

## S&CB Guest Editorial - Faith seeking, and sharing, understanding

“Why are we here?” This question of existence may have been first stimulated by some awe-inspiring sight, for example, of a star-filled sky visible to men and women at the dawn of humanity’s consciousness. It may come, even today, to the minds of those fortunate to catch a glimpse of a dark night sky in some remote area free of light pollution and atmospheric haze. Our response to a vision of the mind-stretching vastness of the universe or, at the other extreme, the microscopic wonders of molecular “machines” powering life itself, gives rise to such metaphysical questions of significance and purpose. Our minds seem tuned to seek answers not only to the mechanisms of “creation” but also to its meaning. It was, in my view, one of the turning points in the story of man’s relationship to the Creator that people, like Abraham, realised that, if we were ever to know the Creator then firstly, some kind of self-revelation on the Creator’s part would be necessary. This self-revelation, however, would have to be carefully judged in order not to overwhelm the recipient. Secondly, it would require an exercise of faith to experience such revelation and fit it into an understanding based on rational enquiry. That these two modes of “knowing” would be required for a fuller grasp of reality is at the heart of the relation between Science and Faith. It is apparent that many people seem to believe that only Science or Faith in “revealed religion” can really tell us the truth and that a choice has to be made to trust one or the other. My guess is that most readers of, and contributors to, this journal are saddened by this misconceived conflict.

The question “why are we here?” is pertinent also to the purpose of this journal. What is its role in the dialogue between Science and Faith? Does it have a part to play in the wider mission of the Church? Our basic answers to these particular questions are, of course, set out in the aims of CiS; developing and promoting a biblical Christian view of science and faith in the public arena, encouraging practising scientists in the practice of their faith and witness at work, stimulating a Christian response to environmental care and helping science students integrate their faith with their studies.

It is, however, also vital to keep these aims, not only in mind, but also to see them as part of our wider calling as disciples and followers of Christ to make a difference in the world. Existential questions such as “Why are we here?” may be the starting point for many on a journey of faith. Christians who are scientists have a privileged role in helping others see God for themselves by witnessing to the harmony between their faith and their rationality. Christians who simply have an interest in science have an equally important role in showing to others a confident faith that is able to accept scientific “truth” on a par with other insights, for “All truth is God’s truth.”

When Andrew Halestrap wrote in his editorial piece six years ago, as the incoming Chair of CiS, he identified several challenges and opportunities. These

included the misconceived idea of a conflict between science and faith that was exploited by the “New Atheism”. He noted also the problems caused by well-meaning Christians advocating “Creationism” or “Intelligent Design” that put obstacles to faith in the path of many. These challenges remain. Opportunities to address them are still present but are evolving. Social media have become an integral part of many people’s lives, especially of the younger generation. Finding the best way to use these channels of communication and of how to get a sensible Christian voice heard above the internet din present their own challenges.

Why is this journal here? It is here surely to provide one way in which we can think together and explore how science enriches Christian faith. It provides an important space where scientists, theologians, philosophers and anyone seriously engaged in the intellectual basis of the faith may test ideas and subject prophetic essays to prophetic critique.<sup>1</sup> It is almost thirty years since Mark Noll published his influential book, “The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind”.<sup>2</sup> Although it addressed principally an American context, its criticisms of the level of intellectual engagement had more general application. The situation today, at least in the academy, both in the USA and the UK, is healthier. A particularly encouraging aspect of the vigour of Christian intellectual engagement today has been the tendency to identify with, what C S Lewis famously called, “Mere Christianity” and a willingness to forego old labels identifying sectarian perspectives. The problem remains, however, that the blessings of this engagement are not reaching the pews of our churches. There remains a perception, in the popular mind, that science and faith are fundamentally incompatible. This journal cannot, by itself, address that challenge, but it remains an important part of the ministry of Christians in Science to equip Christians in congregations and to encourage a robust faith in the midst of a sceptical world. It will be important, however, that we do not end up talking only to ourselves.

None of us is infallible. Nor is anyone’s interpretation of the Bible infallible. As we explore the interaction of science and Scripture with developing scientific ideas, applications and ethical implications, let us interact with each other with grace and humility as our faith seeks understanding. As much as our own faith is blessed by the understanding that science provides, we need to remember our calling to share our joy with the world around us. As Abraham experienced his personal journey of faith he was blessed in order that he could be a blessing to others.<sup>3</sup> So, let us encourage one another to keep thinking ... and submitting articles to Science and Christian Belief!

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1 1 Corinthians 14:31-33

2 Noll, Mark A. (1994). *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans. ISBN 0-8028-4180-5.

3 Genesis 12:2 “...and I will bless you,... so that you will be a blessing.” Revised Standard Version