

Dialogues in Science and Faith

Talk 3

Title: Integrating Science and Faith in the World of Physics'

Speaker: Prof Russell COWBURN

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Russell Cowburn FRS is a Professor of Experimental Physics at the Cavendish Laboratory, University of Cambridge. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 2010. He has had over 60 patents granted in connection with his research, is the founder of two start-up companies and the inventor of the anti-counterfeiting technology *Laser Surface Authentication*.

His current research projects cover work on nanoscale magnetism and spintronics. Applications of this basic research include low-energy computer chips, ultrahigh-density 3-dimensional data storage, and healthcare devices. He is interested in bringing ideas from applied physics through technology to commercialisation. At the start of his professional life,

he had thought he faced a choice between a “spiritual” career and a “material” one. Several decades on, he is convinced that the separation is not as clear may have initially appeared.

Abstract:

It is a statistical fact that many practicing scientists are also people of faith, demonstrating that these two spheres of reality are certainly not incompatible. But can integration between science and faith go beyond simple compatibility? Can science inform our faith and can faith assist our science? In this talk, I describe my experience – as a professional academic physicist and practicing Christian – of areas where I have found strong integration between science and faith to be both possible and beneficial. Specifically, I will discuss the role that physics has to play in providing empirical input to theological questions such as how did the universe begin, is there a creator, what is his nature, and how can we deepen our worship of him? I will also discuss ways in which I have found Christian faith to motivate and assist my physics research.