

with safety and even to distort or fabricate data. Into this situation, the Christian should act as a role model of how to pursue science to the highest ethical standards with honesty and integrity, giving due credit to others for their work

and not being preoccupied with the desire to be first to publish or to receive accolades. The words of Paul to the Colossians have particular resonance: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord and not for men" (Col 3:23).



Prof Andrew Halestrap

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Further information

www.cis.org.uk – Christians in Science

Suggested reading

Berry, R.J. *Real Scientists- Real Faith*. Edited by Monarch Books. Eighteen eminent scientists write about what difference their faith makes to their scientific practice and what difference their science makes to their understanding of their faith.

Keller, T. *Every Good Endeavour*. Hodder and Stoughton. A more general consideration of how

THINKING ABOUT...

science as a christian vocation

how do we approach a career in science as a Christian?

ADDRESSING QUESTIONS OF SCIENCE AND FAITH



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If exploring God's truth in scripture is the realm of the theologian, exploring God's truth in creation is the realm of the scientist

The Cavendish Laboratory in Cambridge, home of the Department of Physics, has produced 29 Nobel Laureates.

Carved above the main entrance to the building are words from Psalm 111:2, "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein". These same words, but in Latin, were also above the entrance to the original Cavendish laboratories, opened in 1874. They may seem strangely out of place in today's world, but this would not have been the case for James Clerk Maxwell, the founding professor, who would have regarded science as a truly Christian vocation in which he was revealing the majesty of the creator God. A century earlier, Frances Bacon put it this way: "God has laid before us two books or volumes to study, if we will be free from error; first the Scriptures revealing the will of God, and then the creatures expressing his power". If exploring God's truth in scripture is the realm of the theologian, exploring God's truth in creation is the realm of the scientist, and both are noble vocations that increase our knowledge of God's power and majesty. This has been

CAN A SCIENTIFIC CAREER BE A CHRISTIAN VOCATION IN ITS OWN RIGHT?

appreciated by many famous scientists who have been renowned as much for their theology as their science. Indeed, Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727), one of the greatest scientists of all time, wrote more works of theology than of science. Similarly, Sir John Polkinghorne, who was Professor of Mathematical physics at the University of Cambridge before becoming ordained, is now better known for his theological works that explore the relationship between Science and religion. Of course, today the majority of scientists who are Christians are not theologians, but they do have the opportunity to express their faith in their science.

One important way in which Science is a Christian vocation is that it is a fulfilment of the Biblical command in Genesis 1:28 to be good stewards of God's world. The Christian view is that God has created an ordered universe that scientists can understand, predict and utilise for the benefit of humanity; such as in the provision of better crop yields, improved medical care and disease prevention, and energy efficient and labour-saving technologies. The Christian who takes part in this enterprise is therefore fulfilling the God-given vocation of being a good steward of creation. However, science can also

be used for unethical or even overtly evil purposes, and it is important to have Christians actively involved at the highest level of scientific research and policy making to speak against these things, and promote God's standards in how science is carried forward and where funding is focussed. By way of example, Frances Collins, who headed up the Human Genome Project, is a keen Christian and is now the Director of the National Institutes of Health, the largest funder of BioMedical Research in the world.

The scientist who is a Christian also has the unique privilege of discovering just how immense is the power and majesty of our creator God. The more science reveals about the workings of the universe, from the mysterious Higg's Boson (often referred to as the God Particle!), through the intricate beauty and complexity of life itself, to the immeasurable expanse of the universe, the more amazing the creation appears. For the Christian, sharing this knowledge can inspire a greater sense of awe and wonder in God and His creation amongst fellow Christians whilst also helping to point those without faith towards the creator God. Furthermore, scientists who are active Christians are best placed to challenge the pervading atheism of the scientific world. Strangely, it is not uncommon to hear colleagues speak of a particular scientific process being

perfectly "designed" for its purpose! They just don't accept that there is a God who lies behind it. Christians working in Science have a unique opportunity to share their own faith in a creator God with their colleagues and explain how he can be known.

Finally, the scientist, like any Christian in the workplace, can embrace their God given role of being "Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us" (2 Cor 5:20). The way duties are performed, with enthusiasm, honesty and integrity, the care and compassion shown to colleagues, and the words spoken should all witness to the God we serve.

Within the world of science, which is a highly competitive environment, the Christian has the particular challenge of avoiding the temptation of building a personal reputation at the expense of scientific integrity, personal well-being and healthy relationships. Striving to be the first to achieve a particular scientific goal brings with it the temptation to take short cuts

IN WHAT UNIQUE WAYS CAN A CHRISTIAN SERVE GOD THROUGH A CAREER IN SCIENCE?