

Science and Faith Complement Each Other

Following are excerpts from an address given by Pope John Paul II to a group of scientists and students in the Cologne Cathedral.

Our culture, in all its areas, is imbued with a science which proceeds in a way that is largely functionalistic. This applies also to the area of values and norms, of spiritual orientation in general. Precisely here science comes up against its own



limits. There is talk of a crisis of legitimation of science, nay more, of a crisis of orientation of our whole scientific culture. What is its essence? Science alone is not able to give a complete answer to the question of meanings, which is raised in the crisis. Scientific affirmations are always particular. They are justified only in consideration of a given starting point, they are set in a process of develop-

ment, and they can be corrected and left behind in this process. But above all: how could something constitute the result of a scientific starting point when it first justifies this starting point and therefore must already be presupposed by it?

Science alone is not capable of answering the question of meanings, in fact it cannot even set it in the framework of its starting point. And yet this question of meanings cannot tolerate indefinite postponement of its answer. If widespread confidence in science is disappointed, then the state of mind easily changes into hostility to science. In this space that has remained empty, ideologies suddenly break in. They sometimes behave as if they were "scientific" but they owe their power of persuasion to the urgent need for an answer to the question of

meanings and to interest in social and political change. Science that is purely functional, without values and alienated from truth, can enter the service of these ideologies; a reason that is only instrumental runs the risk of losing its freedom. Finally, there are new manifestations of superstition, sectarianism, and the so-called "new religions," whose appearance is closely connected with the crisis of orientation of culture.

These wrong-ways can be detected and avoided by faith. But the common crisis concerns also the believing scientist. He will have to ask himself in what spirit, in what direction, he is pursuing his studies. He must assume the task, directly or indirectly, of examining, in a constantly renewed form, the procedure and aim of science from the standpoint of the question of meanings. We are jointly responsible for this culture and we are called upon to cooperate in overcoming the crisis.

In this situation the Church does not advocate prudence and restraint, but courage and decision.

There is no reason not to take up a position in favor of truth or to be afraid of it. The truth and everything that is true represents a great good to which we must turn with love and joy. Science too is a way to truth; for God's gift of reason, which according to its nature is destined not for error, but for the truth of knowledge, is developed in it.

This must apply also to science orientated in a technico-functional direction. It is reductive to understand knowledge only as a "method for success," while on the contrary it is legitimate to judge as a proof of knowledge the outcome it obtains. We cannot consider the technical world, the work of man, as a kingdom completely estranged from truth. Then, too, this world is anything but meaningless: it

is true that it has decisively improved living conditions, and the difficulties caused by the harmful effects of the development of technical civilization, do not justify forgetting the goods that this same progress has brought.

There is no reason to consider technico-scientific culture as opposed to the world of God's creation. It is clear beyond all doubt that technical knowledge can be used for good as well as for evil. Anyone who studies the effects of poisons can use this knowledge to cure as well as to kill. But there can be no doubt in what direction we must look to distinguish good from evil.

Technical science, aimed at the transformation of the world, is justified on the basis of the service it renders man and humanity.

It cannot be said that progress has gone too far as long as many people, in fact whole peoples, still live in distressing conditions, unworthy of man, which could be improved with the help of technico-scientific knowledge. Enormous tasks still lie before us, which we cannot shirk. To carry them out represents a brotherly service for our neighbor, to whom we owe this commitment, just as we owe the man in need the work of charity, which helps his necessity.

We render our neighbor a brotherly service because we recognize in him that dignity characteristic of a moral being; we are speaking of personal dignity. Faith teaches us that man's fundamental prerogative consists in being the image of God. Christian tradition adds that man is of value for his own sake, and is not a means for any other end. Therefore, man's personal dignity represents the criterion by which all cultural application of technico-scientific knowledge must be judged.

More Opinions

Punishment And Crime

Editor:

I feel compelled to answer Robert Bart's letter of Jan. 28 in which he states that there is evidence that realistic penalties deter crimes. He cited the study of Isaac Ehrlich that indicated that an additional execution per year between 1933-69 "may have resulted on the average of seven or eight fewer murders." Contrary to Bart's assertion, these results have not been confirmed by other investigators and Ehrlich's method itself has been questioned.

Using Ehrlich's method, and examining the murders only in the years 1933-61, no deterrent effect was found. Ehrlich's conclusion rests on what happened in the years 1962-69. During these years, robbery, burglary, larceny and aggravated assault increased more dramatically than murder, although the penalty for these crimes has never been execution in any but a few Southern states. Increase in all crimes during these years must be attributed to something other than the fact that few people were executed. Ehrlich also failed to compare the deterrent effect of the death penalty with that of imprisonment.

Sophisticated research recently published by William Bowers and Glenn Pierce in "Crime and Delinquency" gave strong evidence that

executions provoke murder-prone persons to commit murder. In the month following each of the 695 executions in New York State between 1907-63, there was an average of two additional murders over and above the expected number. State violence seemed to have a brutalizing effect, conveying the message of the legitimacy of lethal violence.

Similar results were found when the homicides committed in San Francisco, Los Angeles and Alameda County from 1946-55 and in South Carolina from 1951-62 were analyzed.

Since 1900, there have been more than 100 known instances where innocent people have been sentenced to death. At least eight innocent people have been executed. Dare we take the chance of killing innocent people?

Society has a right to protect itself from dangerous people. Removing such people to a secure, humane environment would serve this purpose.

If we believe that all human life is sacred, that God loves each of us unconditionally, and that no one is beyond redemption, we should continue to nurture each person, leaving the exact moment of death in the hands of God. "Whatever you do to the least of these, you do to me."

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Finds Courier Inadequate

Editor:

I am writing regarding your

article "How the Courier-Journal Serves the Church" (Jan. 28). I find many of the statements you make to be vague generalizations. Under "News Function," you say the Courier-Journal is the instrument (emphasis is the letter writer's); indeed the Courier is one of many instruments for reflecting and recognizing the community experience of our church. You claim that you provide "professional church personnel with most of their information regarding authoritative statements, etc." As a professional in the church I can clearly say that this is false. I depend on many national and international communications to keep abreast of information. The Courier seldom publishes the texts of many important and authoritative statements.

I could continue at some length with an analysis of what I believe are grave misrepresentations. The Courier is often shallow and inadequate. The paper has grown progressively smaller and less useful in my work. As a member of this diocese and a professional serving the Church of Rochester I cannot agree that the Courier is adequate in presenting the present condition of the church. I regret that you chose to make such sweeping statements and vague generalizations. You ignore the importance of other publications and the difference between a diocesan publication and national news services. I agree that we need a well-informed Catholic community and I certainly question whether the Courier is the most adequate, useful and effective means for informing people of the Diocese.

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Drinan to Teach

Father Robert F. Drinan, a Roman Catholic priest and former Democratic congressman from Massachusetts, who did not run for re-election because of a new Vatican ruling forbidding priests to participate in politics, will teach a seminar in international civil rights, beginning soon, at the Georgetown University Law School in Washington, D.C. (RNS Photo)

Cathedral Offers Courses

The adult education program at Sacred Heart Cathedral is under way this week.

The spring session includes five courses all taught in the Rectory, 296 Flower City Park. They are Israel's Ancient History, Prayer of the Heart, Justice and the Church, Genesis 2: Our Journey in Faith, and a daytime program, Mary, Our Mother.

The cost of the evening courses is \$6 each. The daytime program is \$3. To register for a class or for further information those interested may contact Ted and Kitty Lum, 543 Seneca Pkwy., Rochester, N.Y. 14613, 647-1900.

Fr. Shamon Donates To DeSales Drive

Geneva DeSales High School kicked off its annual Giving Drive with a Mass, Feb. 1. Father Albert Shamon from St. Mary's in Waterloo was the celebrant.

According to Frank Delamere, director of the DeSales Promotion and Development Committee, the drive's goal is \$100,000 with

three-fourths of the total to be used for present expenditures and the remaining amount to be put in a reserved fund for future use.

At the end of Mass, Father Shamon gave the committee a pleasant surprise in donating a \$1,000 to the drive in memory of his late brother Father Edward Shamon.

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Deadline

The deadline for submitting news to the Courier-Journal is noon on Thursday preceding the following Wednesday's publication.