

Review of *Let There Be Science* by David Hutchings and Tom McLeish

By Chris McNeill

*Let There be Science* is written by two authors, David Hutchings and Tom McLeish. Tom McLeish – who is a professor of polymer physics at Durham University and an ISCAST Distinguished Fellow – may be familiar to ISCASTians as the author of the excellent book *Faith & Wisdom in Science* (Oxford University Press). Indeed the present book picks up on many of the themes of *Faith & Wisdom in Science* in particular the recasting of science as ‘the love of the wisdom of nature’ (from the old term for science, natural philosophy) and showing how science has been carried out by humans for millennia with scientific notions and ideas even embodied in the Bible.

David Hutchings – the other author – is a science teacher at Pocklington School in the North of England, and the collaboration between the two has essentially resulted in a version of *Faith & Wisdom in Science* written for a wider audience. The book seeks to show that Christianity and Science haven’t been locked in mortal combat for centuries, but rather that science has evolved quite naturally from the Christian world view. This is achieved by showcasing many interesting stories of science over the past millennia being carried out by some unlikely (by modern standards) people.

The authors also successfully highlight the human nature of science, that it proceeds in fits and starts with periods of joy and pain, debunking the idea of science as a sterile, dispassionate pursuit that relies solely on cold, hard logic and reason. Such an approach helps to establish their thesis that faith and science are not so distant from each other as some would like us think, and that increased interaction between faith and science can only be positive for both sides.

I found *Let There be Science* to be very engaging and easy to read, with some excellent accounts of the development of modern scientific theories. The book however is probably still suited to those who have at least a high school training in science, and in particular physics. Written by a physics teacher and a physics professor, it is perhaps not surprising that most of the science stories are physics-focused, which in one sense is a little disappointing as there are many fascinating aspects to the history of the other sciences.

For ISCASTians, *Faith & Wisdom in Science* may be a more rewarding read on the subject area covered by *Let There be Science*, but the latter is certainly a lighter and quicker read. It may also be worth being familiar with to recommend to friends, relatives etc. as an antidote to the notion of the Science-Religion conflict.

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