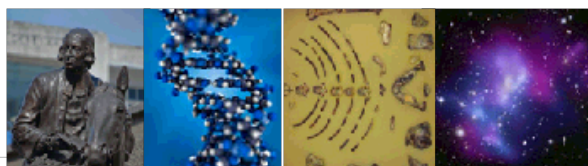


# WesleyNexus

*Science and Religion within the Wesleyan Tradition*



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July 29, 2015

Dear WesleyNexus Colleague:

We believe in God above us, creator of all things, sustainer of all life.  
We believe in Christ beside us, companion and friend, redeemer of all broken pieces of our universe.  
We believe in Spirit deep within us, advocate and guide, who lives with us eternally.  
We believe in God's resurrected created world, where all things are fixed, and all creation fits together in vibrant harmonies.  
We believe in God above, beside, within, God yesterday, today and forever, the three in one, the one in three.  
We believe in the history, mystery, and victory of God.  
We believe in God.

This Affirmation of Faith was shared on July 12, 2015 by those attending the morning worship service at Trinity United Methodist Church, Denver, CO. Two days before, I had never heard of this church nor had I any intention of capping off a four day whirlwind vacation in the Denver area with a Sunday church service. I flew to Denver with my middle son on an early Thursday morning to visit my older son who lives in Denver and my two oldest brothers. Our plan was to meet in Denver and visit as many craft breweries in the area as possible within an extended four day weekend. As you may suspect, it turned out to be so much more than just drinking good beer. We started the first day in Denver catching up...what we are working on, our health and well-being and what we planned for the rest of the summer. Just nice family stuff! The next day we headed off to Fort Collins to visit the breweries there, the biggest being New Belgium, where we were scheduled for a tour. But first, we headed to Horsetooth Falls, a nature area west of Fort Collins. The awesome beauty of the Colorado mountains is well known but the more sublime foothills provide an equally inspiring experience, particularly when shared with loved-ones



After completing this three mile hike in nature, we were off to experience something completely different, what we thought would be a standard brewery tour and a taste of some good craft beer. It turned out to be much more. You see, New Belgium has been rated as one of the best places for millennials to work in the US – and when you enter the company campus, it shows. From the bike rack which lines the outside wall to the tap room where visitors enjoy a cold beer to the tour itself, you can feel that something special is taking place here. A blend of entrepreneurial spirit and social conscience, the enterprise openly displays “a values-driven company that resonates with millennials,” said Bryan Simpson, New Belgium spokes model. “We are 100% employee-owned, have an open-book management policy and actively give back. We also celebrate the unique qualities of each employee, unlocking the potential for great things to happen. This mixture creates a culture



that attracts and retains some awesome people, especially among millennials.” It also represents the hopes and promises of the generation of religiously unaffiliated Nones so frequently reported on by the popular press. For the Christian faith to remain vibrant, it must find a way to effectively engage this cohort of young people

The next few days we visited a total of 15 breweries, sampling both beer (4 ounce tasters) and the unique ambiance found in each. By the time Sunday came, we were exhausted but, still being on East coast time, I was up at the light of dawn, so I went exploring and found Trinity UMC. The congregation dates back to 1859 when it was known as the Aurora and Denver City Methodist Episcopal Mission. Floods destroyed the original meeting place in 1864 but the congregation rebuilt and eventually relocated to a new building in 1888 in downtown Denver. With a capacity of 2000, the church houses a very impressive organ that when played loudly nearly knocks your socks off.



Arriving early before the church service, I had time to reflect on the experience of the last four days and realized that what was written in the affirmation applied to each and every moment of my time spent in Colorado. Nature, family, business, and yes, craft beer are all present in God’s creative, sustaining and transforming presence. When we separate and compartmentalize areas off from God, we diminish God and we make our universe smaller. As the affirmation proclaims, God is above us, beside us and within us. The domain of divine presence is not limited. I think that is why I find the science and religion enterprise so engaging. It affirms God’s creative activity in all of creation and provides insight and hope into the promise of that creation.



As we at WesleyNexus look forward to our programs for the coming year, and as we mentioned last month, we find our goals exceed the funds needed to support them. So, we continue to ask for your support. **THANK YOU TO THOSE OF YOU WHO ACTUALLY SENT RECENT CONTRIBUTIONS.** We want to stress that all funds that we collect are spent on maintaining our web presence, sponsoring programs, distributing the newsletter and promoting activities of other organizations within the science and religion space. All contributions are acknowledged for tax reporting purposes either through PayPal receipt or by letter. Please consider supporting us with a contribution either through the PayPal DONATE link below, or, by sending a check to:

WesleyNexus, Inc.  
24500 Fossen Road  
Damascus, MD 20872



Thanks in advance for your support.

God Bless,

Rick, Maynard, and the rest of the  
WesleyNexus Board of Directors

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New Event Posting

**Modern Cosmism Conference**

Dates: October 10, 2015

Location: New York, NY

The conference will address fundamental philosophical issues that arise with the future design and use of artificial consciousness, mind-uploading and cyber-immortality. How will our concepts of subjectivity, perception, and morality change, if we will live in a mega-consciousness environment where you can experience multiple presences, personality, gender (or no gender at all) and unlimited kinds of artificial feelings? What are the possible ramifications and consequences of digital consciousness? Cosmism suggests that the profound nature of the reality is also digital and it utilizes an existential source code coming from Being that is using “radiant humanity” for its own preservation and modification.



Our keynote and plenary speakers are well-known international protagonists of Cosmism, Transhumanism and interdisciplinary researchers. Their lectures will discuss the most important current issues of Modern Cosmism from the point of view of philosophy, technology, ethics, robotics, psychology, and anthropology.

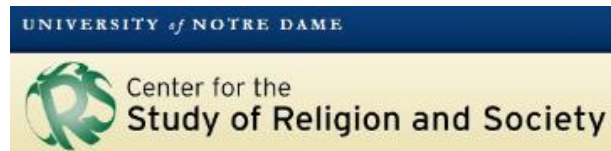
For more on Cosmism and the event, click [here](#).

**Reminder of Upcoming Events:**

**Please let us hear from you if any of you attend these events:**

**“New Conversations in Science and Religion: What Difference Might Critical Realist Philosophy Make?”**

An Interdisciplinary Conference, July 30-31, 2015,  
University of Notre Dame, IN  
Center for the Study of Religion and Society,  
Christian Smith, Prof of Sociology, Director  
<http://csrs.nd.edu/events/newconversations/>



**61st Annual meeting of the Institute for Religion in an Age of Science (IRAS) –**

Star Island (off Portsmouth), New Hampshire, August 8-15, 2015  
Call for Papers, deadline February 1, 2015; website: [www.iras.org](http://www.iras.org)  
Confirmed keynote speakers include: Carol Wayne White,  
Karen Barad, Fern Feldman, Billy Grassie, Catherine Keller,  
Laurel Schneider, Emilie Townes, Claudia Schippert, Whitney Bauman,  
Lisa Stenmark, and Chapel Speaker, Donna Schaper.



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**Recent Events**

**“Hearing God's Voice in Nature: Natural Science and Natural Theology” the 70th Annual Meeting of the American Scientific Affiliation, July 24 – 27, 2015, Oral Roberts University.**



The meeting began with the keynote address on July 25, a presentation on the Conference theme by Dr. Allistair McGrath, noted author and Professor of Science and Religion at Oxford University. A second keynote was a presentation by Dr. Bethany Sollereeder on “Blood, Fire and Fang: Listening for God in the Violence of Creation.” Dozens of presentations on a wide range of science-and-religion topics followed, including sessions led by Dr. Esther Meek of Geneva College, Dr. Amos Yong of Fuller Theological Seminary, Dr. Edward B. (Ted) Davis of Messiah College, and Dr. Robert John Russell, founder and Director of the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences in Berkeley. The schedule included a variety of pre-conference guided field trips, including a tour of the Tulsa Air and Space Museum, and the huge Boston Avenue United Methodist Church, the largest and one of the most vibrant congregations (8,000 members) in the United States, sponsored by ASA affiliate group Christian Women in Science. Dr. Micah Redding reports that he attended a lecture on the Singularity and human genetic enhancement, so these themes were present on people's minds at the conference. The Rev Dr. Christopher Benek of Ft Lauderdale's First Presbyterian Church, led the discussion on transhumanist themes, “Technological Enhancement: What's a Christian to Do?” which elicited vigorous discussion. Dr. David Winyard, Professor at Mount Vernon Nazarene University reports, “Personally, I find that the ASA (and especially their annual meetings) provide a stimulating environment in which to discuss a range of topics that are of interest to Christians. With assent to the Apostles and Nicene Creeds as ASA membership requirements, many theological views come into discussion, and yet times for devotionals, worship services, plenary sessions, one-on-one discussions, and ordinary presentations are Christ-centered. I leave ASA meetings feeling blessed and encouraged in my own work in Science & Technology Studies.” We invite comments and impressions from others within ASA – we can share these in our next newsletter. All meeting presentations are being posted at the ASA web site.

**“Our Transhuman Futures” a conference hosted by Juniata College, Huntingdon, PA; Chaired by: Don Braxton, J Omar Good Professor of Religious Studies, Juniata College.**

Our **Transhuman Futures** brought together people from all over the world who are pioneering thought at the edges of these realities. It was four days of exciting presentations, demonstrations, theater pieces, and art exhibits, all on the theme: Our transhuman futures.



The first full day of the Conference featured a lecture/

demonstration by Don Schwartz on “The Culture of Google Glass” and a presentation by Dr. Aleksandra Przegolinska of the University of Warsaw, on “Wearable Technologies: Gamifying Neuroscience.” Several presentation raised the issues of artistic / technological interactions, and other sessions raised questions about the viability and impact of democratic decision-making processes on the development of human enhancement technologies. The entire Conference was treated to a dramatic presentation by the Juniata Experimental Theater Company “Citizen Cyborg” a play written by Neal Utterback, with music by Professor Gabriel Gould, a collaborative production that brought the audience to their feet in appreciation. An intriguing session, led by Bruce Duncan, principal investigator at the Terasem Foundation in Vermont, featured an interactive conversation with Bina48, an android with a cyber-identity designed by David Hanson Robotics to voice-interact as a social being utilizing intelligence drawn from a mix of information, memories, values and beliefs, uploaded from the mind of Bina Rothblatt, a 58-year old African American woman, enhanced by new experiences through continuous interactions in human conversations. Bina48 has been featured in the New York Times, presented on NPR, interviewed in GQ Magazine, and pictured in National Geographic. She has also been featured in several TEDx talks. More than a dozen other lectures and demonstrations kept everyone at the conference fully engaged for four days. Dr Maynard Moore, President of WesleyNexus, who participated in these sessions, expresses the view that some of the

presenters strongly overstated the benefits of human enhancement technologies, but agrees with colleagues that these are critically important issues that must be discussed within churches and in all Abrahamic congregations now – not later – in order that responsible social decisions be made on the basis of the best thinking in ethical circles and faith communities, not based on fear of the future or outmoded creedal formulas. All conference talks will soon be posted on the Juniata College website. We encourage others who were in attendance to share your feedback and comments for future newsletters. WesleyNexus will actively engage with others in this dialogue on the implications of our Transhumanist Future.

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### **Empathy Is Actually a Choice by By Daryl Cameron, Michael Inzlicht and William A. Cunningham**

In the July 7, 2015 NY Times, three psychology professors weighed in on the developing research into empathy and the neurological underpinnings of that emotion. Arguing for the significant role of human volition, they state that “empathy is a choice that we make whether to extend ourselves to others. The “limits” to our empathy are merely apparent, and can change, sometimes drastically, depending on what we want to feel.” They reference current research that supports their perspective. The article can be found [here](#).



### **Traditional Churches Are Making a Comeback by Grant Wishard**

While it has been clear for some time that millennials are increasingly becoming more religiously affiliated, the cause of the disaffection is not necessarily clear. While many commentators cite a disconnection between the perceived values expressed in the church and those of the younger generation, Grant Wishard proposes that perhaps the issue in part is that the church has ceased to be the church in the traditional sense. Citing a recent survey by the Barna Group, the author claims that “many young people have a desire for a more traditional faith, rather than a hip version of Christianity.” Perhaps a large subset of millennials “need the church, now more than ever, but they need the church to just be the church.” Concert entertainment, coffee, and friends can be easily found. But as Rachel Clare Evans wrote, “Church is the only place you can get ashes smudged on your forehead as a reminder of your mortality.”



The article can be found [here](#).

### **Belief and the Skeptical Brain by Lala Stone (Salon.com)**

While most people who grow up in practicing religious homes remain affiliated in a marginal way, there are a small but significant minority that buck the pattern and move from belief to disbelief. In her article, Lala Stone points to current research in cognitive inhibition as potentially part of the answer. “Cognitive inhibition is the mind’s ability to stop or override a certain mental process — the ability to stop unwanted thoughts, for example, or to weed out irrelevant information.” The area of the brain correlated with cognitive inhibition, (the right inferior frontal gyrus) was more active in skeptical personalities than those who were believers in the supernatural. For those of us who have been following developments in neurotheology, it is not surprising that differences in brain activity might be found between believers in God and those God-skeptics. But correlation is not cause – and it is far from clear that being skeptical as presented in the



article is intellectually superior to critical reflective belief. But, as the author points out, the causes of one's turning away from one's inherited faith "sounds like something that requires further research." Agreed! The article can be found [here](#).

### Faith vs. Facts by T. M. Luhrmann

T. M. Luhrmann, professor of anthropology at Stanford and frequent contributor to the New York Times, wrote a piece for the paper highlighting the difference between religious belief and factual belief. Our minds approach these two domains differently and represent differing cognitive attitudes. Religious perspectives represent our sense of destiny, purpose and values which go beyond what is or is not the facts of the matter. As has often been said, religion deals with why and not just what or how. Instrumental, quantitative reasoning gives way to more qualitative and evaluative reasoning, mental activity of a differing sort. So as Luhrmann summarizes at the end, "people aren't dumb in not recognizing the facts. They are using a reasoning process that responds to moral arguments more than scientific ones, and we should understand that when we engage." To read the whole article, click [here](#).



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### Last Minute Additions

#### Biologos Evolution and Christian Faith Conference

"From June 30 to July 2, over 250 people met in downtown Grand Rapids, Michigan, for our largest public conference ever, entitled "Evolution and Christian Faith". Attendees included scientists, scholars, pastors, teachers, and laypeople of all ages. They came from all over the country (and the world) to hear how evolutionary science proclaims God's glory. The conference also functioned as the culminating event for our 3-year grants program of the same name. Our grantees, who have been working on dozens of projects both in the US and abroad, presented their research and results to eager and enthusiastic audiences." <http://biologos.org/news/july-2015/evolution-and-christian-faith-conference-a-huge-success>

#### God and Nature Magazine: Doubt and Searching

I am pleased to announce the publication of our latest issue of **God & Nature** magazine, on the topic of Doubt and Searching. Many wise and honest writers have taken up the task of discerning and describing what doubt has meant to them in their academic, religious, and personal lives. The essays and poems in this issue are deep and engaging and the question, I think, couldn't be more important. In an age where social media allows us to trumpet our successes and declare constantly our opinions on everything from faith to media to diet and exercise, it can be easy to feel actively discouraged from admitting when we neither feel successful nor confident in our relationships, work, or beliefs. Depression and alienation can quickly follow feelings that may have started as innocuous uncertainty or mere curiosity.

From Emily Ruppel, editor To read, go to <http://godandnature.asa3.org/>







