Newtonian 'billiard-ball' predictability but also the random element provided by quantum physics and quantum biology.

The third section is a description of how God might act in a cosmos created that has both deterministic (Newtonian) and non-deterministic (quantum) physics. There is a short section on aesthetics in which it is proposed that the combination of predictability and the unexpected are required to produce the best in music and the visual arts, for the enjoyment of both humanity and the Creator.

The implications of the theodicy are discussed. The principal objection to human rebellion being the cause of all suffering does not explain billions of years of animal suffering that occurred before fully human beings lived on this planet. Whilst Moltmann proposed the *adventum*, a future (heavenly) existence that is not the same as the earthly future into which we move through time; the book proposes a *pre-archaios*, a time 'before time' in which human rebellion occurred that pre-dated life on Earth.

The book concludes with comparison with some ancient and modern theodicies.

Good God was reviewed in the *Church Times* (24th May 2024) by the Rt Revd Dr John Inge, the former Bishop of Gloucester, who recommended reading this book so that the reader might decide if the book answers the question of suffering 'for all time'.

Good God is available from Sacristy

Press: [https://www.sacristy.co.uk/products/good-god?](https://www.sacristy.co.uk/products/good-god?_pos=1&_psq=good+god&_ss=e&_v=1.0)

[_pos=1&_psq=good+god&_ss=e&_v=1.0](https://www.sacristy.co.uk/products/good-god?_pos=1&_psq=good+god&_ss=e&_v=1.0)

priced £16.99 [e-book and Kindle £6.99] and from

Amazon https://www.amazon.co.uk/Good-God-Suffering-reason-science/dp/178959328X/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0 priced £14.93 [Kindle £5.99].

The author, Michael Brooks, became a Christian whilst a teenager and studied science (molecular biology) and medicine. After qualifying as a doctor, he worked for a decade as a hospital doctor in surgical specialties and then two

decades as a GP. He had a second vocation to ordained ministry and was ordained in the Church of England in 2008. His interest in theology led to the award of an MA. He now serves as the Minister of a Parish in South London. In 2024 Michael became a Fellow of the Guild of Church Musicians.

Christian Name	Surname	Date of Death	Category
Kumyul	Albone	2021	A
Robyn	Arnold	2022	M
Peter	Arvedson	2011	M
Michael	Benton	2013	M
Sjoerd	Bonting	2012	M
John	Brennan	2023	M
Roger	Brown	2024	M
Robert	Buckley	2014	M
Mary	Catterall	2015	A
Cyril	Chalice	2023	Life
Reed	Freeman	2022	M
Peter	Fulljames	2020	M
Tim	Gouldstone	2006	M
+John	Habgood	2019	H
John	Hardwick	2023	A
Richard	Hills	2019	M
Jack	Hird	2013?	M
Eric	Jenkins	2006	M
Lucius	Johnson	2020	M
Donovan	Laurie	2024	A

John	Loxton	2023	A
Hubert	Makin	2008	?
Philip	McPherson		A
Michael	Meredith	2014	A
David	Moore	2018	A
James	Moran	2010?	A
Rowland	Moss	1993	M
John	O'Hearne	2017	M
Arthur	Peacocke	2006	M
Rosemary	Peacocke	2024	HA
John	Polkinghorne	2021	M
Michael	Pragnell	2020	M
Barbara	Pursey	2014	M
Michael	Ranken	2003	M
Colin	Richards	2025	A (Founding Member)
James	Salmon	2025	M
James	Sawers	2017	M
Robert	Semeonoff	2009	M
James	Skehan	2020	M
Michael	Soulsby	2025	M
Helen	Stacey	2013	M
Derek	Stanesby	2024	ex M
Bill	Stoeger	2014	M
George	Tolley	2015	M

Frank	Topham		A
Joyce	Wilding	2025	A
+David	Young	2008	?