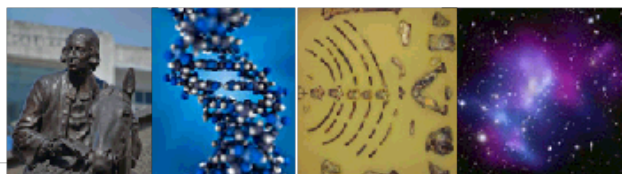


# WesleyNexus

*Science and Religion within the Wesleyan Tradition*



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August 28, 2012

## Dear WesleyNexus Colleague:

September usually means a new cycle of activity for us all. We at WesleyNexus hopes that you will be able find on our web site website resources that are both interesting and helpful in promoting discussion. Below you will find recent articles and videos on a variety of topics from a broad range of perspectives. At [www.wesnex.org](http://www.wesnex.org) you can find additional materials and suggestions on how to start a discussion group in your community, either in your place of worship, a library or even a restaurant or pub (e.g., [DC Theology Pub](#) on [www.Meetup.com](http://www.Meetup.com)). If you have any questions, please let us know and also let us know of any projects or programs that you might be organizing.

Note: WesleyNexus does not endorse any of the views presented below but we think it is important to the dialogue that a variety of thoughtful opinions be made available to our participants.

## Donate To WesleyNexus online

As WesleyNexus continues to grow in our promotion of science and religion dialogue across the country, additional expenses are being incurred that put pressure on the modest financial resources currently available for this effort. To extend the offerings of resources, programs and networking, WesleyNexus has now made it possible to donate online through Paypal. The [Donate button is on the main page](#) and allows anyone with a credit card and an email address to access Paypal's secure payment process. Our main objective is to secure enough funds before December 31 to upgrade the website permitting continuous dialogue among those in a our growing online community. Since WesleyNexus has no employees, no offices, and only minimal operational expenses (web registration and hosting, program promotion and a few office supplies), nearly 100% of each donation goes towards science and religion dialogue and networking. Please consider donating today. No amount is too little. All contributions will be properly acknowledged for tax purposes. If you have any questions concerning our budget, please send an email to [WesleyNexus@aol.com](mailto:WesleyNexus@aol.com)

## Scientists in Congregations

Last month we highlighted an ongoing initiative called Scientists in Congregations funded by the John Templeton Foundation that calls for a sustained, creative collaboration between scientists and those involved in our faith communities. We also identified one of the 37 congregations that have has been awarded a grants, **Hope Lutheran Church and Student Center** in College Park, Maryland, that is sponsoring an adult education program where weekly themes are discussed from the perspective of science, language and biblical interpretation. The discussion notes can be found [here](#).

The [Church of the Advent](#) is another Scientists in Congregations grant recipient also in the Washington, DC area.

## **Free Will**

Free will is a topic that has biological, psychological, anthropological, ethical and theological dimensions. As such, it will continue to be present in science and religion discussions and trigger a variety of views no matter the background of the discussants. In “[Does Contemporary Neuroscience Support or Challenge the Reality of Free Will?](#),” Big Questions Online has posted a brief, accessible and provocative article designed to encourage open and honest discussion of the topic. The author, **Eddy Nahmias**, is an Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy and the Neuroscience Institute at Georgia State University. Nahmias specializes in philosophy of mind and cognitive science, moral psychology, and experimental philosophy and is well qualified to address these issues.

As a companion piece, also take a look at a recent New York Times article “[Anything But Human](#)” by **Richard Polt**. Polt is a professor of philosophy at Xavier University in Cincinnati.

For additional materials, see the March, 2012 article by Alfred Mele, “[The Case Against Free Will](#).” It includes a sidebar that references a number of articles by researchers that view free will an illusion.

Free will and consciousness are closely related and WesleyNexus has materials from a 2008 discussion by the Montgomery County Science and Religion group that can be found [here](#).

Please let us know of other resources that you have discovered that can be posted or linked on the WesleyNexus website.

## **Careers in Science and Religion AAAS DoSER program**

### [Senior Program Associate, Science & Evangelical Christianity \(Req #2026\)](#)

The American Association for the Advancement of Science seeks a Senior Program Associate to work within the Dialogue on Science, Ethics and Religion program. The position will be working with an exciting new DoSER project geared to promote positive understanding between the scientific and religious communities, especially evangelical Christians.

## **Templeton Grant to Study Immortality**

The Templeton Foundation continues to promote a variety of research on science and religion related topics. Most recently, they have awarded a \$5-million grant for a multidisciplinary investigation of human immortality [as reported by the Chronicle of Higher Education](#). The recipient, John Martin Fischer, is a philosopher at the University of California at Riverside. The Immortality Project will invite research proposals from philosophers, theologians, and scientists. Stressing interdisciplinary projects, it will award grants ranging from \$100,000 to \$250,000. The web site can be found [here](#).

## Doubters and Believers

In March of 2012, **Philip Clayton** addressed in a [Los Angeles Times editorial](#) the fact that a significant and growing number of young adults (ages 19-29) consider themselves spiritual but not religious. The “**Emerging Church**,” a movement within current Christianity with roots in the evangelical tradition, has made steps to engage this group by downplaying doctrine and belief and inviting those who are drawn to “sincerely engage with the teachings of Jesus and with the communities that seek to live by those values”. He promotes a religious space where doubt, experimentation and the word “God” can coexist. Clayton, a member of the **WesleyNesux Advisory Board**, has been on the cutting edge of the science and religion dialogue for well over a decade.

## Q: Technology Fast & Pentecostals and Science

Q is an organization founded by Gabe Lyons dedicated to Gospel-centered critical thinking, and active collaboration among church leaders who would chart the future of the church in the West. As part of their mission, Q regularly posts essays on science, technology and faith. Two recent articles caught our attention. The most recent is by **Nancy Sleeth**, Program Director of [Blessed Earth](#). She asks the provocative questions: [Do You Need a Technology Fast?](#) How can we hear the voice of God if we are multitasking nonstop? How can we see the face of God in still waters and green pastures when we are chronically refreshing the screen? She suggests that the digital generation is a distracted generation.

The Wesleyan tradition is historically diverse. Liberals and conservatives, evangelicals and mainstream, social gospel and charismatic streams flow from its source. One stream not often noted is the Pentecostal movement which began in 1906 on Azusa Street in LA. More often than not, impressions of this movement highlight conflicts with science, not collaboration or integration. In “[Science and Spirit](#)”, **James K. A. Smith and Amos Young** recognize this conflict but also point out that “we are already seeing Pentecostals working in cancer laboratories, developing and utilizing media technologies, engaged in the health-giving work of psychology, and studying human behavior through the social sciences. It is our hope that as Pentecostals and as scientists, their work can contribute to the common good.”

## Why We Struggle Now: Michael Dowd on TED

**Michael Dowd** has promoted the compatibility of faith and an expansive understanding of evolution for many years. Recently, he presented a talk for Ted.com called “Why We Struggle Now”. TED is a nonprofit devoted to Ideas Worth Spreading. It started (in 1984) as a conference bringing together people from three worlds: Technology, Entertainment, and Design. Since then its scope has become ever broader. Along with two annual conferences -- the TED Conference in Long Beach and Palm Springs each spring, and the TEDGlobal conference in Edinburgh UK each summer -- TED includes the award-winning TEDTalks video site, the Open Translation Project and TED Conversations, the inspiring TED Fellows and TEDx programs, and the annual TED Prize. You can find Michael Dowd’s TED lecture [here](#).

## Covalence

Covalence is a monthly online publication of the ELCA Alliance for Faith, Science & Technology.

Published 10 times a year, this e-bulletin centers on the places and people where the theology is faithful and the science is credible. Monthly news and feature stories include a variety religion and science topics and profiles theologians and scientists who incorporate faith and science in their lives. They often feature papers and thought pieces on faith and science activity. The site includes [Commentary](#), [Profiles](#), [Events](#), and [Features](#).

## **Fracking**

Fracking is the process by which a fluid – a mix of water, sand, and chemical additives – is injected into wells under high pressure to create cracks and fissures in rock formations that improve the production of natural gas wells. The practice is clouded by heated political, economic and ideological rhetoric making it difficult to ascertain the benefits, risks and moral appropriateness of the practice. A recent report by the Pacific Institute called “[Hydraulic Fracturing and Water Resources: Separating Frack from Fiction](#)” provides an extended discussion of the practice that attempts to get beyond the rhetorical posturing that dominates some much of the media coverage.

A shorter article on the same topic can be found on the Environmental Defense Fund’s web site [here](#).

Have a productive Fall.

God Bless,

Rick Barr, Secretary, WesleyNexus

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