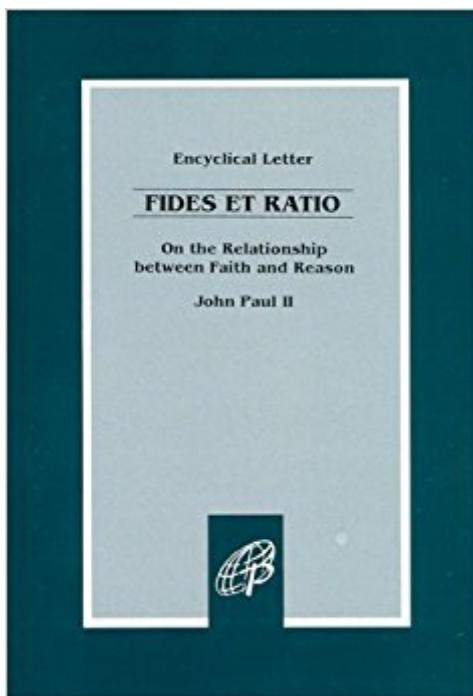


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Fides Et Ratio / On The Relationship Between Faith And Reason



Synopsis

This encyclical addresses the the notion that faith and reason are somehow incompatible and contrary in nature. Sections Include: Introduction I: The Revelation Of God's Wisdom II: Credo Ut Intellegam III: Intellego Ut Credam IV: The Relationship Between Faith And Reason V: The Magisterium's Interventions In Philosophical Matters VI: The Interaction Between Philosophy And Theology VII:Current Requirements And Tasks Conclusion

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This is my first book that I have read by Pope John Paul II. I could not believe as I was reading the book that his writings emphasize so much of the interaction and the working together of theology and philosophy to adequately present and defend the truth as expressed and understood in Christianity. The last chapter titled "Current Requirements and Tasks" and the conclusion brings together the meat of the content. And in just one short chapter, Pope John Paul remarkably present the competing world views (nihilism, scientism.....) as inadequate and in fact untrue and how with the proper use of theology and philosophy, we can bring these false ideas into subjugation. Great

work. Now I am more eager to read "The Gospel of Life". Thanks to God and also to Pope John Paul II.

While he acknowledges straightaway that reason and faith complement each other - indeed, they cannot work without each other - John Paul II cites numerous contemporary philosophical concepts hindering man's capacity to fully pursue the fundamental questions of existence: Who am I? Where have I come from and where am I going? Why is there evil? What is there after this life? While John Paul II does not apologetically explain the Magisterium's position on such questions - *Fides et Ratio* thinks big picture from page one onwards - it calmly and succinctly addresses that there will always be a need for mankind to ponder such questions while identifying thoughts and states of mind that detract from pursuing the truth, posing a tremendous danger that we are seeing played out on an every day basis. *Fides et Ratio*, the 1998 mature epic isn't as comprehensively sprawling as *Redemptor Hominis* (1979) or as Church focused as *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), but is nevertheless the conclusion to a staggering trifecta of encyclicals on man and society John Paul scribed in the mid-late 1990s, following *Veritatis Splendor* (1993) and *Evangelium Vitae* (1995). It's like the Lord of the Rings trilogy - the position of man as a being of good, a being created by God, lost in a world of abandonment to its own self, relying on its own creations and thinking rather than trusting in the natural and divine work of the Creator. And there's now 78 year old Pope Wojtyla still seeing Truth through the fog of the world. *Fides et Ratio* wastes no time in coming out swinging, like the opening D-Day scene in *Saving Private Ryan* (also released in 1998), building as its foundation that faith and curiosity for it is built in man to find it. St. Anselm was never used so potently as in the book's first act: "To see you was I conceived, and yet I have yet to conceive that for which I was conceived". This is man's dilemma, John Paul writes, today. He cites - among other cultural malaises - nihilism as weakening's man's pursuit of truth and its passive acceptance of relativism. Is it no coincidence that four months before the encyclical was promulgated, the arguably funniest sitcom on American television, *Seinfeld*, concluded its nine year run? Relying on a show about nothing while resorting to making fun of other people for its humor, *Seinfeld* cashed in on a culture slowly adrift, thinking individually and not as a community seeking the greater good. Among other detractors to faith and reason complementing each other to pursue the meanings of life, John Paul writes, are scientism "which leads to the impoverishment of human thought", pragmatism, which relies on practical considerations - especially dangerous in the political sphere, John Paul warns. While written in the waning years of the Clinton presidency and in the height of the president's impeachment, John Paul was looking ahead, to what would be transpiring 15 years later: "The scientific mentality has

succeeded in leading many to think that if something is technically possible it is therefore morally admissible."For its insight, *Fides et Ratio* feels a little pruned, a little soft on its attacks. While effectively establishing the necessity for faith and reason especially in an increasingly secular world, it could have been more widespread on exposing the roadblocks to uniting faith and reason. Still, he acknowledges the difficult road ahead and leaves it up to us to better ourselves in preparing for combat. While chiefly written to bishops around the world, *Fides et Ratio* speaks to all who are concerned about humanity's direction; a prophecy in 1998 that saw dangers ahead for a world in the third millennium. It's as sobering as the time to come.

The book titled *FIDES ET RATIO/ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAITH AND REASON* is a well written compact book based on the late Pope John Paul's (1978-2005) 1998 Letter to the Bishops. Pope John Paul II informed the Bishops of the responsibility of Catholic teachers and scholars to seek bona fide knowledge and to use such in teaching the Faith. The fact that the dialogue and debate re Faith and Reason has been ongoing for about 2,000 years was not lost on Pope John Paul II. Pope John Paul II was clear that the Catholic Church has been no stranger to debate, intellectual confrontation, etc. He was clear that one of the problems that distorted scholarship, teaching, and study has been philosophical pride which Pope John Paul II warned could warp serious learning and an honest quest for honesty and truth. He expressed dismay of what could be called indifferent pluralism which can lead to distrust of knowledge. Pope John Paul II wrote what Catholic scholarship is not based on false self imposed speculation but reaches to what could be called God's Truth. Pope John Paul II made a good case that what Catholics have known was that reason was important, but above reason was what may be termed the Great Unknown or God. In other words, philosophy and faith were not hostile to each other. What Pope John Paul II wanted readers to know was that reason, knowledge, etc. brought men closer to God. Another tenet that Pope John Paul II held was that the better men and women studied knowledge the closer they could be to God and freer of ignorance. Such a quest should be done without arrogance because more is not known than is known. As men know more, the more they realize what they do not know. Pope John Paul II was further concerned with language and wisdom and that there was the language of wisdom and words of wisdom. Pope John Paul II commented on an incident when the Apostle Paul supposedly visited Athens, Greece and viewed a statue with an inscription about The Unknown God (Acts 17: 22-23). This was an interesting anecdote and showed that some of the early Christian Apologists were familiar with Greek Philosophy. The implication was that men can know more if only because of what they have already learned. Many of the Early Church Fathers

knew they had to be learned to avoid as appearing stupid and ignorant. Otherwise, the Catholic Faith could have been historically insignificant. Pope John Paul II used St. Justin (100-165) and St. Clement of Alexandria (d. 215 AD) as examples of early Church Fathers who were learned and yet devout Catholics. Probably the best example of a learned man who added much to the Catholic Faith was St. Augustine (354-430) who wrote the Catholic Classic titled **THE CITY OF GOD**. Pope John Paul II then examined the contributions of St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) who has "pride of place" in the Catholic Church. St. Thomas Aquinas was and is respected because he entered a dialogue with Muslim, Jewish, and Greek Orthodox scholars. As Pope John II noted, Aquinas argued that truth is where we find it even among those with whom we may disagree. Pope John Paul clearly explained that Aquinas made a good case that knowledge, reason, and learning could lead to God or truth is where God leads us. Pope John Paul II then explained why the Catholic Church's Magisterium or teaching authority is important. The newer concepts of pragmatism and utilitarianism undermined truth and distorted reason. Yet, Pope John Paul criticized what he termed radical traditionalism because such tried to refute reason. Pope John II mentioned that Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) announced a renewal of the logic, reason, and Thomism to revive the thinking of St. Thomas Aquinas and to give reason its proper place. Basically Pope John Paul II tried to explain was that Catholic learning was more about truth than about any philosophical system. Catholic Theology needs reason and clear thinking and should be an inquiry about truth and life. Pope Paul II argued that reason and learning led to the "seat of wisdom." This is a compact book which requires careful reading and thought. Pope John Paul could have included the work of Father Lemaitre (1894-1966) whose work in physics was admired by Albert Einstein (1879-1955) and Father Jaki (1920-2005) who did advanced work in physics. Both Fathers Lemaitre and Jaki were devout Catholics who were learned men. Those who have limited exposure to the supposed "debate" between religion and science would have a better understanding by reading this book. An excellent companion book is Father Duffy's book titled **QUEEN OF THE SCIENCES: THE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY AND LIBERAL EDUCATION**. James E. Egolf August 16, 2010

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