

Sam Berry

The Disciple and the Professor

by James Jones

The Word and the World, Christ and Creation, Resurrection and Renewal Sam was supremely the disciple who was forever learning to make connections, and none more so than between the mind of science and the heart of faith.

I first met him when I was a teacher at Sevenoaks School and he and Caroline and the children welcomed me warmly into their home often for Sunday lunch after church. Although a friend he was also a colossus whom I admired for decades and whose articles I had read as a student. To this day I have his books on my study shelves.

For Sam, as for his own heroes of the Faith, God was the author of two books – the Bible and Nature. His understanding was bi-focal and he brought to both the Word and the World the same rigorous yet reverent examination. His personal devotion to Christ nurtured his own sense of awe and care for Creation. With St Paul he was convinced that all things have come into being ‘through and for Christ’. The Resurrection of the body was vital to Sam as the clearest demonstration that ‘matter matters to God’. It was the key to his belief in ‘the renewal of all things’ which Jesus himself had promised as the Son of Man and the Child of Adam. Sam believed not just in personal salvation but in the transformation of the whole of Creation.

Most recently I worked with him, with Sir John Houghton and with others including the Prince of Wales to engage religious leaders in America especially evangelicals to see that from Genesis to Revelation the Bible lays upon us the imperative to care for God’s Creation. It was to Sam a first order issue. He was able to show that looking after our environment is predicated on the best science and the best biblical interpretation.

As I have written in a commendation of the last book he finished before he died, Sam ‘has been intimately involved in many of the major discussions that have shaped contemporary attitudes to the environment. He was one of the elders of the environmental movement. His chapter on awe is the best bridge that anyone can walk over to survey the imaginary chasm between between science and religion.’

Sam was incisive, witty and encyclopaedic in his knowledge. But the raising of an eyebrow or the shrug of a shoulder could with a smile be his gentle riposte to a lesser intellect!

But above all he was a servant of our Lord Jesus Christ at whose name Sam will by now have gladly bowed the knee for with his mind and his heart he had practiced such obeisance as both a disciple and a professor.