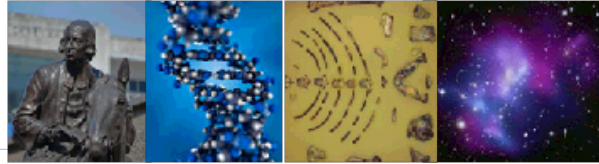


# WesleyNexus

*Science and Religion within the Wesleyan Tradition*



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Dear WesleyNexus Colleague:

December 14, 2015

We at WesleyNexus, like the rest of the country, are shocked and dismayed by the violence occurring across the country perpetrated by persons who feel they must destroy those with whom they feel no sense of loyalty or value. Through distorted thinking and visceral reaction to perceived disrespect, they lash out against those they see as a threat to their values. They live in a self-deluded world of small values, of myopic vision and diminutive loyalties. In response however, we must reflect a deeper, broader and more inclusive perspective. In **Yes, But Not Quite**, a recent book by Dwayne Tunstall on Josiah Royce's ethico-religious philosophy, this broader perspective was succinctly presented. Over 100 years ago, Royce equated loyalty to love and purpose and his term "loyalty to loyalty" is synonymous with what Christians understand as agape. Tunstall states that for Royce, "Loyalty to loyalty... involves respecting the diversity of moral ideals and trying to create a more hospitable environment where persons could pursue their ideals in a non-confrontational (or less confrontational) atmosphere. Living a life in pursuit of genuine loyalty lets one respect and willingly assist others as fellow persons who yearn to pursue their own loyalties, even if they are different from one's own." Royce described this network of persons who pursue this genuine loyalty as the Beloved Community, a term later used by Martin Luther King in his pursuit of social justice. But, as Tunstall states, "Royce's metaphysics of community does not only have an ethical and religious dimension to it; it also involves a reinterpretation of scientific inquiry. According to Royce, we are fit to interpret our environment in creative and novel ways and to make reliable scientific hypotheses that enable us to live in a precarious and evolving world."

WesleyNexus continues to encourage the coming together of all three dimensions, the religious, the ethical and the scientific, into an energetic, engaged dialogue. Coming up this year, we will be hosting our forth Evolution Weekend discussion on "**Technology, BioEthics and the Human Future.**" It will be available to all participants at no charge and, assuming that we have sufficient funding, the event will be a live webcast available to all merely by registering with an email.

However, since we are an all-volunteer organization and rely on our participants to continue our presence on the web and to develop in-person programs, we need your support. To be specific, we need additional funding to enable us to host the webcast and record it for later viewing. We hope that you will consider supporting us this holiday season with a contribution of any size. We need about \$1500 to support the February program. Any additional funds will be used to support additional programming in 2016. **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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**February 13-14, 2016: 3:00 pm Eastern time.**

Evolution Weekend, sponsored nationwide by the Clergy Letter Project.

WesleyNexus is pleased to announce that we once again will be hosting the premier event in Maryland, at the Baltimore-Washington Conference Mission Center in Fulton, Maryland. For the fourth year we will be live-streaming the event from our webpage. We encourage all in our network who are in the near vicinity to plan on attending and bring a large delegation from your congregation. We have clarified our 2016 program under the theme of **Technology, BioEthics and the Human Future**. We have confirmed that **Professor Sondra Wheeler**, bioethicist and Professor of Christian Ethics at **Wesley Theological Seminary** in Washington will be our moderator for the program. The panel addressing our theme will be:

- Robert J. Morell, Ph.D., Director, the Genomics & Computational Biology Core at the National Institute on Deafness & other Communication Disorders, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda MD
- Fatimah L. C. Jackson, Ph.D., Professor of Biology and Director of the W. Monague Cobb Research Laboratory, Howard University, Washington DC
- N. C. SivaSubramanian, Ph.D., M.D. Professor of Pediatrics and Dept head at the Georgetown University Medical Center, Washington DC.
- Jaydee Hanson, Policy Director, International Center for Technology Assessment
- TBD

We will be building a separate web page that will contain more information, biographical links and discussion questions to be addressed so please visit our website after the first of the year. Meanwhile, any of you beyond the Metropolitan Washington area can plan now to organize your own discussion group by downloading the webcast at the time when it is streamed: 3:00 p.m. Eastern time, Feb 14.

We hope to provide an email link to allow you to ask questions of our panelists in real time. This will cost you nothing, and becomes an excellent way to engage in the science/religion dialogue with colleagues in your own congregation.

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**Recent Events:**

**International Society for Science and Religion (ISSR)**

This is an organization with which we at WesleyNexus suggest that our participants become familiar. The Society took shape after a four-day conference in 2002, in Granada, Spain, which until the late 15th

century was the center of peaceful discourse between scholars of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In follow-up, ISSR was established for the purpose of the promotion of education through the support of inter-disciplinary learning and research in the fields of science and religion, conducted where possible in an international and multi-faith context. The ISSR home webpage is found at <http://www.issr.org.uk/>. Subsequently, the North American section of ISSR was organized and meets annually in conjunction with the international meetings of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) and the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL). The meetings of the North American section are coordinated by Dr. Ron Cole-Turner at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary (Ron can be reached at [coleturn@pts.edu](mailto:coleturn@pts.edu).) The 2015 ISSR meeting took place on November 20-21, in the downtown hotels in Atlanta, Georgia, just before the opening of the Annual Meeting of the AAR/SBL. Dr. Maynard Moore, President of WesleyNexus, participated in the 2015 sessions.

The opening event on Friday morning featured a panel on the topic "**Against Empathy? Theological Interrogation of Neuroscientific Debates on the Existence of the Human Mirror Neuron System and the Moral Significance of Empathy.**" Panelists included Michael Spezio, Scripps College, UKE Hamburg, and Caltech; Celia Deane-Drummond, University of Notre Dame; Anne Runehov, Uppsala University, Sweden; Charlene Burns, University of Wisconsin Eau Claire; and Gregory Peterson, South Dakota State University. Mirror neuron theory serves as a central pillar of some influential accounts stressing embodied cognition of social understanding and of the evolution of language. But – there is a major controversy in scientific circles as to whether mirror neurons even exist. The other controversy – of equally intense interest to moral theologians and philosophers – is whether the brain encodes empathy separately from “cognitive” forms of compassion and from concepts of justice in action. If so, then empathy could be viewed (at best) as irrelevant and at worst destructive of moral formation beyond one’s immediate ingroup. The discussion over this two-and-a half-hour period was intense, but resolution remains elusive.

ISSR co-sponsored two other sessions during the AAR weekend. On Friday afternoon ISSR partnered with the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and with the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) in presenting "**Science and the Next Generation of Religious Leaders: The Science for Seminaries Project.**" This was a five-hour event designed to showcase the grant-winning seminaries currently working with AAAS and ATS, and to invite participation in the next stage of the project, entitled "**Science for Seminaries.**" What have they learned? How can religious and theological education be enhanced by science? How can future religious leaders best be exposed to the dialogue between religion and science? **WesleyNexus plans to host an event on this topic during the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference in May, 2016.** The final ISSR session highlighted the latest research and important new books in science and religion, including the latest from the research team of Andrew Robinson and Christopher Southgate, Exeter University, on "Creative Mutual Interaction in Action." Three other new books were also featured, first with a critical commentary and then a response from the author, followed by audience discussion. These other books included Michael Burdett, Eschatology and the Technological Future; Robert Geraci, Virtually Sacred: Myth and Meaning in the World of Warcraft and Second Life; and Thomas Jay Oord, The Uncontrolling Love of God: An Open and Relational Account of Providence.

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#### **American Academy of Religion – Science/Religion related events**

During the AAR Annual Meetings in Atlanta, there were several interesting sessions focused on issues in the current Science and Religion dialogue. Dr. Moore, WesleyNexus President, attended several of these including: “Between Philosophy and a Phenomenological Hard Place: New Materialism as a Methodology in the Study of Religion,” in which Dr. Whitney Bauman (Program Vice-President at IRAS) was the

respondent; a plenary panel on “Racial Injustice and the Religious response;” a session coordinated by Dr. Tom Oord (WesleyNexus Advisory Board) on Open and Relational Theologies, which included participation by Dr. Jurgen Moltmann, Universitat in Tubingen; “Class, Religion and Theology” which featured Dr. Joerg Rieger of Perkins School of Theology; “Science, Technology and the Sacred;” “Cultural Perspectives on the Cognitive Science of Religion,” and finally, two sessions that featured presentations by Dr. Wesley Wildman of Boston University: “Cognitive and Evolutionary Approaches to Religious Ideology,” and “Transhumanism: Hacking the Religious Mind through Cognitive Simulation.” It will be of interest to WesleyNexus participants to follow the work of Dr. Wildman, [www.wesleywildman.com](http://www.wesleywildman.com). His Modeling Religion Project (MRP) has just been awarded a Templeton Foundation grant; this is the sixth specific project within a larger endeavor called the Simulating Religion Project in conjunction with the Virginia Modeling Analysis and Simulation Center at Old Dominion University in Norfolk. MRP aims to construct a simulation-development platform to support modeling the social dynamics of religion using cognitively complex agents. The Complex Learner Agent Simulation Platform (CLASP) will allow modelers to specify the cognitive, emotional, and social characteristics of agents, the causal architecture governing how those characteristics interact, the processes by which agents learn from one another, and the types of groups that agents can form—with no coding. This in turn will facilitate testing of theories of religion through virtual experimentation. MRP includes a training component to introduce doctoral students and post-doctoral associates to the complexities of modeling religion using simulation techniques, and an outreach component to explain the benefits of simulation in the scientific study of religion. WesleyNexus will periodically provide alerts when Dr. Wildman publishes research findings.

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**Videos**

Over the years, WesleyNexus has focused primarily on written resources available on the internet. With the increased network speed and computer capacity, it is becoming clear that we need to start emphasizing video resources as well. Below you will find a number of links to videos that are worth viewing.

Process Theology Videos  
What is Process Theology?

The following videos present perspectives on what it means to be a process theologian. Phil Clayton, John Cobb, Marjorie Suchocki and David Ray Griffin represent over 50 years of presenting process thinking to both academic and lay audiences. John Cobb is perhaps best known in process theology, a United Methodist and a strong advocate for integrating theological and scientific understanding. He is Professor of Theology Emeritus at the Claremont School of Theology, Claremont, California. Phil Clayton is the Ingraham Professor at Claremont School of Theology in Claremont, California. He is known internationally as one of the leaders in the science and religion dialogue and is also on the advisory board of WesleyNexus. Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, also is Professor Emerita, Claremont School of Theology, and Co-director of Process & Faith, an affiliated program related to the Center for Process Studies. Finally, David Ray Griffin, Ph.D., is Professor Emeritus of Philosophy of Religion and Theology at the Claremont School of Theology. All four are Co-Directors of the Center for Process Studies (CPS) in Claremont, CA.

As you might surmise, CPS is the flagship institution for process studies in the United States. They have always been amenable to the science and religion dialogue and in 2004 began a three year program in science and religion. In 2004, The Center for Process Studies began a new program: "Dialogues Concerning Science and Natural Religion." Funded jointly by the Metanexus Institute's Local Societies Initiative and the Helios foundation, the program's goal was to promote discussion between science and religion, using process thought as a bridge between the two fields. This program is explicitly focused on

promoting fruitful interaction in the local community. The results can be found [here](#).

In Clayton, Suchocki and Griffin you will hear three different takes on what process theology is by three intellectual leaders in the field.



[Introduction to Process Theology](#)  
Philip Clayton



[Introduction to Process Theology](#)  
Marjorie Suchocki



[Introduction to Process Theology](#)  
David Ray Griffin



[John Cobb and Center for Process Studies](#)  
John B. Cobb, Jr.: Work and Legacy with Tom Oord, Phil Clayton and others

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### **The God Debacle: Clayton and Shults on the Reality of God**

In the past year, Philip Clayton has continued to engage in conversation with those who are convinced that religion can be reduced to human mythological construction. In “The God Debacle”, Leron Shults and Clayton continue a discussion that began with Clayton’s critical commentary on Shults’ newest book, *Theology after the Birth of God*. The commentary can be found [here](#).

In this commentary, Clayton says “LERON SHULTS IS CONVINCED that he has broken the DNA code of theology. We now know that humans construct their gods . . . and how they do it. Given this knowledge, he is convinced, it's no longer rationally acceptable to hold religious beliefs...At this stage of the discussion one can see the case for both sides. It could be that humans form theistic beliefs because of inbuilt cognitive and biocultural mechanisms, such as hyperactive agency detection. Or it could be that human reflection and/or experience lead us to recognize religious dimensions of reality that underlie our empirical experience. If in the end personal experience and social conditioning determine which of these two possibilities you find more plausible, then arguments do not decide the question—neither Shults’s arguments nor those of his opponents.



[The God Debacle, Part 1](#)  
[The God Debacle, Part 2](#)

With this pushback, Clayton sets the table for the live webcast that has been recorded [here](#). NOTE: The quality is not the best but the content is outstanding. Since it is two hours long, you may want to view the discussion between Clayton and Shults which begins in part 2, minute 4. It should be noted, that Shults and Clayton know each other, are friends and, in the spirit of Josiah Royce and William James 100 years ago, enrich each other through their disagreements. Thanks to Tripp Fuller for sending me the edited links.

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## Evangelicals and Traditional Theology Engaging in Science and Religion

Evangelicals and traditional theologians are also engaged in the science and religion dialogue. The center of gravity here is across the pond in England where Alister McGrath and Keith Ward represent scientifically informed and theologically orthodox perspectives. In the first video below, McGrath, Ward and John Lennox discuss the relationship between science and religion. In the following video, McGrath takes on Christopher Hitchens with the question "Is religion a poison or a cure?"



[The Relationship Between Science and Religion](#)  
John Lennox, Alister McGrath and Keith Ward



[Debate - Christopher Hitchens vs Alister McGrath](#)  
Is Religion a Poison or a Cure?

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## TED Talks Related to Science and Religion

“TED is a nonprofit devoted to spreading ideas, usually in the form of short, powerful talks (18 minutes or less). TED began in 1984 as a conference where Technology, Entertainment and Design converged, and today covers almost all topics — from science to business to global issues — in more than 100 languages. Meanwhile, independently run TEDx events help share ideas in communities around the world”.

Ted is now much more than Technology, Entertainment and Design with talks on dozens of subjects including science and religion. The videos below are three that combine these subjects from different perspectives. Bryan Enderle is an evangelical and professor of Chemistry at UC-Davis, Michael Dowd is a well known speaker and author of [Thank God For Evolution](#) and Jeff Lieberman is an MIT-trained artist, scientist and engineer whose focus is on mystical experience and our relationship with the universe and our relationship with each other.



[Science vs God](#)  
Bryan Enderle at TEDxUCDavis



[Reality reconciles science and religion](#)  
Michael Dowd at TEDxGrandRapids



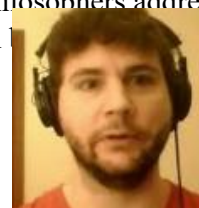
[Science and spirituality](#)  
Jeff Lieberman at TEDxCambridge

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## A Tippling Philosopher: Everybody Is Wrong About God by James Lindsay

A Tippling Philosopher is a thread of linked youtube.com videos where skeptical philosophers address issues relevant to the science and religion discussion. The Tippling Philosopher can be found at [http://www.tipplingphilosopher.com](#)

In the video below, James Lindsay is interviewed about his new book [Everybody is Wrong About God](#). A convinced atheist, Lindsay none-the-less wishes to change the conversation to a more constructive, functional approach. The position is similar to the position of Shults in the "God Debate". As



Ryan Bell, who also appears in the God Debacle, states in his patheos review, “[Everybody Is Wrong About God](#) is a manifesto; a call to abandon the battle over God, which has already been won and which some are still far too invested in fighting, and move on to the main front in the struggle for the future of all sentient beings. Not everyone will agree with Lindsay's conclusions, but everyone who cares about secularism and humanism should read this book and discuss it vigorously”.

[Everybody is Wrong About God](#)  
James A. Lindsay

Ryan Bell’s review of book can be found [here](#).

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**Audio**

**Home Brewed Christianity with Tripp Fuller**

(From the web page)

Since March 13, 2008, Homebrewed Christianity Podcast has been bringing you the best nerdy audiological ingredients so you can brew your own faith. You will find conversations between friends, theologians, philosophers, and scholars of all stripes. What started as a reason for Tripp to interview the authors of his favorite books has turned into a community of podcasts, bloggers, & D (our regular listeners) invested in expanding and deepening the conversation around We hope you listen, question, think, and then share the Brew!



[Moltmann on Home Brewed Christianity](#)  
Interviewed by Tripp Fuller

In this audio podcast, Trip Fuller interviews Jurgen Moltmann, one of the most influential theologians of the past 50 years.

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**Articles**

**Rhythm and ... Logic? By Gary Herstein**

After some 25 years in the computer and high-tech industries, Gary Herstein decided to abandon his career in technology to pursue a new career in academics. He taught courses at Merrimack and Muskingum colleges in Ethics, Logic, Philosophy of Science, and Process Philosophy and Pragmatism. He is currently an Independent Scholar working on various projects relating to the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, the logical forms and presuppositions of measurement, and the connections between spatial reasoning and general metaphysics. He has also written on “The Roycean Roots of the Beloved Community” mentioned above.



In the linked article found [here](#), Herstein addresses the “false dichotomy which supposedly stands between aesthetics and analysis. But art and emotion do not stand in opposition to logic and reason.”

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**Even God gets tired of God, Eight Forms of Tiredness Or From Atheism to Faithism: Saying no to God the Bully and yes to the Holy Spirit by Jay McDaniel**

Jay McDaniel is trained in the philosophy of religion and theology, my specialty is Process or Whiteheadian thought. His Ph.D. dissertation was on Whitehead and Buddhism, with particular focus on whether and how, with help from Whitehead's way of thinking, human beings might jointly awaken to the wisdom of Buddhist enlightenment and simultaneously live from faith in God. In this short reflection, McDaniel reflects on the tired religious ideas that don't work anymore (with a little help from his friend, John Lennon) and suggests that we move on to "Faitheism: sensing that there is a Breathing at work in the universe and human life, a principle of order and novelty, a lure to love and be loved".



McDaniel's reflection can be found [here](#).

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**Closing Prayer by United Methodist Bishop (retired) and Mrs. Jo**

In closing, we at WesleyNexus wish to share a prayer written by Forrest and Josephine Stith for this Christmas season. We thank them for allowing us to share this prayer [here](#).



Bishop Stith was elected to the episcopacy in 1984 while serving in the Baltimore-Washington Conference, and remains a strong advocate for social justice and a friend of WesleyNexus.



