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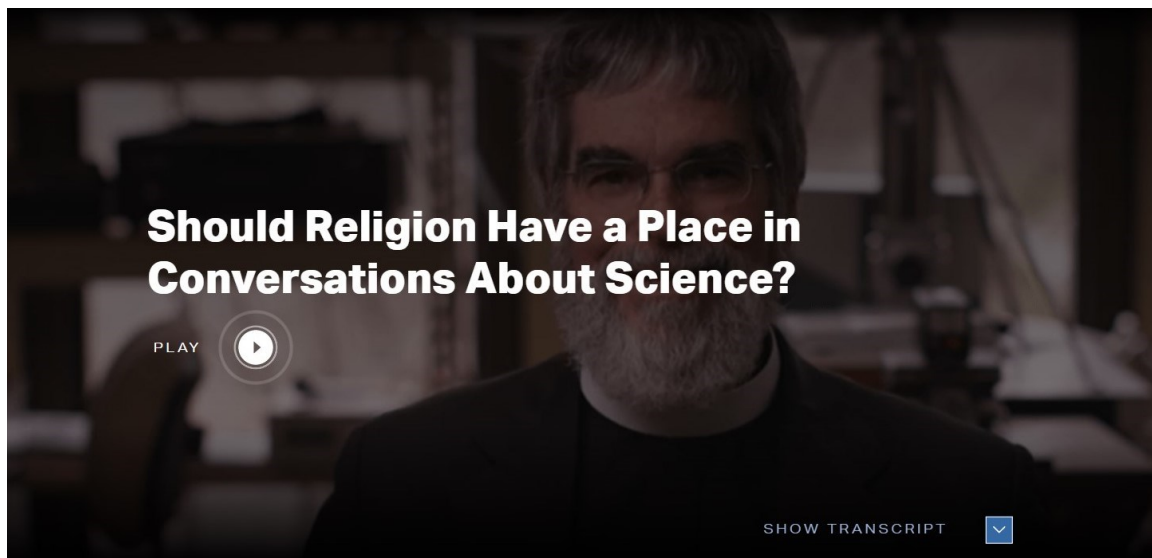
Should Religion Have a Place in Conversations About Science?

Dr. Guy Consolmagno, also known as the 'Pope's Astronomer,' is both a scientist who studies the cosmos and also a priest of the Vatican.

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Dr. Guy Consolmagno, also known as the 'Pope's Astronomer,' is both a scientist who studies the cosmos and also a priest of the Vatican. He believes people should spend less time trying to find the conflict between science and religion but should focus on how they complement each other.

Featured Scholar:

Br. Guy J. Consolmagno is an American research astronomer, physicist, and Jesuit. He serves as the Director of the Vatican Observatory and the President of the Vatican Observatory Foundation.

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

ENGLISH

One of the great things about being a Jesuit is that they went and forced me to study theology and philosophy really seriously rather than just dabbling in a couple of books. And so it's given me the language to try and understand what it is that I do when I do science and why I do this.

People ask me about the science and religion boundaries and how it works. My soundbite answer is: "My religion tells me God made the universe; my science tells me how He did it."

There is something more going on though. When people wonder about boundaries between science and religion, when they ask about possible conflicts, they have in the back of their minds a vision of what science is and a vision of what religion is. In both cases I think it can be naïve. They see science as a big book of facts

and religion as a big book of facts, and “my gosh what happens when the one book conflicts with the other? Who do you choose?”

That's not what science is. That's finger exercises; that's not playing music. Religion is not a book of facts. It's: how do we ask questions about the reality that we do exist, that we do experience God and now what do we do? Science is not about getting answers or proving stuff. Science is about growing in understanding of the physical universe.

In some ways it's more about coming up with better questions. Questions that more perfectly describe what it is we know and don't know. Questions that lead us to moments of joy and wonder and insight. They say about physics what I think it was Von Neumann said about mathematics: You never understand, you just get used to it.

SPANISH

Una de las grandes cosas de ser jesuita es que me forzaron a estudiar teología y filosofía seriamente en lugar de solo incursionar en un par de libros. Y eso me dio el lenguaje para intentar entender qué es lo que hago cuando hago ciencia y por qué lo hago.

La gente me pregunta sobre los lazos entre la ciencia y la religión y sobre cómo funcionan. Mi respuesta memorable es: “La religión me dice que Dios creó el universo; la ciencia me dice cómo lo hizo”.

Sin embargo, sucede algo más. Cuando la gente se pregunta acerca de los lazos entre la ciencia y la religión, cuando preguntan acerca de posibles conflictos, en el fondo de su mente, tienen una visión de lo que es la ciencia y una visión de lo que es la religión. En ambos casos, creo que puede ser una visión ingenua. Ven a la ciencia como un gran libro de hechos y a la religión como un gran libro de hechos y, mi Dios, ¿qué sucede cuando un libro entra en conflicto con el otro? ¿A quién eliges?

La ciencia no es eso. Eso es solo una aproximación; no es la ciencia verdaderamente. La religión no es un libro de hechos. Es cómo hacemos preguntas acerca de la realidad de que existimos, de que experimentamos a Dios y de qué hacemos ahora. La ciencia no se trata de obtener respuestas o probar temas. La ciencia se trata de crecer en el entendimiento del universo físico.

En cierto sentido, tiene más que ver con elaborar preguntas mejores. Preguntas que describen mejor qué es lo que sabemos y lo que no sabemos. Son preguntas que nos llevan a momentos de gozo y asombro y entendimiento. Dicen de la física lo que creo que Von Neumann decía de las matemáticas: Nunca la entiendes, solo te acostumbras a ella.



Facilitating dialogue and engagement between scientific and religious communities on science, technology, and society.

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