

Dialogues in Science and Faith

Talk 4

Title: Tales from the Faraday Institute: reflections on life in science and faith

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Denis Alexander is the Emeritus Director of The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion, St. Edmund's College, Cambridge, where he is a Fellow. He was previously Chair of the Immunology Programme and Head of the Laboratory of Lymphocyte Signalling and Development at The Babraham Institute, Cambridge. He has many years' experience of being known both as a scientist and as a Christian, and notably as an academic who will actively pursue fruitful engagement between science and religion.

Abstract:

The Faraday Institute, now with 21 staff, was founded in January 2006 as part of St. Edmund's College, Cambridge University. It has the aim of creating an academic enterprise within which research and dissemination activities might be carried out in order to build positive interactions between science and religion. High-level academics have been involved since the Institute's founding, including the first Chair of the Advisory Board, Prof. Sir Brian Heap FRS, formerly Master of St. Edmund's College, Cambridge, and Vice-President of the Royal Society; and co-founder and present Director, Prof. Bob White FRS, Professor of Geophysics at Cambridge, who this year was awarded the Gold Medal of the Royal Astronomical Society.

Over the last four years (2014-17) publications by The Faraday Institute have included 34 academic books and peer-reviewed papers on a wide variety of topics within the field of science and religion. The research is carried out predominantly by post docs within Cambridge University departments. Current research projects include 'Mystical Seizures and Saliency in Temporal Lobe Epilepsy' [Dept. of Medicine]; 'Human Identity in the Age of Nearly Human Machines' [Computing Laboratory]; and 'Transcending the Dimensions' [Cavendish Laboratory].

This talk will reflect on the challenges and opportunities involved in nurturing the academic discourse between science and religion. In particular, it will highlight some of the insights and lessons learnt from the first 12 years in the life of the Faraday Institute.