

## OBITUARY

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### The Revd Dr Arthur Peacocke (1924-2006)

Arthur Peacocke was one of the truly original thinkers who forged new links between science and faith during the second half of the twentieth century. A distinguished biochemist, he made important discoveries about the structure of DNA during the early 1950s at Birmingham University. After moving to Oxford in 1959, his academic interests increasingly included theology. In 1960, he received a Diploma in Theology and in 1971, a Bachelor of Divinity from Birmingham University, maintaining all along an active career in biochemistry in parallel.

Arthur was my tutor in biochemistry at St Peter's College, Oxford, 1964-8. Weekly tutorials with Arthur and one other undergraduate colleague were always stretching. My grasp of irreversible thermodynamics was never strong, and discussing the topic with a world expert must have been tedious for the expert on occasion. But Arthur was very focused, arriving in a whirl of papers and departing in a cloud of dust for the next appointment. His publications output was prodigious, amounting to 12 books and more than 200 papers by the end of his academic career.

Arthur also organised a College discussion group during this period with the main aim of introducing students to systematic theology. We discussed a chapter of *Christian Doctrine* by J.S. Whale every week, and the science was never far from the theology in our discussions. Arthur provided a role model, someone who regarded science and theology with equal seriousness, combining both worlds in one career. In 1971 he was ordained and moved to Cambridge as Dean of Clare College in 1973. In 1975 Arthur founded the Science and Religion Forum and was its first President (1975-2000). Returning to Oxford in 1985 as fellow of St Cross College, he founded, and became first director of, the Ian Ramsey Centre and the following year established the Society of Ordained Scientists. During his time in Cambridge Arthur also established the Triangle Club, a dining club which meets termly to discuss matters of science and faith. All the enterprises that Arthur nurtured continue to thrive.

Arthur's extensive writing in science and theology began with his seminal *Science and the Christian Experiment* (1973), which won the Lecomte de Noüy prize, and continued steadily right up to *The Palace of Glory: God's World and Science* (2005). His well-deserved Templeton Prize in 2001 reflected his huge output and its worldwide influence. Arthur contributed to this journal on several occasions, indeed from its second volume, characteristically clear but gracious in all he wrote (2: 59-62, 1990; 7: 109-115, 1995; 9: 145-147, 1997). With Arthur's passing on 21 October 2006, the world of science and faith has lost one of its very significant figures.

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**Dr Denis Alexander is the Editor of *Science & Christian Belief***

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