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In the world of education, ideas marketed as innovations are often old hat. When “cross-curricular” became the latest in a series of evermore cringe-inducing buzzwords, many teachers shook their heads and rolled their eyes, reminding each other that collaborative links between subjects had always existed.

In my subject, Religious Education, educators have, for a long time, emphasised the importance and benefit of working with other disciplines. Music, art, history, geography – even mathematics – have played a vital part in my teaching of RE this year. One thing that seems sorely missing though, from too many RE classrooms, is science.

I don’t just mean a brief mention when teaching topics such as “the difference between beliefs and facts” (something that is an altogether different pet hate of mine, what with the inference that beliefs are somehow, by definition, based on falsehoods rather than facts). I mean that deep and complex discussions about science are a vital part of excellent RE.

It is the single biggest hurdle with which many RE teachers find themselves challenged on a daily basis. For those of us in faith schools, it is even more of a concern since our role is both academic and evangelical.

I hear stories about Year 5 pupils, who are nine and 10 years old, routinely writing that they “don’t believe in God because I believe in science”. This assertion remains for many to the end of their schooling, when a good proportion leave as firm atheists, separated from a once-blossoming faith that evaporated at around the time that they learned about evolution and the Big Bang.

It does not have to be this way. While it may be difficult to explain the basis of *On the Origin of Species* to a lower-ability group of nine year olds, it is certainly not beyond the realms of possibility, even for non-specialist science teachers or teachers of RE. There are countless resources available to make the task of conveying the basic principles in a simple, more straightforward manner.

The same can be said of teaching the Big Bang. What seems perplexing to me is the myth that these scientific discoveries are perceived by the majority of young people in many schools as being diametrically opposed to faith.

It is difficult to pinpoint the origins of this phenomenon. There is certainly a strong argument to be made that many science teachers, particularly in non-faith schools, teach these lessons without any cross-curricular links to RE, thus implying that the two do not make appropriate bedfellows. I do not envisage that this is a deliberate attempt to divert students away from faith; rather that they may have never considered the idea of including issues of religion in this context.

It seems less likely, I would hope, that teachers of RE would teach Creation as per Genesis as literal fact with no mention of evolution or the Big Bang. Perhaps it is symptomatic of a more secular society in which children are taught at home, either expressly or by implication, that there is a choice to be made: science or religion, reason or irrationality.

Maybe it is a failure on the part of teachers like me to adequately or eloquently explain that it is entirely plausible that the beautiful and complex process of evolution may have been set in motion by God or that the Big Bang must have required a first cause.

It seems to me that we are missing a vital opportunity to reach out to young people. In a world where there are seemingly so many barriers to faith this need not be one. All it needs, I would argue, is for someone to point out the simple fact: yes, you can have faith in God and faith in science.

Last week, I discussed this topic at length with students. One passionate young woman threw her hands in the air and exclaimed, "Finally!" She had been telling her friends, apparently for several weeks, that there was no lack of logic or contradiction in her faith in the facts of science and her acknowledgement of the existence of a creator God.

For others, who said they had never been told that they could "trust in both" it was a light-bulb moment. In a climate so driven by data, where goose-bump-inducing moments hardly ever have time to happen, this was a rare moment of genuine satisfaction. It is these opportunities that confirm to me that my job is so much more than a career.

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