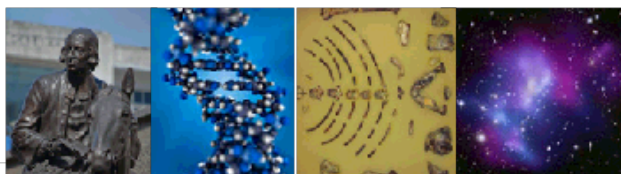


# WesleyNexus

*Science and Religion within the Wesleyan Tradition*



[Home](#)

[Back](#)

[Links](#)

[Contact Us](#)

May 22, 2014

Dear WesleyNexus Colleague:

Each month, I scan the myriad resources available through the internet to share the best and most relevant events and research with the WesleyNexus participant network. This month I have identified a number of events and articles that I wish to draw to your attention.

WesleyNexus continues to encourage participation in science and religion discussions across the country. Over the next year, we plan to sponsor a number of programs near our DC area base such as a two-day retreat near Annapolis for leaders within the United Methodist Church interested in promoting science and religion within the denomination (more information can be found here). We will also be sponsoring the third annual Evolution Weekend panel discussion in February 2015. In addition to promoting local programs in the Baltimore / Washington, DC area, we will continue to highlight other events of interest to our participants and appreciate your help by sending us an email about events near you.

As we have pointed out before, we are dependent on you, our participants, for donations to cover expenses for these activities. WesleyNexus is a certified 501(c)(3) charitable organization, so please consider supporting this initiative with a contribution either through the PayPal DONATE link below, or, by sending a check to:

WesleyNexus, Inc.  
24500 Fossen Road  
Damascus, MD 20872



We will use these funds to further our efforts to promote the dissemination of resource material promoting the dialogue between sound science and religion across the country.

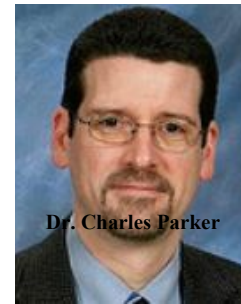
God Bless,

Rick Barr, Secretary,  
WesleyNexus, Board of Directors

## **Response to Jesus Seminar Program in DC**

On April 4 and 5, Metropolitan United Methodist Church hosted a two day seminar led by Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre, Th. D. and Robert J. Miller, Ph. D. "Jesus in the First and Twenty-First Centuries."

Each presenter reflected on what the rediscovery of the historical Jesus and his vision of the reign of God mean for the heirs of the Christian tradition, and if this Jesus has any relevance for people who claim no allegiance to Christianity. The presenters, each a Fellow of the Jesus Seminar and the Westar Institute, offered their insights and engage almost 70 Seminar participants in discussion about the relationship of Christianity to contemporary politics, economics, and global power.



The Institute on Religion and Democracy's Jeffrey Walton, no friend of the Jesus Seminar, reviewed the event which can be found [here](#).

In response, Dr. Charles Parker, Senior pastor at Metropolitan responded with a blog posting that reflects the willingness to engage a variety of opinions and perspectives with the United Methodist Church. Dr. Parker echoes WesleyNexus's perspective when he states: "If our faith is going to survive in the 21st century, we can never be afraid to engage with different ideas. A healthy, robust faith is one that relishes dissent and discussion. I am grateful that we have dialogue partners like the Jesus Seminar as we deepen our understanding of who Jesus is for each of us and for the world." Editor's NOTE: Metropolitan Memorial, collaborating with St. Mark's Episcopal Church on Capitol Hill, is planning to host another Jesus Seminar on the Road in Spring 2015. The text of Dr. Parker's blog can be found [here](#).

### **Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference Breakfast in Baltimore**

WesleyNexus will host a "special meal" for informal discussion at the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference May 29-31, 2014 at the Marriott Waterfront Hotel in Baltimore. All clergy and lay members of the Annual Conference are welcome to attend to learn more about the opportunities for participating in the science and religion dialogue. Those attending will be provided with information on forthcoming programs sponsored by WesleyNexus. Our purpose, as is the case consistent with our mission, is to bring the best thinking in sound science and contemporary theology together in a way that informs all "thinking Christians."

### **Science and Religion: 5 Questions Edited by Gregg D. Caruso**

"Are science and religion compatible when it comes to understanding cosmology (the origin of the universe), biology (the origin of life and of the human species), ethics, and the human mind (minds, brains, souls, and free will)? Do science and religion occupy non-overlapping magisteria? Is Intelligent Design a scientific theory? How do the various faith traditions view the relationship between science and religion? What, if any, are the limits of scientific explanation? What are the most important open questions, problems, or challenges confronting the relationship between science and religion, and what are the prospects for progress? These and other questions are explored in Science and Religion: 5 Questions—a collection of thirty-three interviews based on 5 questions presented to some of the world's most influential and prominent philosophers, scientists, theologians, apologists, and atheists." (From <http://www.scienceandreligion5questions.com/>) The persons interviewed by Caruso are all well known to those who follow science and religion. Pro or con, conservative or liberal, skeptical or believing, they are all represented.



You can get a flavor of Dr. Caruso's book by reading a recent article on Real Clear Religion on Stephen Jay Gould's notion of "non-overlapping magisterial or NOMA. The article can be found [here](#). Gregg Caruso is Associate Professor of Philosophy and Chair of the Humanities Department at Corning Community College (SUNY).

### **The Strange Tension between Science and Religion by Michael Gerson**

It isn't often that science and religion makes the pages of major news outlets but in April the Washington Post published an editorial by the nationally distributed columnist Michael Gerson. In the editorial, Gerson emphatically support the scientific process as the valid means by which we discover the nature of our universe. "The scientific method is the proper way — actually the only way — to understand the physical universe. There is no philosophical or theological method to study the structure of a star or a starfish. But this does not mean that the knowledge revealed by the physical sciences is the only valid type of human knowledge." In this, he echoes the United Methodist Book of Discipline when it states: "We recognize science as a legitimate interpretation of God's natural world. We affirm the validity of the claims of science in describing the natural world and in determining what is scientific. We preclude science from making authoritative claims about theological issues and theology from making authoritative claims about scientific issues. We find that science's descriptions of cosmological, geological, and biological evolution are not in conflict with theology. ." (¶ 160. Part IV - Social Principles - I. The Natural World). You can read the editorial [here](#).



### **A New Link: Science, Religion and Culture**

It is always a pleasure to discover a new web site that offers something different and worthwhile. Science, Religion and Culture, a blog offering from Harvard Divinity School, is such a discovery. Their mission "is to open space for the study of how science and religion become enmeshed with, distinct from, and implicated in broader social, political and cultural structures, and to examine the ways in which topics interact to shape and structure knowledge, social practice, and everyday life." They characterize their blog as a conversational space where the domains of science and religion are viewed from the perspective of practice, language and sources of authority. Recent blogs include "Koren's "God Helmet": Mapping Faith", an article on the developing discipline of neurotheology and "How to Avoid the G-Word" where the author discusses multiverse cosmology as a way to avoid the "G-Word". These article and others can be found on the Science, Religion and Culture blog [here](#).



### **"When disruption comes to church" by By Kenneth H. Carder Jr., L. Gregory Jones and Susan Pendleton Jones**

Disruptions of our regular patterns of behavior are not something that most of us seek out or look forward to. However, our current moment seems to be filled with many disruptive events and trends. In a recent pair of articles, Kenneth Carder, L Gregory Jones and Susan Pendleton Jones address the how the church is



addressing the “disruptive changes in the church’s patterns of congregating” and how we might use them as a force of congregational renewal. Though the articles focus on leadership in the church, they are worth being read by laypersons as well. Reflecting on the dynamics of the original Wesleyan movement, the authors point out that “history teaches us that innovative movements become, in time, more structured organizations that can often stifle creativity and suppress innovation. As these organizational structures develop and mature, other new and emergent forms of Christian experience begin to arise, some from within established systems and others alongside them. Today, we are witnessing this same disruption among the ossified structures of mainline Protestantism.” Perhaps science and religion can be part of this creative disruption. I hope so. The articles can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

### **Wonder Shock by David Cooney**

In his first Easter sermon as senior pastor of Damascus United Methodist Church, The Reverend Dr. David Cooney meditated on the resurrection story told in the Gospel of Mark. In Mark, women went to the tomb where Jesus’ body had been lain to prepare the body for final burial. To their amazement, they found tomb empty and the body of Jesus was gone. “Instead, they saw a young man dressed in white. Mark describes their reaction as alarm. But the man said, “Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here... Terror and amazement had seized them.” In this message, Dr. Cooney labeled this response as “wonder shock,” that sense of being jarred by an experience to such an extent that one feels off balance, weak-kneed, and disoriented. In his own life, living in Colorado, he experienced wonder shock when peering out over the mountainous vistas of the Rocky Mountain. Wonder shock is also experienced when one witnesses the birth of a child, the wonders of Stonehenge, a deserted beach in the morning light or gazing up at the Milky Way on a cloudless night.



You might ask what all this has to do with science. We at WesleyNexus did just that. Board Member Rev. William Maisch commented that “While an interesting sermon, I’m not sure how David Cooney’s Easter homily advances or informs the dialog on religion and science” and Jennifer Secki Shields, also a Board Member, seconded that perception. However, we are including the sermon. As Dr. Maynard Moore pointed out, “we welcome sermons from WesleyNexus participants when they are preaching on “science & religion” topics”. Though not exactly on science and religion, I feel that wonder shock is an appropriate way to describe those experiences that are life transforming. I would like to think that scientific discovery and the experiences of faith are not that far apart and share the wonders that shock us, amaze us and transform us. I invite you to [read](#) or listen to the sermon [here](#) and join us in the conversation.

