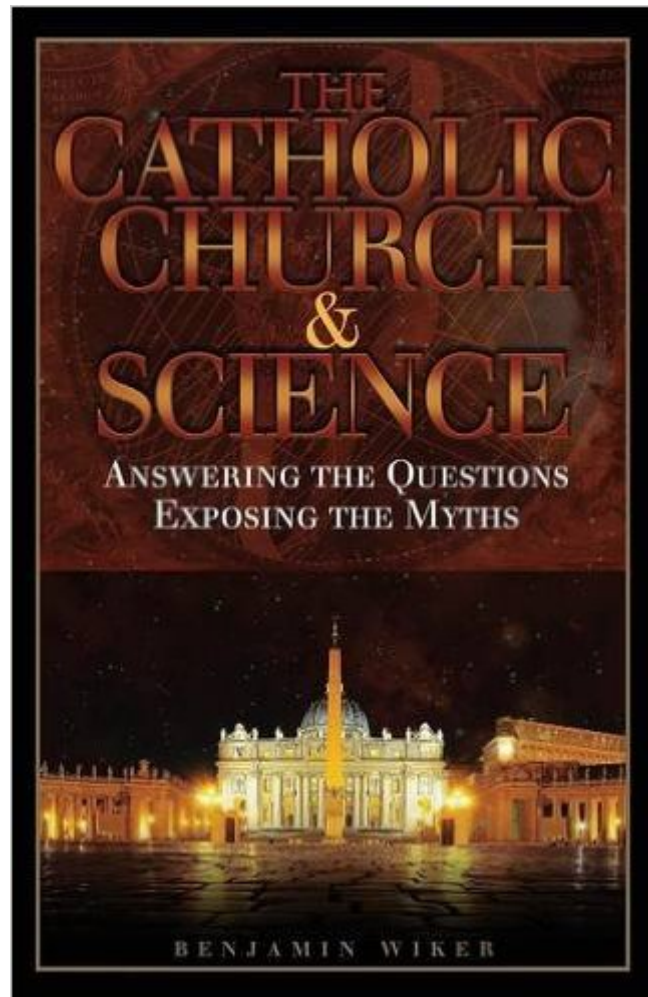


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# The Catholic Church & Science: Answering The Questions, Exposing The Myths



## Synopsis

Were the Middle Ages dark for science? Did the pope say Darwin was right? From the Big Bang to Galileo, from the origins of life on Earth to the existence of life on other planets, *The Catholic Church and Science* clears away the fog of falsehood and misunderstanding to reveal a faith whose doctrines do not contradict the facts of science, but harmonize with them and a universe whose uncanny order and precision point not to chance assemblage by random forces, but to the purpose-built design of an intelligent creator. Author Ben Wiker (*The Darwin Myth, A Meaningful World*) takes on the most common errors that modern materialistic thinkers, convinced that faith and science must be mortal enemies, have foisted into popular culture. With great learning, clarity, and wit he tackles stubborn confusions many people have about the relationship between Christianity especially Catholicism and the empirical sciences, and separates truth from lies, the factual from the fanciful.

## Book Information

Paperback: 192 pages

Publisher: TAN Books (March 1, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0895559102

ISBN-13: 978-0895559104

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.5 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (18 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #206,145 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #7 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Denominations & Sects > Christian Science](#) #303 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Religious Studies > Science & Religion](#) #980 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Education](#)

## Customer Reviews

As a non-science major and faithful - but also critically minded - Catholic (full disclosure), I would describe this book as a near "tour-de-force" layman's guide to the Church's relationship with science down through the ages. The book is very brief in relative terms (153 pages, including appendix and conclusion), but by no means does it lack in substance. And it's very readable. Reaching as far back as the Jewish dismissal of superstition in the creation account of Genesis, Wiker addresses seven common "confusions" present in today's thinking: "The Catholic Church is at war with science", "The

Middle Ages were a time of scientific darkness", "The Church persecuted Copernicus and Galileo for anti-science reasons", "The Church accepts Darwinism" or "The Church rejects Evolution", "The Big Bang is a scientific alternative to the notion of a Creator God", "The Origin of Life was an accident", and "Extraterrestrial life has to exist given the vastness of the universe." Wiker convincingly demonstrates the actual truth regarding each of these claims, only rarely drawing a conclusion that did not seem (in my mind) to unequivocally follow upon a given premise. (This occasional perceived misstep is one reason I am giving the book 4 stars, rather than 5. The second reason is that it was so good, I found myself regretting that the book was about half as long as it is should have been. "Tell us more!!!" I found myself thinking when I reached the end.) Anyone that thinks that the Catholic Church and science are at odds will not only be forced to reconsider after reading this book, but will find themselves wondering why so many intelligent individuals today think that such a position is even possible in the first place.

Benjamin Wiker's book titled THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND SCIENCE: ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS AND EXPOSING THE MYTHS is a short but informative account of the History of the Catholic Church and scientific scholarship. Wiker was clear that many Catholic authorities carefully studied nature and the Cosmos in an attempt to understand the mystery of God's Creation and to make an intelligent responses to materialists and those who argued that Creation was achieved by random chance. The introduction to this book dealt with Lucretius (c.99-c.55 BC) and Epicurus (c. 341-c.270 BC) who argued that men are predestined by material forces over which they have little or no control. Wiker compared these concepts with Calvin's (1509-1564) view of predestination which Catholic authorities ardently opposed. Wiker also demolished the false notion that Catholic authorities opposed science by citing the SECULAR historian J.L. HEIBRON who showed that Catholic dignitaries lavished wealth on scientific research. The Vatican Observatory is such an example. During the early history of the Catholic Church, astronomical studies were crucial if only to get the correct dates of Lent, Easter, Advent, etc. As readers may know, the early Christians were "radicals." To paraphrase G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936) men can easily have let an age to have its head but difficult to keep one's own head. Catholic authorities did not dictate science, and St. Augustine (354-430 AD) gave the Ancient Greeks credit for their work re science and mathematics. A recent trend that Wiker noticed is that honest historians have checked sources and documents which clearly show that Medieval Catholic scholars contributed much to scientific inquiry. Northrup (1861-1947) showed that modern science depended on Medieval Catholic scientific studies. The fact that astrology and horoscopes were and are in vogue is obvious, but

Catholic scholars and authorities condemned such concepts including St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) and the Medieval Catholic Popes. Another popular myth that Wiker exposed was the nonsensical view that during the "Dark Ages," Catholics thought the earth was flat. St. Jerome (346-420), St. Ambrose (347-397), etc. knew the earth was round and had studied the work of Erastosthenes (276-196 BC) who demonstrated the earth was round. Early Catholics including Boethius (480-525) also knew that compared to the universe, the earth was infinitely small. Pope Sylvester II (999-1003) was well aware that the earth was an orb. Wiker provided a list of "Who's Who" re Medieval Catholic Churchmen who contributed so much to scientific study. Wiker mentioned Robert Grosseteste (c.1170-1253) who accurately predicted tides, comets, the light spectrum of rainbows, etc. Father Roger Bacon (1214-1294) did original work re telescopes and is considered by some historians as The Father of the Scientific Method. Father John Peckham (1230-1292) did original work in optics. Richard Wallingford (1282-1336) did complex celestial tables and improved the mechanical clock. One could write "a five foot book shelf" on other Catholic dignitaries and other Catholic Churchmen who did so much effective scientific research. Another aspect of Medieval university learning was that much of what was taught was mathematical. Wiker gave a good account of the Catholic scholarship during Early Modern European History. Wiker among others debunked the myths that Copernicus (c.1473-1543) was persecuted but actually was encouraged to publish his heliocentric theory as a theory. Galileo (1564-1627) WAS NEVER imprisoned and NEVER tortured. He spent his brief "incarceration" either in Florentine Ambassador's residence or the Papal Palace where he had his own chef and wine tester. In fact, Pope Benedict XIV (1740-1758) gave his Imprimatur to ALL of Galileo's work. Furthermore, Pope Paul V (1605-1621) arranged a special celebration for Galileo in 1610. Pope Urban VIII (1623-1644), the Pope during Galileo's arrest, honored Galileo in 1624. Galileo had trouble because he was a rude guest and ungrateful to anyone who helped him but who disagreed with him. Wiker's chapter on evolution and Darwinism clarified the Catholic Church's position re evolution. Wiker was clear that Catholic authorities DO accept evolution and c. 4 1/2 billion geological history of the earth. Catholic authorities also accept the c. 14 billion astronomical history of the universe. In fact, when Hubble (1889-1953) announced his Big Bang Theory in 1929 the Big Bang Theory implied a beginning of Creation. Father LeMaitre, S.J. (1894-1966), who was close friends with Einstein (1879-1955), produced a mathematical model of an expanding universe. What Catholics do reject is the random theory that men and women and life are a chance combination of elements and molecules. Wiker provided a clear analysis of how delicate the creation of conditions of life are and how complex life is which is well beyond any random theory. Wiker cited Cardinal Schonborn's book

titled CREATION AND EVOLUTION as a source to examine the debate. Basically Catholic authorities accept evolution but reject Darwinian materialism and random selection. People are much more than their chemical composition. Basically the Big Bang Theory implies a beginning or Creation which is reasoned conclusion. To deny scientific reality is to make a mockery of religion per St. Thomas Aquinas. The earth is galactical good real estate. Wiker produced a chapter re ETs. With all the money and effort spent, there is not one shred of evidence of ETs in spite of the films and tv series which promote such a belief. The only thing space probes have show is silent static. Wiker provided the space and time impossibility of ETs. Speculations taken as truth have exited for hundreds of years without any proof whatsoever of ETs. Wiker gave a short reading last in his Conclusion which should help readers know more about biology, astronomy, chemistry/physic, etc. His book is not long, but Wiker has a knack of "making serveral points with an exceptional economy of words." Those who are not scholars can comprehend this book, and scholars can profitably examine Wiker's theses. February 25, 2012 James E. Egolf

This is a great book. It gives the popular misconceptions and answers them. It's an easy to understand, well-reasoned treatment of the topic that backs itself up well and gives a lot of food for thought. I especially like how it dispels without question the long propagated myths, such as people in the Middle Ages believing in a "flat earth," - Galileo - evolution - and a whole lot more. Recommended!

The book was very easy to read. It presented its topic in a very clear, logical way. The book brought up several ideas that I had never thought of. The Church is not anti-science. The Church has been consistent in its refusal to accept materialism and other heretical ideas. I would strongly recommend this book.

I am not a Catholic. This book documents the real positions of that church on science and history to clear and refute the stereotype charges against that church and their responses to scientific discoveries. A very interesting read, worth the effort.

Interesting...wish the author had gone DEEP into the Latin library of an old Jesuit and found the casuist arguments made centuries ago...would have made the book much more interesting...

A very clearly researched book which states how the Catholic Church has always stood with

science not against, as falsely told by those who are prejudiced against the Church

Very easy to understand, insightful, and to-the-point text! The book gives facts to illustrate that the hackneyed ideas about the war between religion and science is false.

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