**Extract from an address of Pope Benedict XVI to
members of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences**

November 2006

Some have seen in the progress of modern science and technology, one of the main causes of secularisation and materialism: why invoke God’s control over these phenomena, when science has shown itself capable of doing the same thing?

Certainly the Church acknowledges that *“with the help of science and technology…, man has extended his mastery over almost the whole of nature”*, and thus *“he now produces by his own enterprise benefits once looked for from heavenly powers”* ([*Gaudium et Spes*](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html), 33). At the same time, Christianity does not posit an inevitable conflict between supernatural faith and scientific progress. The very starting-point of Biblical revelation is the affirmation that God created human beings, endowed them with reason, and set them over all the creatures of the earth. In this way, man has become the steward of creation and God’s “helper”. If we think, for example, of how modern science, by predicting natural phenomena, has contributed to the protection of the environment, the progress of developing nations, the fight against epidemics, and an increase in life expectancy, it becomes clear that there is no conflict between God’s providence and human enterprise. Indeed, we could say that the work of predicting, controlling and governing nature, which science today renders more practicable than in the past, is itself a part of the Creator’s plan.

Science, however, while giving generously, gives only what it is meant to give. Man cannot place in science and technology so radical and unconditional a trust as to believe that scientific and technological progress can explain everything and completely fulfil all his existential and spiritual needs. Science cannot replace philosophy and revelation by giving an exhaustive answer to man’s most radical questions: questions about the meaning of living and dying, about ultimate values, and about the nature of progress itself. For this reason, the Second Vatican Council, after acknowledging the benefits gained by scientific advances, pointed out that the *“scientific methods of investigation can be unjustifiably taken as the supreme norm for arriving at truth”*, and added that *“there is a danger that man, trusting too much in the discoveries of today, may think that he is sufficient unto himself and no longer seek the higher values”* (*ibid.*, 57).

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**Task:**

How does paragraph two suggest that science and religion can co-exist?

What are the strengths and weaknesses of this suggestion?

What does Pope Benedict warn against in paragraph three?