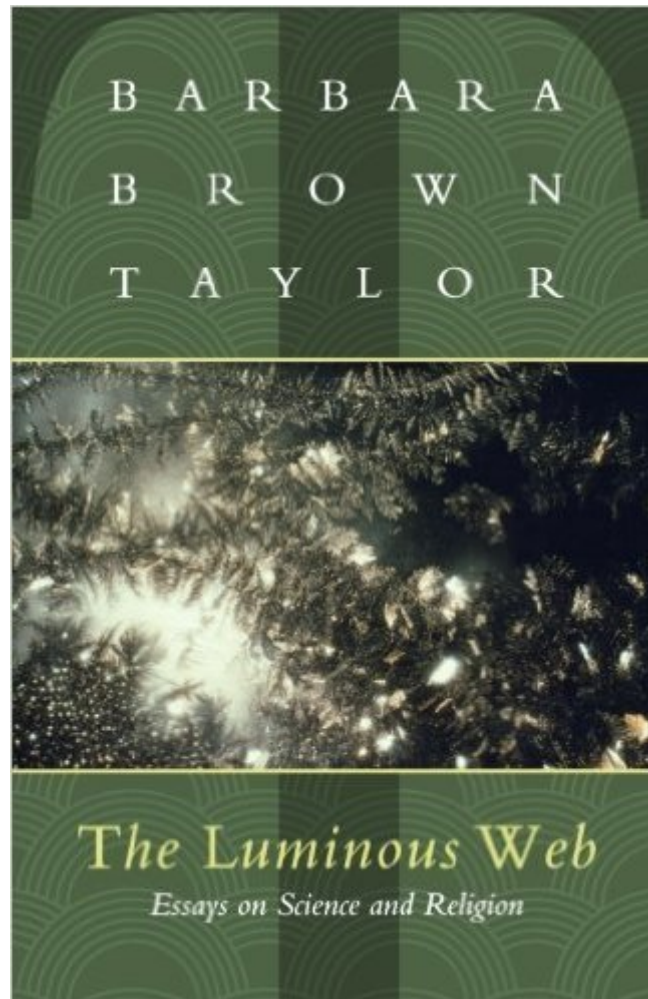


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The Luminous Web: Essays On Science And Religion



Synopsis

In these essays on the dialogue between science and Christian faith, Barbara Brown Taylor describes her journey as a preacher learning what the insights of quantum physics, the new biology, and chaos theory can teach a person of faith. She seeks to discover why scientists sound like poets and why physicists use the language of imagination, ambiguity, and mystery also found in scripture. In explaining why the church should care about the new insights of science, Taylor suggests ways we might close the gap between spirit and matter, between the sacred and the secular. We live in the midst of a "web of creation" where nothing is without consequence and where all things coexist, even in such a way that each of us changes the world, whether we know it or not. In this luminous web faith and science join on a single path, seeking to learn the same truths about life in the universe. "For a moment," Taylor writes, "we see through a glass darkly. We live in the illusion that we are all separate 'I'ams.' When the fog finally clears, we shall know there is only One."

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Customer Reviews

In *The Luminous Web*, Barbara Taylor describes her own journey as an Episcopal priest (holding the Harry R. Butman Chair in Religion and Philosophy at Piedmont College in Demorest, Georgia) trying to learn what the insights of quantum physics, the new biology, and chaos theory can teach the Christian believer. In explaining why the church should care about the new discoveries and insights into the physical world that modern science has to offer, Taylor suggests ways that

Christians might close the gap between spirit and matter, between the secular and the sacred. The Luminous Web is profoundly rewarding reading.

For those who love to read Mrs. Taylor's books or meditations in Christian Century will be in for a surprise. This is a collection of essays (4) that provide an excellent, easy to follow blend of scientific theory with theology. Taylor simplifies difficult scientific theories for the average person. For those of us trained as scientist with a strong faith based on personal encounters with the "awe" (Taylor's description of God), it was comforting. Her verbal dexterity expresses for me the many ideas and thoughts that I have pondered. I kept wanting to say "yes! that's what I would have said, if I had not been so limited by language deficit." Another must read book of her's is When God is Silent.

After hearing Prof Taylor's sermons and lectures, I needed to wade thru her Essays on Science and Religion. Especially true, when I read three widely divergent reviews ... It seemed that any review title using the Metaphor of "Like a Black Hole," was a bit too outlandish for anything our knowledgeable Prof. Taylor could conjure up to print! In my first encounters with references to Albert Einstein, then Robert John Russell and James McCord before noting Sir John Templeton on the same page... she then uses humorist Will Rogers' quote, "We're all ignorant, just on different subjects." She introduces Richard Feynman, one of our century's charismatic physicists, plus one of my generation who is familiar to any native of Oak Ridge, Tennessee! She then proceeds to move thru the shortest chapter "The Evolution of Praise" heavy with the writers of Science. My favorite, most heavily under-lined Chapter is, "The Physics of Communion." After her statements from Albert Einstein, Galileo, Copernicus and Newton, she touches upon Niels Bohr, George Johnson, Fred Burnham, John Polkinghorne, even Alan Watts, Bennett Sims and Paul Tillich. How's that for a multi-colored team of biologists, mathematicians, physicists, philosophers, theologians and scientists? When Professor Taylor does her homework there is no such metaphor as that Black Hole! For me it is her 'Way-Out-of-the-Box' book worth 5 golden stars!

I am a retired biomedical research scientist. Over the last three years I participated in a unique program called Science for Ministry at the Princeton Theological Seminary (PTS). This program was funded by a large grant from The John Templeton Foundation. During the course of the program I participated in almost a dozen mini-courses on topics related to science and theology. The courses were taught by both PTS faculty and guest lecturers. Participants were ordained pastors and scientists from their congregations, and others with training in either ministry, theology, or science

and in some case all of those fields of study. It was an outstanding visionary program. As a participant I was assigned many books to read, given dozens more books, and heard recommendations and citations on many other relevant books. One book I stumbled upon was Barbara Brown Taylor's, *The Luminous Web*. Barbara Brown Taylor is known widely for her beautiful and insightful sermons and books on faith and religion. She has been ranked as one of the 12 most effective preachers in the country. As an ordained Episcopal priest she served for many years as a church pastor in Atlanta, Georgia. She currently holds the Harry R. Butman Chair in Religion and Philosophy at Piedmont College in Demorest, Georgia. Barbara Brown Taylor has no formal training in science, but she has a wide circle of friends that includes some of the best minds in the sciences. As a scientist with a long standing interest in the conversation between science and religion I can say without reservation that Barbara Brown Taylor "gets it." *The Luminous Web* is an excellent place to get a broad introduction to all of the most interesting topics in the science and theology dialogue. She is elegant and insightful. I have developed and taught my own course in science and theology within my own faith community, and anyone who asks me for a recommendation to a good book to get started thinking about this faith-expanding conversation, I will point them to Barbara Brown Taylor's, *The Luminous Web*. I have not found a better more concise primer on science and theology. Highly Recommended.

One of the most lucid and reasoned discussions of science and religion that you'll find. I've read a number of the new science books, but by the end she had me. Not just a reasoned approach but a personal and moving account as well.

Barbara Brown Taylor thinks like a theologian, writes like a poet, and explains science like a gifted teacher. Her examination of the wonders of modern physics will do more to inspire awe and wonder than nearly all books overtly devoted to faith.

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