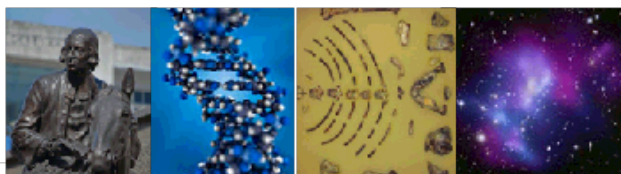


# WesleyNexus

*Science and Religion within the Wesleyan Tradition*



Home

Back

Links

Contact Us

July 20, 2014

Dear WesleyNexus Colleague:

Those of us in the Washington, DC are experiencing a wonderfully pleasant, low-humidity mid-summer day. It is a good day to relax and enjoy a pleasant breeze midst the rustling of leaves. However, I do want to take the time to update you all on the progress towards the first ever WesleyNexus retreat at West River Center in Maryland. In addition, I found a few articles that I found interesting and a new blogger, Gary Herstein, who promises to offer an array of interesting posts related to science and philosophy.

WesleyNexus hopes you are enjoying your summer and, as always, thank you for your interest and support. 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

## WesleyNexus Retreat/Discussion, September 19-20, 2014

[Click here to register today.](#)

WesleyNexus is moving forward on developing the retreat that will take place on September 19-20, 2014 at West River Center near Annapolis Maryland. We will gather in the evening of the 19th with a scheduled film "The Journey of the Universe" beginning around 7:30 until 10:00 PM. WesleyNexus members will be arriving before that time to welcome you all to West River. Dinner details for Friday evening will be worked out in the coming



weeks. We will be starting the next day early with breakfast at 7:30 followed by the Keynote remarks by Dr. Connie Bertka. Connie has many years working in the science and religion arena and is currently Adjunct Professor at Wesley Theological Seminary and is the Co-Chair of the Broader Social Impacts Committee in the Hall of Human Origins program at the Smithsonian Institution's Museum of Natural History. The rest of the day will be spent in workshops focusing on faith and science issues such as:

- The story of evolution as a framework for religious thinking.
- How can I speak about evolution within a faithful perspective?
- The paradigm of creation as a framework for scientific thinking.
- What does "created in the image of God" mean in the 21st century?
- How do new discoveries re: DNA impact our thinking about humanity?
- What does brain science have to say about our self-identity as humans?
- How is our witness as Christians impacted by our taking science seriously?
- Science findings re: human identity for church decision making.
- The perspective of young people that the church is "anti-science."

West River is a United Methodist Church Conference Center and camp with 45 beautiful acres on the shores of the Chesapeake Bay just 20 miles south of Annapolis, MD. Lodging for guests is in adult accommodations in a modern Conference Center, generally two persons per room, with bath rooms. Delicious meals are prepared by a professional staff. There is a maximum of 50 persons for this retreat so please register early. Acceptance is on a first come, first person basis. Click [here](#) to register.

## **IRAS turns 60**

The 60th Anniversary Conference of The Institute on Religion in an Age of Science (IRAS) convenes on August 2-9, 2014 at Star Island, on the isle of Shoals out in the Atlantic off the coast of New Hampshire. The conference theme "Religion in a Globalizing World" is chaired in 2104 by Dr. Whitney Bauman, Florida International University, and Dr. Karl E. Peters, Rollins College (emeritus); the Conference is a sell-out with a long waiting list, but information can be found here: [www.iras.org](http://www.iras.org).



IRAS was founded in 1954 in response to a civilization crisis: the moral and motivational resources of traditional religious and cultural practices and beliefs had proved inadequate to constrain horrid barbarity, and techno-scientific progress had given rise to weapons whose use could destroy civilization. At the same time, scientific advances carried the portent of enormous improvements in the human prospect, and the human sciences seemed to promise understandings that could foster their attainment and help head off catastrophe. IRAS leaders thought that old traditions should be reformed and that the new scientific story about the world and humanity's place in it was "good news" that could enable that reformation.

The annual IRAS Conference evolved from the ideas of two pioneer groups. The first was a group of scientists from the Committee on Science and Values of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. The second group was an interfaith, religious coalition which hoped to revitalize religion for today's needs. Members of both groups saw the, at times, battlefield of conflicting ideologies of religion and

science as a place of opportunity for a constructive relationship to emerge. In 1954 the scientists accepted an invitation to present their views to the religious group at a seven-day conference on Religion in an Age of Science on Star Island. The October 1 issue of Science reported on the conference:

Ten scientists explained how they thought scientific and religious knowledge could be integrated... While there were a number of both scientists and clergy who held that religious truth was hardly susceptible of being approached by scientific beliefs, there was a strong recognition that today we can increase the scope and validity of our understanding of our destiny and our relationship to that "in which we live and move and have our being," not only by reading ancient texts, but also by building up the science of theology in harmony with other science.

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of IRAS (and the upcoming 50th anniversary of Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science in 2015), and in light of developments in the sciences, religious studies and society, in August 2014 we will explore new and enduring questions: "Can either science or religion, or both taken together, enable us to organize and govern ourselves in harmony with the Earth with enough wisdom to cope with the emerging conditions of the 21st Century? If so, what do we require in our understandings of religion, science, ourselves, and the cosmos? Which insights stand the test of time? What about our inherited enterprises of science, religion and society must be re-conceived, re-thought and renewed?" The following topics will provide a framework for our inquiries.

Among those confirmed as speakers for the 2014 Conference, Nancy Abrams, University of California, Santa Cruz (attorney and cultural philosopher), Zain Bagir, Director of the Center for Religious and Cross-cultural Studies at the Graduate School of Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia; Willem B. Drees, University of Leiden, Editor of Zygon; Mark Juergensmeyer, University of California, Santa Barbara, and Director of the Orfalea Center for Global and International Studies; Joel Primack, University of California, Santa Cruz, Director of the University of California system-wide High-Performance AstroComputing Center, and Michael Ruse, Florida State University, Director of the History and Philosophy of Science Program.

What is Science?

Gary Herstein, Ph. D. is an independent scholar working on various projects relating to the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, logical forms and measurement, and metaphysics. His blog, "The Quantum of Explanation" started in July of 2014, has a number of articles of interest to those engaged in the science and religion dialogue. He keeps his posting short and written to be understood by the general public. Three posts in particular are of note:



What is Science: <http://garyherstein.com/2014/07/09/what-is-science/>

On Whose Authority: <http://garyherstein.com/2014/07/06/on-whose-authority/>

The Nature of Naturalism: <http://garyherstein.com/2014/07/16/the-nature-of-naturalism/>

Per Science 2.0 ([http://www.science20.com/profile/gary\\_herstein](http://www.science20.com/profile/gary_herstein)), "Dr. Herstein began his career in the computer and networked PC industries, where he worked for almost 25 years. During this time he completed an MA in Interdisciplinary Studies at DePaul University, writing his thesis on the group-

theoretic algebraic structures underlying the concept of identity. Dr. Herstein completed his Ph.D at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, writing his dissertation on Whitehead's criticisms of the logical presuppositions of Einstein's general theory of relativity. He has taught full-time at Merrimack and Muskingum colleges, and part time at Harper college, where his courses included Ethics, Logic, Critical Thinking, American Philosophy and Philosophy of Science.”

### **Science is Not About Certainty by Carlo Rovelli**

In a July 11, 2014 posting in the New Republic, physicist Carlo Rovelli reflects on what it means to be a scientist and what it means to have scientific knowledge. Rovelli muses that perhaps the difficulty with scientific advancement is not the method, not the techniques nor the tools. For Rovelli, the real challenge is to view the challenges of science, in his case, physics, with fresh eyes, a new perspective, a new point of view. “It’s not by changing theories that we go ahead but by changing the way we think about the world.” It is not about finding that theory will solve, once and for all, scientific problems. Science is not about certainty but about overturning our inherited ideas of the world. “It’s about overcoming our own ideas and continually going beyond common sense. Science is a continual challenging of common sense, and the core of science is not certainty, it’s continual uncertainty—I would even say, the joy of being aware that in everything we think, there are probably still an enormous amount of prejudices and mistakes, and trying to learn to look a little bit beyond, knowing that there’s always a larger point of view to be expected in the future.” The discussion that follows the article is illuminating. The comments demonstrate that Rovelli’s position is not dominant even in the scientific community, although it is impossible to tell how well informed are the critics. Nevertheless, the “uncertainty about the world” that is reflected in science is something the religious community needs to hear. Too often, the uninformed lay person assumes that “science speaks with authority,” even though many scientific findings and reports present only tentative conclusions. As Bishop John Shelby Spong continually points out, we religious types too often accept doctrine and authority as a foundation for certainty instead of making hard choices in situations requiring ethical responsibility. The issues raised by Rovelli are important for the Science and Religion dialogue. The article can be found [here](#).



### **The Science-Religion Crisis at Christian Colleges**

Academic freedom is a bedrock principle at most colleges and universities. However, freedom of scientific inquiry and instruction in Christian colleges continues to be a challenge. In a recent article in the Huffington Post, Kelly James Clark of Grand Valley State University highlights the difficulties that scientists face when the official position of a church related school conflicts with accepted scientific understanding. “Forcing a choice between science and God may not have the result Christian colleges and their shortsighted leaders desire. Forced to choose between physics, cosmology, paleontology, anthropology, geology, genetics, and biology, on the one hand, and the antiquated interpretation of Christianity on the other, increasingly many will choose science.”

THE HUFFINGTON POST

The article does not mention any colleges affiliated with the United Methodist Church but does mention a Nazarene college. The Church of the Nazarene is within the Wesleyan tradition and is

struggling to accept scientific findings that conflict with long held doctrines. The article can be found [here](#)

## **The World at 7 Billion**

I just ran across a beautiful NY Times collection of pictures titled “[A World at 7 Billion](#)”. Posted in 2011, this pictorial montage provides a “visual time capsule, capturing our world at seven billion people — and counting...you’ll find a virtual quilt that weaves together about 400 of the more than 1,000 photographs we received. There is little rhyme or reason to the order you see. We sought a mega-snapshot of our world — different regions, subjects, viewpoints.” Enjoy.

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