

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Science has taken tremendous strides to show how things work but it completely ignores and side steps the questions: What should we do? To what purposes should we live? What is the purpose of these stupendous achievements of science? Science maintains its silence.

Since the ouster of religion by science, for three centuries humanity has looked to science to create a better world – of progress, of abundance, freedom and well-being. We let go of the Churches and the priests and placed all our hopes and trust in the hands of the scientist and have put all our resources into his hands – only to have a better life, to have purpose and meaning in life. But the scientist turns around and says: "Hey, that's not my job. You've got me wrong! I am there to carry out research. Don't disturb me with your stupid questions. Well, you can enjoy the luxuries and the gadgets I have created for you. Enjoy yourself! What more do you want?" But what to do with our lives when the luxuries and the gadgets get boring? What to do when the electronic toys fail to cheer us? Science maintains its silence.

Jacques Monod, the Nobel laureate scientist expressed the view that the systematic denial of purpose is the cornerstone of the scientific method. Steven Weinberg, another Nobel laureate, a physicist (ironical), says: "The more comprehensible reality becomes, the more meaningless it becomes because it comes

down to equations and numbers, and those do not have any existential meaning”.

Science can deal with quantities, with atoms and molecules, with equations and numbers. But in spite of being the religion of our times, it cannot deliver values, purpose and meaning. Traditionally, these were supplied by religion. Science has usurped the place of religion but has refused to meet the hopes and expectations of its devotees. The scientist has become the new priest – but he does not hear our confessions; he does not offer consolation. TS Eliot writes:

A thousand policemen directing the traffic
Cannot tell you why you came or where you go

An extract from my book THE RELIGION OF WONDER