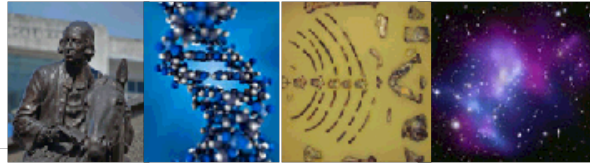


WesleyNexus

Science and Religion within the Wesleyan Tradition



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August 23, 2015

Dear WesleyNexus Colleague:

Engaging the sacred by whatever name is both a unique trait of being human and one of the most challenging aspects of the human condition. This month, we will highlight some of the journeys taken by individuals of diverse backgrounds ranging from scientists engaged in the protestant mainstream to a young earth creationist's struggle to embrace both faith and evolution. We then move to an excerpt of a philosophical theologian's magnum opus which describes our current cosmic understanding; this approach embraces the challenge to cultivate new "more transcendent symbols of ultimacy" that reflect both the immense scale of the cosmos and the continued need for intimacy and piety within that cosmos. Finally, it was with great joy that I discovered a link reporting that Mr Facebook himself, Mark Zuckerberg, has recommended to his virtual community the reading of one of the religious classics of the modern age, William James' Varieties of Religious Experience. We may be a society that is becoming less and less affiliated with the religious institutions of our recent industrializing, urbanizing and pluralizing past, but the questions of mysterium tremendum et fascinans (terrible mystery) of Rudolph Otto, and absolute concern of Paul Tillich, remain with us as part the human experience. We are drawn to mystery and drawn to meaning. It is our lot and is our calling. I hope you enjoy what we have included in this month's newsletter.

We at WesleyNexus produce this newsletter and develop our programs as a labor of love and as a response to a call from that ultimate mystery just mentioned. To enrich our programs, we need 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.

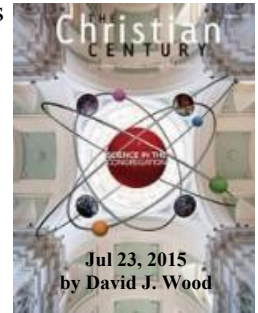
God Bless,

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

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Scientists in Congregations

On <http://www.scientistsincongregations.org/about-us/>, Scientists in Congregations is described as “a \$2 million grant program, funded by the John Templeton Foundation, created to catalyze the dialogue of theology and science in local congregations. In 2011, grants were awarded to thirty-five congregations in the United States (representing twenty-five states), as well as one in Canada and one in France. These grant recipients produced a wide range of projects on topics in theology and science that enhanced their congregational life. This website has gathered many of those projects as a way of resourcing additional churches that would like to explore their engagement with the insights of science.... Our hope is that you will use these resources as guides for leading your own discussions and classes, or as inspiration to craft new material specifically tailored to your congregation”.



Reflecting the fruits of this effort, The Christian Century made the question of scientists' participation in faith communities their cover story. The cover article by David J. Wood's (found [here](#)) frames the discussion by presenting both the ideal of respectful dialogue between persons of differing perspectives along with the reality of conflict between parties that misunderstand each other. The article concludes with “it is no wonder, then, that children grow up assuming that religion and science do not mix—or worse, that scientific understanding equates with an intellectual maturity and that faith represents a lack of courage to see the world as it truly is. It is no wonder that many adults think religious life belongs in that diminishing cognitive space reserved for a sentimental loyalty to things learned before one grows up.”

To counter Wood's downbeat conclusion, there are five companion pieces providing more positive reflections by those participating in the Scientists in Congregations program. Reflecting a wide diversity of geographic communities, these articles present a hopeful sign that incremental progress can be made. As Elaine Howard Ecklund, sociologist at Rice University puts it, quoting a scientist in her congregation, “I always thought of my work [as a scientist] as completely separate from my actual faith or something that needed to ‘be dealt with.’ But through presenting my own perspective on the compatibility, for me, between science and Christian faith, I came to see how my work and my Christian faith can be deeply integrated.” These articles can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

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Event Summary

Biologos: Evolution and Christian Faith by Mike Beidler

From June 30 through July 2, 2015, BioLogos culminated its Evolution and Christian Faith (ECF) grant program with an eponymous conference in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Over 250 people attended the conference and 150 joined by live stream. The conference featured a world-class lineup of plenary speakers whose expertise spanned a wide range of disciplines: theology, history, biology, paleontology, biblical studies, and ministry. Video recordings of the plenary lectures and audio recordings of oral sessions from the five concurrent program tracks are available to view and



download.

It was a phenomenal opportunity to be energized by everyone's dual passion for both Jesus Christ and the cosmos that He made. In addition to being exposed to a variety of viewpoints, some of which were incompatible with each other, I was struck by the humility expressed by all of the plenary speakers and oral presenters. The priority of Jesus Christ and His command to love one another served to underscore the plethora of views, thus creating a safe environment to explore in greater detail the science behind evolutionary theory, the theology of the sacred Hebrew and Christian scriptures by which we can know the living Word of God, and how we can put science and faith into practice in our respective spheres of life and influence.

Mike Beidler

A retired U.S. Navy commander, Mike currently resides in the Washington DC Metro Area and serves as the Deputy Director for International Affairs in the Department of the Navy. Mike holds an MS in Global Leadership from the University of San Diego, a BA in Political Science from the University of Michigan, and an AA in Persian-Farsi from the U.S. Army's Defense Language Institute. Mike is President of the DC Metro Section of the American Scientific Affiliation (ASA), a member of the National Center for Science Education (NCSE), and helps administer the Facebook group Celebrating Creation by Natural Selection (CCNS).

Star Island Conference

Close to 100 persons gathered on Star Island off the coast of Portsmouth, New Hampshire on August 8 for the 51st Annual Conference of the Institute for Religion in an Age of Science. The 2015 Conference topic "Unsettling Science and Religion:



Contributions and Questions from Queer Studies," took shape under the direction of Drs. Whitney Bauman and Lisa Stenmark. The conference drew its intellectual and social cues from the work of Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, beginning with the idea that assumptions of heterosexuality, monogamy, gender and sexual dimorphism, among other norms, are not in any way natural but cultural, created through time, traditions, politics, and power dynamics. Extending this idea to all ideas that purport to be natural, universal and given, ultimately suggests that reality is more complex and far stranger than any thought, idea, system, or belief can capture. It is at heart about continuing the conversations and explorations of the world in which we live, rather than arriving at any final conclusions. The scientific method of exploration and deconstructive strands of religious thought both have mechanisms that unsettle and challenge truth claims, and in this sense are much "queerer" than popularly imagined. However, such iconoclastic streams of religious and scientific thought often give way to the institutionalization of more solid ways of understanding reality.

Conference Co-Chair Stenmark, Professor in the Humanities at San Jose State University, provided the opening keynote on "The Future of the Science and Religion Dialogue." Other lectures and discussions were led by Dorothy L. Hernandez, Attorney in San Francisco, Dr. Claudia Schippert, Associate Professor at the University of Central Florida, Dr. Willem Drees, editor of ZYGON and Dean of the School of Humanities at Tilberg University in Denmark, Meredith Coleman-Tobias, Ph.D. candidate at Emory University, Dr. Catherine Kellor, Dean at Drew University School of Theology, Dr. Bauman, Associate Professor at Florida International University, and Dr. Carol Wayne White, Professor in Philosophy and Religion at Bucknell University. Dr. William Grassie, who describes himself now as an interdisciplinary scholar and academic entrepreneur, but who is known to most of us from his days as Director of MetaNexus, provided the leadership on the final day of summaries and conclusion. Dr. Stanley Klein, neuroscientist and Professor at the University of California Berkeley, provided this reflection: "Topics

related to sex and gender are beyond being complicated and complex. It may be that science doesn't yet have the language to do a good job of dealing with these issues. It was a really fascinating conference.... at the interface between the humanities and the sciences, which was nifty.” Dr. Karl Peters, former ZYGON editor and a member of IRAS stretching back decades, said “We just had a great lecture here at IRAS by Carol Wayne White, based on her forthcoming book: Black Lives and Sacred Humanity: Towards an African American Religious Naturalism (Fordham Press, 2016). Her lecture today was titled “Polyamorous Bastards: James Baldwin and Desires of a Queer African American Religious Naturalism” that weaved together ideas from James Baldwin, Ursula Goodenough, Loyal Rue, Don Crosby and others. The conference had a high-energy level, and Star Island was beautiful.” Some of the Conference presentations will be featured in a forthcoming issue of ZYGON in 2016.

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](#).

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Articles

Journey From Young Earth Creationist to Evolutionary Theist by Mike Beidler

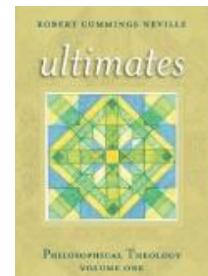
In researching Mike Beidler’s biography, I came across a series of posts on Biologos where Beidler narrates his conversion from a young earth creationist to an evolutionary theist. Beidler describes how he is coming to terms with the church he loves, the community in which he participates, and relates to those within the community whose significant disagreements have caused no small amount of discomfort. But as he states, “my family and I have chosen not to isolate ourselves with others who agree with us on every point of Christian culture; we go where the Holy Spirit leads, and it appears that God has found fit to put us right in the middle of congregations that are solidly young-earth creationist—right in the middle of all sorts of potential anxiety.”



Through gracious accepting of those with whom he disagrees while at the same time communicating clearly his own and his wife’s position, Beidler has formed relationships that have transcended theological differences. His story, which can be found [here](#), is worth reflection, even for those of us who reside in more progressive and open communities.

Metaphysics as Spiritual Journey

Robert Neville, a long time icon on the academic theological scene in Boston, recently completed his three volume magnum opus with the rather intimidating one word title: ultimates. The title, beginning with the first letter being in lower case, reflects both a sense of ambition and humility at the same time. As he states in the Preface, his aim is to find a middle ground between the triumphalism of confessional theology and the “so-called objective religious studies that avoid the questions of truth about first-order theological issues.” One of his commitments is to take the findings of science seriously and to affect theological reflection accordingly. Not only does science extend our knowledge outwards, backwards and inwards in time and space, but also uncovers the “feeling of embeddedness of human life in nature as imagined by the physics of biochemistry and ecology.” This feeling which reflects nature’s depth Neville calls intension. He beautifully describes this intention of nature in chapter seven of the first volume of ultimates. He ends this section by inviting us to cultivate symbols of ultimacy more in keeping with the “newfound scale of the cosmos and the cultivation of more intimate symbols because of nature’s intension.” I invite you to read his text [here](#).



Thanks to Google Books for posting the text.

Robert Neville, an ordained elder in the United Methodist church, was dean of the Boston University School of Theology from 1988 to 2003 and dean of Marsh Chapel at Boston University from 2003 to 2006. He was president of the American Academy of Religion and has held numerous positions in a wide range of academic and religious organizations. You can find more information on Robert Neville on his website at <http://www.robertcummingsneville.com/>

For a collection of sermons given by Robert Neville available on the web, see his “[Seasons of the Christian Life Collection](#)” and “[Nurture in Time and Eternity](#)” Collection on his website. (click the index button on the left to see the sermons.)

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I know you are tired by Stephen Klierer

We hope you find the poem below inspiring. It was written by Stephen Klierer. Stephen works at Wallowa Valley Center for Wellness and attended Whitman, Princeton Seminary, San Francisco Seminary, and Walden. He lives in Joseph, Oregon. The poem below can be found at here on Stephen’s webpage.



<http://dancingfaith.blogspot.com/2015/08/i-know-you-are-tired.html>

“I know you're tired but come, this is the way.”
— Rumi

i am pushed
kicking and screaming
into the day

my body protests
my mind complains

I know this
is Life

It is the way of joy and sorrow
“there are ten thousand joys and sorrows in every life” (Kornfield, A Lamp in the Darkness p.7)
and at one time or another
I will touch all of them

and my soul knows
(it is much wiser than the rest of me)
that my one job

my
one
job

is to weave all my life
for good or ill
for joy or sorrow
into the beautiful tapestry

that is
me

The Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale

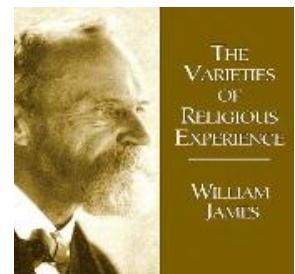
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Forum on Religion and Ecology

“The Forum on Religion and Ecology is the largest international multireligious project of its kind. With its conferences, publications, and website it is engaged in exploring religious worldviews, texts, ethics, and practices in order to broaden understanding of the complex nature of current environmental concerns. The Forum recognizes that religions need to be in dialogue with other disciplines (e.g., science, economics, education, public policy) in seeking comprehensive solutions to both global and local environmental problems. Go to <http://fore.yale.edu/>.

Why Mark Zuckerberg wants everyone to read this book about religion By Richard Feloni

It is unusual to find an article that seems appropriate for WesleyNexus about one of our nation’s most well known technology moguls. I certainly didn’t expect Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook and icon of the social network, to be the focus of an article recommending that everyone read William James’ The Varieties of Religious Experience. Zuckerberg has created a list of books to read this year from a wide range of disciplines. Most of the books are recent publications. William James, one of the founders of modern psychology, wrote a book on religious experience that was based on his Gifford Lecture given at the



University of Edinburgh in 1901. But here it is, right there with titles such as Creativity, Inc., Genome, Energy: A Beginner's Guide, Sapiens and The End of Power: From Boardrooms to Battlefields and Churches to States, Why Being In Charge Isn't What It Used to Be. Zuckerberg said, "When I read Sapiens, I found the chapter on the evolution of the role of religion in human life most interesting and something I wanted to go deeper on." If I had one questions to ask Zuckerberg, I would ask him what he meant by "deeper on." Perhaps I should go on Facebook and ask! You can find the article [here](#).

Zuckerberg's Year of Books Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ayeartofbooks?pref=story>

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Naked Ape or Techno Sapiens? The Relevance of Human Humanities By Willem B. Drees



The inaugural address delivered on 30 January 2015 by Willem Drees at Tilburg University upon the public acceptance of his appointment as professor of Philosophy of the Humanities was shared at a recent IRAS council meeting, Willem B. Drees is Professor of Philosophy of the Humanities at Tilburg University, dean of the Tilburg School of Humanities, and the editor of Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science. Drees studied theoretical physics at Utrecht University, theology at the Universities of Amsterdam and Groningen, and earned doctorates in theology and in philosophy (Groningen, 1989, cum laude; Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, 1994). The article can be found [here](#).

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Resolutions to the General Conference - 2016 Resolution on Evolutionary Scientific Thinking

This is the resolution Rev. Henry Schwarzmann submitted to the Baltimore Washington Conference in 2013. Henry F. Schwarzmann, retired, wrote the resolution and members of WesleyNexus, Inc. worked in presenting this at the BWC. It was passed by the conference which met in May/June 2013. It has been modified slightly and is now submitted to the General Conference of the United Methodist Church 2016. It can be found [here](#).

Schwarzmann's Six Non-scientific Creation Stories can be found [here](#).

NOTE: Other resolutions supporting the dialogue at the nexus of science and religion are being submitted for consideration by the quadrennial General Conference of the United Methodist Church. We will highlight these in forthcoming WesleyNexus newsletters, and post these on our website as they become available. We urge any of you who submitting such resolutions from other annual conferences to share these with us so that other delegates to the 2016 General Conference in Portland will make note of this additional support.

