

## The Quotable Pope at CERN

On June 15 Pope John Paul II visited the CERN laboratory in Geneva. This was certainly the first papal visit to CERN; it may not have been this pope's first visit to a major physics laboratory. As M. U. Vattani, vice president of the CERN Council, pointed out in a response to the pope's address on this occasion, "Your message took shape in the course of your regular contacts with the physicists at the University of Cracow."

Nevertheless, CERN is the capital of physics in Europe — by now probably of physics in the world — and the pope's visit there had a symbolism that was almost certainly in the mind of John Paul II, a man who deals in symbolic gestures with an enviable finesse. On the occasion of the CERN visit some remarks were made by His Holiness and by CERN Director General Herwig Schopper that seem worth noting.

From the pope's remarks—

"You are, above all, research workers. As scientists and technicians you work together for a cause beyond any selfish interest, that of pure research, whose sole purpose is to further scientific knowledge."

. . .

"Your research pinpoints . . . questions to be put to philosophers and the faithful: What is the origin of the universe? Why do we find order in nature?"

"There was a time when some scientists were tempted to take refuge in an attitude imbued with 'scientism,' but that was a philosophical choice rather than a scientific attitude, as it tried to ignore other forms of knowledge; this tendency now seems to belong to the past. The majority of scientists admit that the natural sciences and the scientific method based on experiments, whose results can be repeated, cover only a part of reality or rather reflect a particular aspect of it."

"I say to the Christians . . . : May you create an existential unity in your intellectual activities between the two orders of reality which too often tend to be opposed to each other as if they were antithetical; the quest for truth and the certainty that you already know the source of truth."

. . .

"Furthermore, the Church agrees that the scientific knowledge of today requires Christians to have a more mature faith, an awareness of the language and questions of scientists, a sense of the orders of knowledge and different approaches to truth. In short, the Church hopes that the dialogue between science and faith, even though in the past it has been characterized by tension, will grow progressively more constructive and be intensified at all levels.

"Love of truth, sought with humility, is one of the great forces capable of bringing the men of today together across the different cultures. Science is not opposed to humanism or mysticism. All genuine knowledge opens the way to the essence of life and all truth can become universal. . . . True research, like culture, builds up human communities regardless of frontiers."

. . .

From Schopper's welcoming address—

"I believe that I am right in regarding your presence here today as proof of your desire to foster a new relationship between religion and science. . . . Today both the church and the scientific community recognize the need for a far-reaching dialogue in order to create new and fruitful opportunities for mankind.

"The time now seems ripe for a dialogue of this kind since it is becoming steadily clearer that objective reality . . . in no way excludes the existence of a transcendent reality experienced through faith. Both realities can, in fact, coexist. Indeed, cur-

rent research work in connection with the smallest structures of matter indicates that physical phenomena, the laws of nature and the order of the material universe which they disclose, imply an abstract and transcendental interpretation of Creation rather than a purely materialistic one."

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As Schopper says, the time does seem ripe for such a dialogue. Books are written, symposia are organized, individuals search their consciousness for solutions to what is perhaps the most important dialectic problem in human existence: the search for truth contrasted with the sense of being already acquainted with the source of truth that is common to believers in many religions. (Even those who claim that the material universe is a closed system are making an unprovable statement about the source of truth.)

An intellectual adventure seems to be beginning that will indeed open new and very fruitful opportunities for humanity. But in this case as with so many current developments that promise an increase of human freedom or an extension of the possibilities and perspectives of living, powerful reactionary forces are moving to prevent the future from happening if they can. In the case of science and religion these negative attitudes may derive on the one side from a frozen Scholasticism, from an obscurantist and ignorant biblicism or from doctrines that despise or condemn the material world. On the other side they tend to come from an arrogant and old-fashioned secular humanism or from a Marxist materialism, both of which are based on an absolutist view of science that has not been tenable for the last 60 years. It is gratifying to find persons of the eminence and influence of the Bishop of Rome and the Director General of CERN on the positive side.

—D. E. Thomsen