

ENCOURAGEMENT ENCOURAGEMENT

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Science & Faith...

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Many times during the year in recent times, we have been confronted with some new scientific discovery of one kind or another. We are often faced with either admiring the science that has made this possible or wondering if it is of any value. We may question whether it is going to be useful. For those who are older it may be a case of ‘deja vue’... knowing that it may be replaced sooner or later by another discovery which just replaces that understanding or contradicts the former. Too often theories are taken as ‘fact’ rather than an exploration of possible explanations. With all the barrage of information today, it is no wonder that people are confused and suspicious of new invention, or understandings or feel they need to instantly accept them as progress or *science therefore unassailable*.



We, as human beings, are gifted with both curiosity and the ability to explore and learn. It does not matter what interest we have; there are always new ways of doing things and new ways of understanding the things around us.

It would be quite ridiculous not to use the gifts that have been given to all of us in one measure or another. We are not called as Christians to bury our heads in the sand and disclaim all that is either new or better our way of living and serving. So many ordinary items have come to our aid through mechanical, engineering devices, such as washing machines, hoovers, fridges which have at their base an understanding of science which makes their invention possible. Men and women have worked to improve the situation of others over the centuries and continue to do so.

So why does there appear to be a conflict between science and religion or more correctly science and faith...? In reality the issue is between the natural and supernatural.

Is it possible to explain all things naturally or are some things above the natural plain and cannot be explained thus. This is at the core what is made to separate science from religion /faith. However, this is a false distinction that cannot be upheld. Some scientists would argue that what we call supernatural will one day be explained by science while those who have a natural and supernatural outlook would argue that this is unlikely in all cases. Scientists would argue that we do not yet have an explanation, but it does not mean that we will not find it. The believer would argue that there is an explanation but it does not have to be scientific.

It is a great shame that the conflict between the two is so much emphasised today in order to deride and mock religion and faith. It is all the more surprising when so many scientists are indeed believers and have contributed much to our knowledge. Fr. George Lemaître (Died in 1966), is known to be the father of the Big Bang theory, though this was questioned on the basis that he was trying to find religious explanation for creation. However, there is also a consensus that this was not the case, since “Lemaitre was much too good a scientist to let his religious beliefs influence his scientific research and reasoning”. (Tablet 2008) Much earlier, 1955 Albert Schweitzer wrote ‘Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.’ Many Christian scientists have been awarded Nobel prizes for their work and have had to integrate or be clear about what they have been doing and believing.

There is a famous story about a young student and an elderly gentleman often quoted in various forms and variations but derives from a real event. The student was travelling on the train and pondering his future. He was a science student of capability and had dreams of what he wanted to be.

What one must not do is to rule out the Supernatural as one possible explanation. C. S. Lewis

Sitting opposite him was an elderly man. The elderly man was studying a book and very intently. Quite fascinated by this the student sought to engage with him, so asked him what he was reading. The elderly man replied that it was the Bible... The young man, with an air of slight superiority, stated that he did not believe 'in all that and science disproves it'. The elderly man questions him and engages in a conversation asking him what he wanted to be. The student explains that he wanted to be a great scientist, naming a few. He especially mentioned one professor who he so admired and respected. The old man listened attentively and questioned him a little more. Both agreed that science was important but the young man had no place for religion and all that was just a fairy tale. The wise man continued listening as the student revealed his idol was Professor John Cole a great physicist. The journey was coming to an end for the elderly man, and he said he would like to hear more about this famous man. To the student's delight he gave him a business card and the younger man took it eagerly promising to stay in touch. Just before he finally left, he wrote something on the back of the card and departed. The young man looked at the card. Prof John Cole, Professor of Physics. He turned the card over and he had written. 'Science helps but God saves.'

Much to ponder for the young scientist to be...

St. John Paul II once entered into this debate as he too was a learned man, saying "Science can purify from error and superstition, religion can purify science from idolatry and false absolutes".

There are indeed Saints who have been scientists. Dr. Guiseppe Moscati who served the poor in Italy and similarly in more recent times, Saint Gianna Molla, wife, mother and paediatrician, who with all her understanding, had to make a choice between the life of her baby in the womb and herself. Another is Servant of God Jerome Lejeune (1926-1994) who discovered the Downs Syndrome chromosome, the extra one, earning him the William Allen Award, the highest honour for genetics.

Finally, far from being an obstacle, faith can enhance a person's journey and be a means of conversion. Dr Sy Garte, a Doctor in Biochemistry said that "While I was an atheist, I believed there was no evidence for God but that science was truth. Then science showed

me there was no evidence for atheism!" (The Work of His Hand 2023)

As a student myself and learning many things that were quite challenging I will never forget my Professor coming up to me and asking if I was okay as he knew that I was a Christian. He said 'Never forget that what you have is deep inside and what I can give are just ideas and theories'. Important words from a good and caring teacher. Science has its place and is important in our understanding, but as the wise priest in Lourdes said in regard to miracles accepted on faith, "For those who have no faith no explanation is possible. For those who believe none is necessary". Pray always for discernment remembering that because we can, with science, do many things, it does not mean we always should...

Halina Holman ©



Pope Francis

"The Big Bang theory which is proposed does not contradict the intervention of a creator but depends on it. Evolution of nature does not conflict with the notion of Creation".
Rome 2016

Feast Days in September

1st Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

3rd St Gregory the Great

5th St. Teresa of Kolkata

8th Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

9th St. Peter Clavier

12th The Most Holy Name of Mary

13th St. John Chrysostom

14th The Exaltation of the Holy Cross

15th Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

16th Ss. Cornelius & Cyprian 17th St. Hildegard of Bingen

20th The Martyrs of Korea

21st St. Matthew, Apostle & Evangelist

22nd Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

23rd St. Padre Pio... (St. Pius of Pietrelcina)

24th Our Lady of Walsingham

26th Ss. Cosmos & Damian 27th St. Vincent de Paul

28th St. Lawrence Ruiz & Comp.

29th Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

30th St. Jerome