

Faith and Science

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Opening Reading

“Science develops best when its concepts and conclusions are integrated into the broader human culture and its concerns for ultimate meaning and value. Scientists cannot, therefore, hold themselves entirely aloof from the sorts of issues dealt with by philosophers and theologians. By devoting to these issues something of the energy and care they give to their research in science, they can help others realize more fully the human potentialities of their discoveries. They can also come to appreciate for themselves that these discoveries cannot be a genuine substitute for knowledge of the truly ultimate. Science can purify religion from error and superstition; religion can purify science from idolatry and false absolutes. Each can draw the other into a wider world, a world in which both can flourish.”

– John Paul II, *Letter to the Reverend George V. Coyne, S.J., Director of the Vatican Observatory* (June 1, 1988)

Questions from the Reading

1. Do you agree with John Paul II that science benefits from interaction with culture and the religious quest for meaning in life? If so, how can this interaction take place?
2. Do you agree that “Science can purify religion from error and superstition?” If so, how?
3. Do you agree that religion can purify science from idolatry and false absolutes? If so, how?
4. What do you think that John Paul II means by the phrase: “knowledge of the truly ultimate?”
5. Do you think that science and religion can both “flourish” in the same “world?”

A Prayer for Scientists

Almighty God, source and foundation of time and space, matter and energy. You made the Universe with all its order, atoms, worlds, galaxies and the intricate complexities of living creatures. Help scientists and all who study the mysteries of Your creation to know You more truly and more surely, to fulfill their role in Your eternal purpose, to be true witnesses to Your glory, and to be faithful stewards of Your gifts. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(source: adapted from the Society of Ordained Scientists website)