



Colin Russell taught and practised organic chemistry before joining the Open University, becoming Professor of History of Science and Technology. He has been President of the British Society for the History of Science, and his research particularly qualifies him to make authoritative statements about the relationships between science and faith, such as the one quoted opposite.

PROFESSOR COLIN RUSSELL, FRSC

THE LIGHT OF HISTORY

Even as a young scientist, the notion that the Bible and science were somehow in conflict struck me as laughable. That could only have been the case if one tried to pretend the Bible was a manual of scientific, as opposed to theological, truth.

A growing acquaintance with the history of science immensely strengthened this almost intuitive perception—here were multitudes of the most eminent figures in science whose world-views were rooted in Christ, for whom a ‘conflict’ with science was non-sensical, as recent historical studies have demonstrated. For them, as for me, the study of nature was a worthy vocation, positively encouraged by the Bible. This is splendidly illustrated by scientific history.

My own faith began as a teenager, after abandoning an early dislike of all things religious! It was one of life’s turning points, and one which I have never had cause to regret. My faith began to mature at University, and even more so afterwards. As a scientist, I have always been concerned with questions of evidence, and of reasons for believing any given proposition. In living as a Christian, I soon saw that the authority I needed, the reasons for believing, lay in the Bible, the unique word of God. Experience of prayer, of worship and belonging to a Christian community have deepened that faith considerably.

‘The notion that the Bible and science were somehow in conflict struck me as laughable.’

•Fellow of the
Royal Society of
Chemistry
•Emeritus
Professor of
History of Science
and Technology at
the Open University
•Senior Member of
Wolfson College,
Cambridge

No Conflict

‘To portray Christian and scientific doctrines as persistently in conflict is not only historically inaccurate, but actually a caricature so grotesque that what needs to be explained is how it could possibly have achieved any degree of respectability... The evidence points strongly in the direction of a myth... sustained by a campaign so well planned, so vigorous and so effective that even today, nearly a century later, the propaganda has lost little of its power... The Victorian scientific naturalists... in establishing their myth of an enduring conflict between religion and science... were successful beyond their wildest expectations.’*

Prof Colin Russell

*Abridged from ‘The Conflict Metaphor and its Social Origins’, *Science and Christian Belief*, vol. 1 no. 1 (1989), pp. 3-26.



Is Faith Childish?

Some people opposed to religion call belief in God primitive and childish, in order to contrast it with science as a mature, advanced way of thinking. When Jesus said we must become like little children, he meant we must learn to trust our Father God as a child trusts its parents, not throw our brains out!

Another strategy, intentional or not, is to criticise things that Christians don’t actually believe. An example is to portray faith as anti-intellectual, as belief without evidence. This is the opposite of what Jesus taught—part of what he called the ‘first and greatest commandment’ was ‘Love the Lord your God with... all your mind’ (Matthew 22:37). Nor is faith a blind leap in the dark, but trust based upon evidence.

“Taste and see that the Lord is good”... “Seek and you shall find”... The experimental approach is basic to Christianity.’

Professor Andrew Miller (Molecular Biologist)
Principal and Vice-Chancellor, University of Stirling

