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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAITH, REASON, AND SCIENCE
IN THE TRANSMISSION OF THE FAITH
IN THE TIMES OF GROWING SECULARIZATION*

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A b s t r a c t. This article touches mostly on two points: the relationship between faith, reason, and science (1) and John Paul II's explanation of the growth of secularization (2) as a very important context of the transmission of the Christian faith today.

1. Faith and reason need each other and support each other. Christian faith is not a natural product of human reason and always provokes reason to open itself and to see much more than reason alone can see.

Genuine science is not in conflict with Catholic Christianity. Science, which came to exist thanks to Judeo-Christian Revelation, is a different order of knowledge that has its own built-in logic and dignity. Science wants to know better the material side of nature, while faith is a personal and active answer to God's Revelation which was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Its credibility has many reasons. Some of them are confirmed by scientists investigating nature but more of them are the subject of Fundamental Theology which is a successor of Apologetics.

The Catholic Church owes very much to science and scientists and honors their genius. Good science makes many peoples' lives better: medical care, the production of more food,

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the confirmation of the authenticity of The Shroud of Turin, the confirmation of medical miracles are all products of good science.

2. John Paul II was aware of a phenomenon of growing secularization, especially in the western world. He knew that this phenomenon is explained by some people as proof of the fact that Christian faith is going to end. According to him, secularization seems to grow only in the western world and is a proof of its cultural and ethical crisis. This is the crisis of man, of vision, and the vocation of men. This culture needs repairs, needs a new spirit, a new certain hope to be able to survive. It might be given by the Christian faith which offers a full meaning of human life and answers all existential questions.

Key words: Apologetics, Atheism, Catholic faith, Christian faith, Communism, Credibility, Darwinism, Galileo affair, Fundamental Theology, John Paul II, Lublin School of Fundamental Theology, Marian Rusecki, Materialism, Marxism, Naturalism, Origin of life, Origin of the universe, Reason, Religion, Science, Secularization, Theory of evolution, Transmission of the faith, Year of the Faith.

A few months ago, I heard a debate between a Jesuit and an atheist on a popular radio station in Poland. Throughout the debate, the atheist kept calling himself a scientist and a rationalist. His final words were: “Every serious atheist must be honest with himself and others: After death, there is nothing. There are too many atheists who are not brave enough to say this openly.” What a sad ‘good news’ – and how different from Christian faith and hope. In the end, since there is no God, there is – nothing. Might we not speculate that it was the Holy Spirit who prompted this atheist to make clear to everyone the consequences of atheism?

One day I was watching an episode of “Bones”, the popular American television series. One of the characters – a woman, a brilliant scientist, who solves criminal mysteries – is asked a question: “Do you believe in God?” She answers: “I am a scientist. I believe only in science and reason.”

Actually, a majority of contemporary scientists do not think this way. However, this lady shares the dominant attitude of mainstream western culture, especially that of the media. Atheism, secularism and scientism keep thickening the atmosphere we all breathe. This is a relatively new development, one that Christian parents and catechists must take into account.

In this article, I would like to touch on three points: the relationship between faith, reason, and science; blessed John Paul II’s explanation of the growth of secularization and the fruits of the Year of Faith.

1. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAITH, REASON, AND SCIENCE

I am sure there is no need to remind you about the content of John Paul II's encyclical letter *Fides et Ratio*, or of *Lumen Fidei*, the recent encyclical written in "four hands". Appreciation given to reason by the Church's Magisterium is, in both, very clear. Faith and reason need each other and support each other. There is no true Christian faith without Reason. From the very beginning, the Christian theology was at the same time, the fruit of both faith and reason and cannot keep its own identity without both. In contrast, some today say quite often that religion and faith are, in their nature, irrational. This is not true (by the way, the terms 'reason' and 'rational' are meaningful). Christian faith is not a natural product of human reason, and it always provokes reason to open itself and to see much more than reason alone can see. Faith is not irrational; it does not omit reason and does not destroy it. I will touch on this point again later in this article.

Let us look at the relationship between faith and science, which is very important for the transmission of the faith today. The so-called conflict between the two began in the 17th century and was caused by misunderstandings on both sides. The Galileo Affair is still a stock argument that the Catholic faith and science are mutually antagonistic, although the Church long ago admitted the error of the Holy Office and made amends. It should be recalled that at the time, Galileo did not help his case by insisting that the earth orbits the sun in perfect circles and by offering, as proof of the heliocentric model, the phenomenon of tidal movements – which of course are caused by the moon and not the earth's orbit of the sun.

The so-called New Atheism, which receives so much attention in the media, tells us that science has disproved religion. How does a Catholic respond to this? They do by asking certain questions. In fact, there are three important questions that science thus far has not answered.

The first question is the most fundamental: Why is there something rather than nothing? Science cannot answer this question because it is not even a scientific question. Theories of evolution do not get you an inch toward answering this question. Nor does redefining "nothing" as "next to nothing", since nothingness does not consist of degrees.

The second question concerns the origin of life. Life only seems to come from life, and the origin of life remains a profound mystery. For one thing, scientists need protein to make DNA, but they need DNA in order to make protein. In recent decades, scientists have quietly abandoned the quest to

create life from inert chemicals in a laboratory. They may do it someday, but for the present, the question of the origin of life is not one that favors atheism.

The third question is: If nature is all that there is, how did nature, by a blind process, produce a creature who is so unlike anything else in nature? Mankind did not need the ability to write *Hamlet* or compose *Don Giovanni* in order to compete with the apes.

I come from a part of the world where for many decades people living under communism were taught that materialism, naturalism, Darwinism and Marxism are absolutely true. They were promised that science would create an earthly paradise. These Marxist dreams cost many human lives and many broken consciences. Karol Wojtyła, the future John Paul II, came of age in this culture of lies. Thank God this world has vanished, but not totally.

Marxism has more or less disappeared, but the false use of science has not. Eugenics, for example, which was given a bad name by the Nazis, has come back with a vengeance. Test tube babies, frozen embryos, IVF and genetic engineering all contradict the dignity of the human person. It is the role of Catholicism to humanize science and to point out when it becomes our enemy, rather than our ally.

The truth is that genuine science can never be in conflict with Catholic Christianity. Science is a different order of knowledge that has its own built-in logic and dignity. What the Church warns us against is materialistic philosophies disguised as science. Jacques Maritain, a great champion of science, coined the phrase 'scientism', which is what happens when intellectuals use 'science' to explain things that are outside the realm of science. Thinkers like Maritain and John Paul II assure us that the Church has nothing to fear from genuine science, but that it must be on guard against materialistic philosophies that are disguised as science. Science wants to understand the material side of nature, while faith is different. Faith is a personal and active answer to God's Revelation, which was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. There are many reasons for its credibility. In a general way some of them are confirmed by scientists investigating nature. They 'meet' the Mystery of the beginning of nature. They find the Intelligent Project in nature. They somehow 'meet' God, but as scientists they cannot say much about Him.

The remaining support for the credibility of the Christian religion and faith is the subject of Fundamental Theology as theological discipline. From a methodological point of view, Fundamental Theology differs from classical Apologetics (very popular before the Second Vatican Council and based on philosophy and history) because it tries to find the reasons for the Christian

faith's credibility in the light of the Divine Revelation and 'inside' of its content. Classical Apologetics wanted to be neutral, natural and scientific according to standards chosen by scientism. According to the Rev. Prof. Marian Rusecki¹, Fundamental Theology and Apologetics can exist together and support each other in justifying the credibility of Christianity as the only one religion containing the fullness of God's Revelation². However, Apologetics cannot present the most important reasons, for example the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the fulfillment in Him of promises given by Old Testament prophets, or His miracles. (Certainly Apologetics discussed miracles, but could not refer directly to biblical miracles because the Bible is "written" Revelation). At the end of his life, M. Rusecki discussed some new reasons, which were called by him, "arguments" (argumentations): martyrological, veritative, bonative, calonic, from holiness, praxiological, agapetological, hope-giving, culture-building, personalistic, axiological and comparatistic³. In this article there is not enough time to explain them in detail.

One area in which the division between science and religion must be rigorously observed is that of biblical exegesis. The creation account in the Book of Genesis, for example, is commonly dismissed as being out of sync with what modern science tells us about the origin of the universe and the origin of species.

However, the Book of Genesis was never intended to teach science. It was written in an archaic, pre-scientific idiom; the author of Genesis could not have said that the universe is thirteen billion years old because the ancient Hebrews did not have a word for "billion" (or for "million", for that matter). Genesis is not a textbook in astrophysics; it is not a textbook in geology. There is not a single scientific datum to be found in the Old Testament.

What the Book of Genesis did was to "disenchant" the universe. It taught that trees and rocks are things made by God and are not to be worshipped. Rather, they can be studied and dissected by human intelligence. This "disenchantment" ultimately made western science possible, as did the Judeo-Christ-

¹ Rev. Prof. Marian Rusecki (1942-2012) – professor of Fundamental Theology at the John Paul II Catholic University in Lublin, Poland; co-founder of so-called Lublin Fundamental Theology School; president of the Society of Fundamental Theologians in Poland.

² M. R u s e c k i. *Wiarygodność chrześcijaństwa*. T. 1: *Z teorii teologii fundamentalnej* [*Credibility of Christianity*. Vol. 1: *From Theory of Fundamental Theology*]. Lublin: TN KUL 1994.

³ M. R u s e c k i. *Traktat o wiarygodności chrześcijaństwa. Dlaczego wierzyć Chrystusowi?* [*Treatise on Credibility of Christianity. Why should one believe Christ?*]. Lublin: TN KUL 2010.

tian insistence that the universe is rational – the expression of the divine *Logos* – and thus can be understood by rational minds created in the image of God.

In fact, modern cosmology has delivered the sort of universe that Catholic theology suspected was there all along: one that is finite, highly specific, and having a beginning. Hence the title of an article I recently read (by George Sim Johnston from the United States): “Why Catholics Like Einstein”⁴.

At times, science and faith might be in conflict. This occurs when science – or more often a philosophy or ideology using scientific data – strays from its areas of competence and denies religious beliefs, most often because it misunderstands them. Sometimes conflict between science and faith happens when applied science breaks moral rules. Today it happens very often. It is also true that conflict might be caused by a religious fundamentalism which finds science to be the worst of enemies.

The Catholic Church owes much to science and scientists and honors their genius. Good science makes many peoples’ lives better: medical care, the production of more food, the confirmation of the authenticity of The Shroud of Turin and the confirmation of medical miracles are all products of good science.

2. BLESSED JOHN PAUL II’S EXPLANATION OF THE GROWTH OF SECULARIZATION

The supposed conflict between faith and science is not the biggest obstacle to the transmission of the faith today. The largest obstacle is that of the mainstream culture. So many times I have heard from Catholic parents and catechists about the difficulties of passing on the faith to the younger generation. Pop culture promotes a hedonistic life-style that expresses itself in what John Paul called ‘hyper-consumerism’. It proposes a world free of suffering and responsibility. There are no longer heroes but celebrities. Wealthy pop

⁴ G.S. J o h n s t o n. *Why Catholics Like Einstein* (<http://www.crisismagazine.com/1996/why-catholics-like-einstein-3>; access on the 3rd of November, 2013). See also by the same author: *Did Darwin Get It Right? Catholics and the Theory of Evolution*. Our Sunday Visitor. Indiana 1998; *An Evening With Darwin in New York*, “Crisis” 24(2006) no. 3 p. 32-37.

stars are a seductive role model and we cannot be surprised that many young people try to emulate them.

John Paul II, who was teaching at Catholic University of Lublin, Poland, for about 25 years, used to describe modern European culture as “lacking of conscience of God”, “silent apostasy”, “leaving God”, “European atheism”, “anti-theistic and anti-Christian mentality”, “dechristianization of traditionally Christian countries”, “erosion of the faith”, “setting of Christian society”, “post-Christian era” and “leaving the Church”. He was aware of a phenomenon of growing secularization, especially in the western world. He knew that this phenomenon is taken by some people as proof that the Christian faith is going to end.

He did not agree with that explanation. He also wanted to encourage believers, especially Christian parents and catechists, to be even more active in the transmission of the faith today. How did John Paul II explain the phenomenon of growing secularization?

First, the faith of the Church and the Church herself is very often misunderstood. Some strongly want to present the Church as only one of many institutions, sometimes as the institution which has done bad things and made many mistakes in the past.

Second, according to him, secularization seems to grow only in the western world and is a proof of its cultural and ethical crisis. This is the crisis of man, of his vision, and of his vocation. The vision of men has become one-dimensional: materialistic or even worse: men having no certain vision because of modern relativism. That is why many people suffer today. Even they do not know the true reason for their spiritual suffering. They are looking for something and somebody to be the Rock of their being, the Rock of their individual human status and dignity, and of the credible hope that every human life will be fulfilled after death. According to John Paul II’s teaching, it is not the faith of the Church which needs repairs today – even though all members of the Church always need to be more credible witnesses of the faith – but it is modern western culture which needs repairs, a new spirit and a new certain hope, to be able to survive. It might be offered by the Christian faith and its vision of a man which is attractive in every period of time, past, present, and future, and in every culture. The Christian faith offers a full meaning of human life, it answers all existential questions, and it gives a man a clear vocation. This vocation is to follow Jesus, who is the most credible Teacher and Witness of faith, follow His Gospel, follow the faith of His Church and your life will be fulfilled.

3. THE FRUITS OF THE YEAR OF FAITH

The Year of Faith in Poland has already produced much fruit. There were many events, including evangelization on the streets, conferences, and books. The encyclical letter *Lumen fidei* (*The Light of Faith*) is being disseminated and read. It may be that in my country there had been too much theoretical information presented by the clergy and not enough witness about the faith communicated in simple language by the lay faithful. We can always learn how to do this better.

Faith grows when it is shared. The Year of Faith opened new possibilities and showed the constant necessity of sharing the faith with the world today. It is true that we have to share the faith, first of all, with people who do not know it, or misunderstand it, or are bored with it. However, as Jesus Christ's disciples and members of the Church, and also as Catholic catechists, we have to share the faith with one another. We need it. We all live in a modern culture and could be affected by its many temptations.

Is there a better place to do so, to support each other by telling how much and why the faith is important to us, than in St. Peter's Square in Rome, at St. Peter's tomb which is the proof of his faith, with St. Peter and his Successor among us?

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RELACJE MIĘDZY WIARĄ, ROZUMEM I NAUKĄ
W PRZEKAZYWANIU WIARY
W CZASACH ROSNĄCEJ SEKULARYZACJI

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Ten artykuł, mający na celu udzielenie syntetycznej odpowiedzi na postawiony problem, złożony jest głównie z dwóch części: relacji między wiarą, rozumem i nauką (1) oraz św. Jana Pawła II interpretacji zjawiska rosnącej sekularyzacji (2). Obydwa te zagadnienia są istotne dla przekazu wiary chrześcijańskiej w czasach współczesnych i ukazywania jej wiarygodności. Nierzadko bowiem chrześcijanie spotykają się ze stwierdzeniem, że od początku nowożytności rozum i nauka skutecznie zakwestionowały prawdziwość wiary dając początek nowej epoce, czego skutkiem jest rosnąca dziś sekularyzacja i zjawiska w rodzaju tzw. nowego ateizmu.

1. W świetle wypowiedzi Magisterium Kościoła oraz teologów wiara chrześcijańska i rozum nie tylko potrzebują się wzajemnie oraz wspomagają, lecz także od początku istnienia chrześcijaństwa były ze sobą ściśle związane. Wiara chrześcijańska nie jest wytworem ludzkiego rozumu i zawsze prowokuje go do poznania rzeczywistości, do których sam nie jest w stanie dotrzeć.

Właściwie rozumiana i uprawiana nauka (jako *science*, czyli nauki przyrodnicze) nie wchodzi w konflikt z chrześcijaństwem katolickim. Nauka, która notabene nie mogłaby powstać bez Objawienia judeochrześcijańskiego, jest innym od wiary rodzajem poznania, posiadającym uzasadnioną metodologię. Dąży do poznania materialnej, empirycznej strony rzeczywistości, podczas gdy wiara jest angażującą całą ludzką osobę odpowiedzią na Boże Objawienie, którego pełnia dokonana się w Jezusie Chrystusie. Wiarygodność tego Objawienia posiada liczne racje i argumenty. Na niektóre wskazują naukowcy badając przyrodę, lecz o liczniejszych traktuje teologia fundamentalna będąca sukcesorką apologetyki. Ogromny wkład w jej rozwój wniósł ks. prof. dr hab. Marian Rusecki (1942-2012) – współtwórca lubelskiej szkoły teologii fundamentalnej.

Kościół katolicki o nauce i naukowcach wypowiada się bardzo pozytywnie, dostrzegając ich geniusz. Nauka szanująca godność oraz dobro człowieka uczyniła i czyni bardzo wiele dla poprawy jakości ludzkiego życia; wystarczy pomyśleć o opiece medycznej i produkcji żywności. Kościół wiele zawdzięcza też naukowcom biorącym udział w rozpoznawaniu cudów czy badaniach nad Całunem Turyńskim.

2. Bł. Jan Paweł II był świadomy wzrastającej obecnie sekularyzacji, zwłaszcza w świecie zachodnim, oraz tego, że ten fenomen jest przez niektórych interpretowany jako dowód na zanikanie chrześcijaństwa, jego „przeżycie się” czy wprost niewiarygodność. Według Papieża sekularyzacja jest znakiem kulturowego i moralnego kryzysu cywilizacji zachodniej. Jest to kryzys antropologiczny, kryzys człowieka, jego rozumienia, pojmowania jego natury, egzystencji i powołania. Kultura dotknięta tym kryzysem potrzebuje odnowy i nowej nadziei, by w ogóle przetrwała. Według Jana Pawła II źródłem odnowy może być wiara chrześcijańska, która oferuje pełną, objawioną wizję człowieka oraz odpowiada na wszystkie pytania i niepokoje egzystencjalne.

Słowa kluczowe: apologetyka, ateizm, darwinizm, Jan Paweł II, komunizm, lubelska szkoła teologii fundamentalnej, Marian Rusecki, marksizm, materializm, naturalizm, nauka, początek wszechświata, początek życia, przekaz wiary, religia, Rok Wiary, rozum, sekularyzacja, sprawa Galileusza, teologia fundamentalna, teoria ewolucji, wiara, wiarygodność.