
A table of contents for the *Christian Brethren Research Fellowship Journal* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_cbrfj.php

We then have two papers which discuss the area which is the centre-piece in the unhappy conflict between science and Christianity, which has often led both scientist and Christian to adopt entrenched positions. Dr. Zandrino (a biochemist and our first Argentine contributor to the *Journal*) in his paper catches something of the wonder of God's creation, reminding us of the fact that it is God's world and that He made it. The more the scientist can tell us the more wonderful does God's work appear to be. Dr. Gareth Jones carefully takes us over the grounds of the controversy. He draws a clear distinction between the different levels of 'evolution'. He asserts that the detailed mechanism of biological evolution is of no concern to the Christian as a Christian, but that the conflict emerges at the level of the philosophical approach to evolution. The opening two chapters of Genesis are then considered and a tentative suggestion as to their interpretation is made.

The final paper is concerned with the nature of man. It is noteworthy that some of the themes of this paper are common to some of the earlier papers. It is Paul Hyland's contention that the scientific and Christian interpretation of the world and of the nature of man can be united, and in support of this he quotes from Teilhard de Chardin. (Paul is a science and philosophy graduate of Bristol University.)

It might be said that the papers cover the more traditional areas of discussion between science and Christianity, and this point is conceded. Areas that could be expanded include further discussion on the nature of man, and on the mind of man, and the whole subject of the technological age. Contributions on these subjects are invited and if sufficient are received it is to be hoped that a whole issue can be devoted to these areas or, at least, that articles on them will appear from time to time in these pages.

J. P. REDFERN

THE IMPACT OF SCIENCE UPON ONE'S PERSONAL FAITH

by TERRY MARTIN

The subject of 'Science and Christianity' has been the centre of much discussion and debate; and as long as science remains a dominant force in our culture it is only correct that Christians should continually address themselves to the whole extent of the problem.

It will be helpful to distinguish some of the different issues that are involved. First, we are confronted with the ever increasing store of scientific facts about the physical world and man. How do these facts correlate with those that we obtain from Biblical revelation? Analysing particular difficulties may well throw light upon the Biblical record, and the way we should understand it[1]. Such specific areas of conflict (apparent or otherwise) are the concern of the other three papers.

Secondly; science is more than an accumulation of facts, it is a *method* and approach at comprehending reality and rationalizing our experience. One of the consequences of its activities is the production of its own world view upon the nature of things: a world view which reflects the assumptions, methods, scope and limitations of the scientific approach, and which is undoubtedly a mechanistic one[2]. How can such a view be held by one whose Christian faith brings such a different insight on the world and man?

Thirdly; we must remember that science is also an enterprise, embarked upon by the individual in complex relationship to many others, and with its own conditioning of thought processes and outlook. It is as much a job as bank clerk or accountancy, and like any job it has its own peculiar problems and consolations for the Christian.

The above division is somewhat artificial, since the different aspects are implicated in each other, but it will serve to indicate the principal scope of this paper, which is concerned with the effect that 'being involved in science' has upon one's personal faith.

One of the first questions that must be faced is whether or not the scientific enterprise is such that the Christian can take it seriously, and deeply concern himself with it. For like all other Christians he shares in the common hope for the future, with its new heaven and new earth, and he is aware that the present order is passing away, only a shadow of the things to come. What therefore is the significance, purpose and value of scientific activity, which is committed to the task of understanding and controlling the physical world? This is a crucial issue for the individual who takes seriously the prospect of standing before the judgment seat of Christ to have his works tested by fire[3].

If only specifically 'religious' functions and activities are considered of ultimate importance, then one's secular occupation in itself will be viewed as somewhat irrelevant to the main purpose in life, unless of course it lies within the sanctified field of the real vocations of medical and humanitarian work, which exemplify in some way or another the ministry of Jesus. However this is very unsatisfactory for one seeking a unified outlook upon his total life from the vantage point of his Christian faith, as it excludes such an outlook from the start, with the consequences of denigrating the scientific enterprise, departmentalising one's life and dichotomising one's thinking.

The Christian faith is bigger than the soteriological mould into which it is too often squeezed, and a wider and deeper understanding of it will throw light upon the present problem. Any consideration of it must not start with the cross or the incarnation, but with the infinite-personal God who has created from nothing a real universe outside of Himself[4], and which He continually upholds and sustains. God finally created man so that he was distinct from the rest of the universe, in that like God he too was personal, being made in the image of God. However, man was also organically related to the physical world, and was created to live in a

certain relationship to it, at the same time to live in a certain relationship to God. The subsequent act of disobedience changed the state of affairs somewhat, but did not alter the fundamental purpose of man, which must be appreciated in the light of these two relationships (both of which suffered from the effects of sin—the creation is even now groaning in travail, awaiting release[5].) Man was to have dominion over the earth[6], and consequently he needs first to understand it. Even so, this investigation of the physical world is not an autonomous activity, divorced from the 'real purpose' of life, for it constitutes an essential part of the total vocation of man in the world. Yet it can never be an ultimate concern in and of itself, though one non-Christian[7] can see no other long range motivation for the human species than the quest for knowledge. Modern science has become secularized[8], and separated from its proper position, giving glory to none but man alone.

We conclude that the scientific enterprise is a legitimate and worthy one when engaged upon in the right, Biblical spirit and for the correct motive, and that the whole edifice of knowledge and understanding that science is building is significant, and not irrelevant or secondary to a personal Christian faith.

Another question that must be faced is that of the moral consequences of a particular piece of research work. Knowledge in itself is morally neutral, but the very possibility of the wrong application of such knowledge may well constitute a sufficient deterrent from even starting the enquiry. These days much research work is backed by government grants, and in America especially this is largely in the interests of defence, and space research. One may well question whether the expense incurred is justified by the information obtained, or in the former case whether it is morally defensible at all. Automation, a fruit of scientific work in cybernetics, is a major contemporary social force, but it requires careful and responsible application, and perhaps restriction. The value of the individual as a person that Christianity brings, may well limit the field of scientific enquiry and technological application.

We have so far considered the insights and assurances that a pre-commitment to the Christian faith can bring to the scientist, but what sort of tension can arise from the implications of his work?

One such tension becomes apparent on reflection upon the history of science. Though claims must be pressed with care it is evident that modern science owes much to the impetus of the Protestant Reformation[9]. Biblical ideas of the rationality and revelatory nature of creation, of man's place as lord of creation, and of nature as something to be known from empirical enquiry, did much to evoke and support the new science of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Many of the great men in the tradition were ardent Christian believers—Bacon, Boyle, Newton, Faraday, Kelvin, Maxwell—and they all found their Christian faith a help to their work. Now we are confronted with the totally opposite situation—science has assumed an autonomous existence divorced from its Biblical foundations,

and is now one of the dominating influences in the secularization of our culture[8]. Most scientists today[10] are not practising Christians, and many use their work, or rather a particular philosophy behind their work, for anti-religious ends. This is especially evident in Communist countries, where it is almost state policy, but is no less present in the 'free' world.

As mentioned in the introduction to this essay, science has built up for itself a 'world view' of the nature of things, which is intended to be comprehensive within its own terms of reference. It seeks to understand how things work, and to explain natural phenomena in terms of fundamental laws and relationships, and to do so without reference to occult or metaphysical notions. The object of its enquiry can be anything of which we have empirical knowledge, and that can include man viewed as a purely mechanistic or naturalistic phenomenon. Does not this rather discredit the Christian way of looking at things, with all its metaphysical concepts, beyond the realm of falsification or verification by empirical research? Proposed answers to this tension have inevitably made reference to the concept of complementarity[11], but it is one to be applied with care. Truth is one, and it does more to aggravate than relieve the tension to suggest that certain things can be religiously true whilst scientifically demonstrably false[12]. Nor is it very satisfactory to postulate two entirely different fields of knowledge[13] [14], one to deal with the category of the impersonal (science), and one to deal with the category of the personal (religion). For the tendency is to lift the issues of the Christian faith out of the area of history, space and time, in which they are inextricably involved, into an upper-storey of non-rational experience, where crucial concepts are reduced to symbolism, and all one can do is to make a 'jump of faith'. In its extreme development what one has faith in then becomes somewhat arbitrary, for there is no criterion of truth, all that counts being the personal value of the experience itself.

The genius of the Christian position is that it alone guarantees the the validity of true personality, by its presupposition of the infinite-personal triune God, who creates man in His own image. Appreciated thus, even such 'metaphysical' notions are not so far fetched as some would venture to suggest, for they do provide real answers to the universal experience of all men, of a sense of significance, and of love and communication with other genuine personalities.

We have already anticipated an analogous tension: the object of study in scientific work is impersonal (or at least treated as if impersonal) and therefore the scientist's relationship to *it* would not seem to be implicated in the main thrust of biblical moral teaching, which is primarily concerned with one's relationship to God and one's fellow men (e.g. the Ten Commandments and Sermon on the Mount). However, it must be realized that science is not a lone enterprise, but a communal activity[14], where faith is exercised in the honesty and integrity of others. Also Biblical teaching does speak of the *motivation*[15] that should be behind our actions, whether they are involved with other human beings or not.

Lastly, a mention of the tension that arises out of the extreme specialization in all aspects of modern life, including of course science. The consequences can be a diminishing sense of real communication with others, including the worship, ministry and fellowship of the church, where the relevance of one's faith to the concrete issues of daily life is not always apparent.

In conclusion, we would like to affirm our conviction that science is a genuine vocation for the Christian in the world, offering the possibilities of creative thinking and the opportunity to make an individual and permanently valuable contribution to man's understanding.

NOTES

1. *Scientists look at the Bible*—by R. L. F. Boyd and others. Especially chapters 1 and 2.
   The Christian view of Science and Scripture—B. Ramm. Chapter 3.
2. *Christianity in a Mechanistic Universe*—F. H. T. Rhodes, in a Symposium of same title—edited by D. M. Mackay.
3. 1 Cor. 3:13.
4. This lack of balance in our theological thinking is perhaps reflected in a corresponding lack of a real worship meeting in Assembly life, as pointed out by P. H. Stunt in p. 32 of CBRFJ 15.
5. Rom. 8:19 - 22.
6. Gen. 1:26 - 30, Ps. 8.
7. *Man in the Universe*—by Fred Hoyle, p. 79.
8. *The Secularization of Science*—by Dr. Herman Dooyeweerd (*International Reformed Bulletin* No. 26, July 1966).
9. *Christianity Today Magazine* Vol. 10 No. 2, Oct. 22 1965. Article by H. Stob—*A firm foundation for Modern Science.*
10. A similar list of great names in science for the twentieth Century would find very few who owned any Christian allegiance, though some did have their own peculiar religious ideas in contrast to the prevailing positivistic spirit: e.g. A. Einstein claimed he believed in Spinoza's 'God', and E. Schrodinger embraced a Hindu pantheistic position. See his book—*My view of the World*, (C.U.P.).
11. *Reason, Revelation and Faith*—article by R. L. F. Boyd in symposium cited in reference 2.
12. *Religious Faith and Twentieth Century Man*—F. C. Happold pp. 48ff. (Pelican).
13. *Chance and Providence*—by W. G. Pollard, p. 153 (Faber and Faber).
14. *Physicist and Christian*—W. G. Pollard (S.P.C.K.).
15. Col. 3:23.