

Foreword to

**Faith, Science, Reason:  
Theology on the Cutting Edge,**  
Christopher T. Baglow  
(Midwest Theological Forum, 2019)

A central goal of education is to give students a framework for understanding reality. For Catholics, of course, the overarching framework is the Catholic faith and the revealed truths it teaches about God, humanity, and the world. There is another order of truths, however, that we know, not by divine revelation, but by reason and experience. Of this kind are the truths discovered by science. How do these fit within the wider framework? A truly educated Catholic is one who is able to integrate the different kinds of knowledge he or she possesses and keep them in proper balance and perspective. In other words, he or she does not “compartmentalize” life but has a coherent view of it. This is an important reason for a textbook such as this. But there is another reason, which makes the need for Dr. Baglow’s book especially urgent.

A Catholic student going out into the world will face challenges to his or her faith. Some of these will be in the form of sharp questions about Christian beliefs. These questions may come from those who wish to mock or from those who sincerely wish to learn. In either case, the questions will not always be easy to answer for someone who has never thought much about them. Or maybe the Catholic student has thought about them but has been left in a state of confusion. For example, he or she may be asked, How does the biblical account of Creation relate to the Big Bang theory? How do Adam and Eve relate to what we have learned about the evolution of modern humans from *Australopithecus afarensis* and *Homo habilis*? How do spiritual realities, such as the soul, fit into the world of matter described by physics, chemistry, and biology? Is it possible to believe in miracles and also the laws of nature? Is scientific reason compatible with religious faith? Do the discoveries of modern science really imply that we are just material beings without free will, as some scientists have claimed? Does the case of Galileo show that the Catholic Church is hostile to science?

Some people avoid these questions because they do not know the answers and are afraid that the answers may be unsettling. But avoidance only means that students will grow up nursing secret doubts and fears and be easy

prey for the first scientific atheist they meet in college or in later life. Nor is avoiding questions compatible with our nature as rational beings made in the image of God. For, as such beings, we hunger for truth, and the quest for truth always brings us closer to God if we follow it to the end.

What we have to fear is not truth, but rather half-truths and untruths. And, sadly, these abound when it comes to the relation of Catholic faith and science. There is hardly any subject about which there is more widespread ignorance, misinformation and misunderstanding. Much of this concerns the historical role of the Catholic Church and Catholic believers in the development of science, the true story of which has been left almost completely untold even in Catholic schools.

Even more unfortunate is that few Catholic students (or adults for that matter) have been given adequate theological tools to deal with faith-science questions. In particular, they need to know the answers to such questions as these: What does it mean to say that God “creates”? How does God govern the universe, and what is “divine providence”? In what sense is God the “First Cause,” and what are “secondary causes”? What has the Church historically taught about evolution and about human origins? What does it mean to say that we have “spiritual souls”? What is “faith” and what is its relation to reason?

In this remarkable book, Dr. Baglow does a masterful job of explaining the relevant Catholic doctrines and the insights of Catholic theological and philosophical tradition. He does so in a way that captures their richness and depth while being accessible, engaging, and highly readable.

There are many ways in which books on science and faith go wrong. Some are weak on either the science or on the theology. Some authors think it is necessary to jettison or radically revise doctrines of faith to be consistent with what science says, while others think it is necessary to dismiss well-established truths of science to be faithful to Scripture. Some put Catholic theology and science into a blender and end up with a pseudo-mystical mush that is *neither* genuinely Catholic *nor* genuinely scientific.

Not this book! Dr. Baglow takes authentic and unadulterated Catholic teaching and authentic and unadulterated science and shows them to be in wonderful harmony. His sound analysis and lucid exposition make one apparent difficulty after another melt away. His careful accounts of history

show that the record of the Church in relation to science (despite the Galileo affair) is one to be proud of, and indeed quite glorious. The student will come away with a deeper understanding of the Catholic faith, of science, and a greater appreciation of their coherence with one another.

The first edition of this book appeared in 2009 and remained unexcelled in the breadth of topics discussed and the soundness and beauty of its exposition --- until now. For this second edition, much revised and expanded, has managed to set an even higher standard. Without losing any of its clarity and readability, it goes into greater depth on many issues, especially creation, the “problem of evil”, prayer, miracles, the origin of the human race, the fall of man, and eschatology. Dr. Baglow has woven together much new material, including history and biography, wonderfully apt quotations, illuminating analogies, scientific accounts, and theological explanations into an even more beautiful work.

The Catholic world is deeply in Dr. Baglow’s debt. There has been a terrible drought of classroom instruction in this area for many decades. This book is not just a few drops of water on the parched earth --- which itself would have been welcome --- but a drenching, reviving rain.

--- Stephen M. Barr