

Editorial

The following guest editorial has been contributed by Colin Humphreys, Goldsmiths' Professor of Materials Science in the University of Cambridge, to mark his appointment to the position of chairman of *Christians in Science*.

The Science-Faith Debate: Important New Developments

Recently there have been a number of important developments in the science-faith dialogue. First, Susan Howatch donated £1 million to Cambridge University to establish in 1994, and for as long as Cambridge University lasts, the Starbridge Lectureship in science and religion. As far as I am aware, this is the first ever permanent university post in the UK in science and religion (the establishment of this post was strongly opposed by an editorial in *Nature* which thundered that whereas science was a subject worthy of academic study, theology was not).

Second, in the USA, a wide range of universities are running lecture courses in science and religion, supported by Sir John Templeton. This is the first time in history that such a large number of courses are available. Thus an increasing number of scientists and theologians will be taught that there is no conflict between science and religion, when both are properly understood.

Third, scientists who are Christians have been criticizing for many years, and with little effect, the views of social scientists and others that all truth, including scientific knowledge, is subjective. However a number of world leading scientists have recently taken up the same argument against the social scientists, and with great effect. For example, the Nobel Prize winning molecular biologist Max Perutz is quoted in *The Times Higher Educational Supplement* of 25 November 1994 as criticising the social sciences for teaching students that scientific results were subjective and dominated by cliques. Perutz stated 'This is a caricature of modern science, yet it represents what future teachers, civil servants, journalists and politicians are taught.' Perutz continued: 'The bulk of scientific knowledge is final. If it were not, jet planes could not fly, computers would not work and atom bombs would fail to explode.' Perutz also criticised those scientists attacking religion, stating: 'My view of religion and ethics is simple: even if we do not believe in God, we should try to live as though we did.'

I believe that the above developments will have long-term significance in persuading both the man in the street and the editor of *Nature* that there is no real conflict between science and Christianity, and in counteracting the widely-held view that all scientific knowledge is subjective. Our journal *Science and Christian Belief* has a key role to play in the science-faith debate as interest in this field widens and deepens.