

VISITING SCHOLAR NEWS



JULY 2017



As we reach the middle of the year, it amazes me how fast 2017 is flying by. As the new visiting scholar program assistant here at Reasons to Believe, I am looking forward to assisting with all the collaborations that will come from our growing community of visiting scholars. In this issue, we will be highlighting the work of Nicholas Leadbeater, a past visiting scholar who specializes in organic chemistry. You will also read some background and a compelling story from George Haraksin, a philosopher and theologian, and about Cynthia Spencer, an expert in polymer chemistry. These are just a few words to introduce the distinguished scholars who have come alongside us at RTB. Read on to learn more!

—Caitlyn Carr

VISITING SCHOLAR HIGHLIGHT

Nicholas Leadbeater



What is your area of expertise?

I've been a chemistry professor at the University of Connecticut since 2004. My main area of research is in the field of organic chemistry—specifically

developing methods to make molecules in cleaner, greener ways. I also have a passion for teaching and mentorship. I have developed new lecture and lab-based courses for training the chemists of tomorrow through exposure to state-of-the-art chemical reactions, equipment, and educational tools.

How does your work tie in with RTB's mission and goals?

My motivation for working to develop cleaner, greener ways to do chemistry stems from my belief that we are stewards of the earth while we reside here. God created, and therefore values, his creation, as is clear in Genesis 1. But the Bible also teaches that although God allows people to use elements of the environment, God retains

ownership of all his creation. When we think of developing new chemical processes and making new materials, we need to do so through the lens of our role as caretakers of the environment. The more I study the complexity of chemistry, the more I am in awe of the God who created it.

What do you enjoy most about the Visiting Scholar Program?

Being part of the Visiting Scholar Program has allowed me to bring together my Christian faith and my passion for scientific discovery. I believe that science gives us ever more tantalizing glimpses into God's creation and his redemptive plan. By spending time with the scholars and staff at RTB, I have learned much more about how to engage people in scientific discourse while at the same time showing how a Creator and a Redeemer can be at the center of it. The Visiting Scholar Program has birthed in me a passion for using my scientific background as a launching point for sharing the gospel message and for furthering the mission of RTB.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Local visiting scholar Gavin Ortlund has accepted a position with the Carl F. H. Henry Center and will be moving to Chicago, IL, with his family.

Congratulations, Gavin!



George Haraksin

Philosopher & Theologian
Local Visiting Scholar Dates:
September 2016–ongoing

I grew up in a nominal Catholic family and had a reverence and respect for God. Still, my faith lacked depth and understand-

ing. While in college, I committed my life to Christ.

Soon after I heard Walter Martin’s radio program *The Bible Answer Man*, which inspired me to not simply be a Christian, but be a rational believer who truly “loved God with all of one’s mind.”

Upon graduating from Talbot School of Theology with a master’s in philosophy and ethics, I took a job at NewSong Church where I served for 22 years in various roles, including the lead pastor position for the last five years.

I discovered RTB through reading Hugh Ross’s book *The Fingerprint of God*. I got to know Fazale Rana and his wife, Amy, over the last couple of years when they started attending the church where I was lead pastor. With Fazale’s help, the church built a good partnership with RTB, even inviting RTB speakers to the church.

I’ve since transitioned from my pastoral role to teach undergraduate philosophy at Azusa Pacific University and graduate classes at A. W. Tozer Seminary. Recently, an undergraduate nursing student entered my philosophy class thinking the semester was going to be “a colossal waste of time.” But she eventually became amazed at how philosophy and ethics applied to her chosen vocation and how the class deepened and enriched her Christian faith as well. She works on the oncology floor of a hospital, and the cancer patients she encounters there often ask her deep questions about God, pain and suffering, and the afterlife.

Stories like this help remind me that people are hungry for the gospel. I’m inspired by RTB’s vision to gather visiting scholars from various disciplines to partner in supplying sound reasons for faith in Christ.



Cynthia Spencer

Chemist
Visiting Scholar Dates:
May 2016

I have a BS in chemistry from Howard University in Washington, DC, and an MS in polymer science and PhD in chemistry, both from Carnegie Mellon

University in Pittsburgh, PA. My expertise is in polymer chemistry. I’ve worked for a few chemical companies in my career, developing and improving physical properties of polymers that have various applications to humanity. I also spent a lot of time working in a field called emulsion-based polyacrylate chemistry, which is specifically used for wastewater treatment.

I found RTB about four years ago by searching on the Internet for information on a connection between science and Christianity. I was very impressed at the depth of knowledge on the RTB website. I soon signed up for the apologetics classes and became an RTB volunteer science apologist. I also volunteered to answer emails from people asking questions. I knew that there was a Visiting Scholar Program but was hesitant to apply initially because I couldn’t see how chemistry could be used as an apologetic tool in the same way RTB scholars used astronomy, physics, and biology. However, since being in the program I’m learning there are chemical ideas that support a strong anthropic principle; therefore, chemistry can be used in apologetics. I’m learning so much and am excited to be able to make contributions to RTB now and in the future.

The Visiting Scholar Program has jump-started my engines, giving me the passion I see in the scholars for reading and learning new ways to integrate my faith with science. I like that the program doesn’t stop after the visit to Covina, CA. I’m impressed with the regular scheduled communications that will continue afterward. I am looking forward to doing greater things in my community as a result of this program.

VISITING SCHOLAR
NEWS
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FROM OUR VISITING SCHOLARS

Nicholas Leadbeater: See his interview [“Should Christians Be Good Stewards to the Environment?”](#)

George Haraksin: See his presentation on [“Was Jesus a Philosopher and Does It Really Matter?”](#)

Cynthia Spencer: Read her full [biography](#).