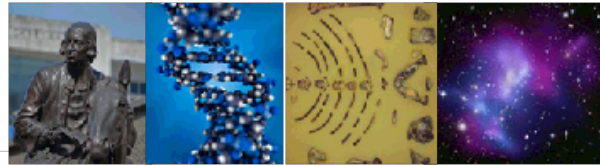


# WesleyNexus

*Science and Religion within the Wesleyan Tradition*



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Dear WesleyNexus Colleague:

February 23, 2016

Last Sunday's Evolution Weekend program was a big success. The panel shared their perspectives on issues of bioethics in their particular areas of professional engagement and spoke also from their own religious tradition. While United Methodists were well represented, we also heard from Dr. Fatima Jackson, a biologist and Muslim and Dr. K. N. Siva Subramanian, an MD and a Hindu. We have captured the discussion on video and it is now available online. If you missed it the first time, we invite you to view it at your leisure. If you were present, we hope you will utilize portions of this video as the foundation for a discussion in your congregation or a local interest group.

WesleyNexus is an all-volunteer organization and relies on our participants to continue our presence on the web and to develop in-person programs. Evolution Weekend is our biggest annual project and it always depletes most of our funds. We thank everyone who helped contribute to this effort. Going forward, we will need support for our ongoing programs and to accumulate funds for next year. As always, all funds that we collect as donations 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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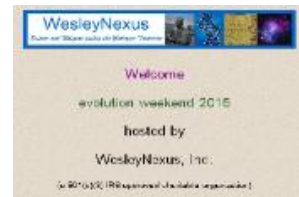
**Reflections on WesleyNexus Evolution Weekend by Rev. William Maisch**  
**February 14, 2016**  
**Technology and Biomedical Ethics**  
**The Baltimore-Washington Conference Mission Center**  
**11711 East Market Place, Fulton, MD 20759**

The panel of experts, facilitated by Dr. Sondra Wheeler, discussed issues surrounding technology and biomedical ethics. The conversation emphasized the need for context as we seek deeper understanding. Panelists held the tension at the intersection of ‘can we’ and ‘should we’. The extent of where science falls short in answering ‘should we’ questions was probed. It was interesting to hear the experts discuss whether or not all information available through technology is useful or desired. Biomedical technology may well redefine life and redefine viability. The panelists explored a social justice component of biomedical ethics along with the impact of anthropological DNA upon our current and future understanding of humanity. New technologies permitting us to mine ancient DNA are providing surprising and interesting results regarding homo sapiens as hybrids, unlocking new areas of understanding. As I left the gathering, I was pondering how those in the coming millennium might observe and evaluate our understanding and use of the ‘tools’ of technology?



**WesleyNexus Evolution Weekend Powerpoint**

We have been requested to post the Powerpoint slides that were used for the Evolution Weekend program on February 14, 2016. You can find the slides [here](#) in a .pdf format.



To reduce the size of the file, we have removed the panel biographies which can be found [here](#).

**WesleyNexus Evolution Weekend Video is Available**

WesleyNexus has recorded the panel discussion for the 2016 Evolution Weekend which took place at the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference Mission Center in Fulton, MD.

You can find the video on Youtube.com [here](#) or click the Video icon on [www.wesnexus.org](http://www.wesnexus.org).

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**W. Montague Cobb Research Laboratory**

The W. Montague Cobb Research Laboratory is the “only academic institution in the world with 400 years of genomic samples on peoples of African descent and with such great potential for illumination of the African American past.”

As Dr. Fatima Jackson, a member of the Evolution Weekend discussion panel, pointed out, the area of the greatest genetic diversity in the world is found in Africa, significantly more diverse than all of Europe. However, research in genetic anthropology has been focused primarily on populations of European descent. The Cobb Research Laboratory is working towards remedying this imbalance. The first issue of The Backbone, the Cobb Research Laboratory Journal, can be found [here](#) and provides a good overview of the it’s mission.



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**Genetic Literacy Project**

Many of the points of focus during the Evolution Weekend panel discussion emphasized the rapidly changing nature of genetic science that has taken place over the last decade.



This rapid change promises to continue unabated for many years to come. As persons of faith, it is imperative that we become informed about these changes and be able to think clearly about their moral and spiritual implications. The Genetic Literacy Project, part of the Science Literacy Project, is dedicated to providing information on the intersection of DNA research and real world applications of genetics with media and policy to disentangle science from ideology. This website provides articles related a wide range of topics related to human genetics, agriculture

genetics and food production, bioethics and government regulations. The website can be found [here](#). The Science Literacy Project can be found [here](#).

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### **Artificial wombs: The coming era of motherless births?**

One of the more fascinating and potentially disturbing topics discussed by the panel was presented by Dr. K. N. Siva Subramanian. Developments are moving rapidly that may one day support fetal development in an artificial womb. In an article posted on the Genetic Literacy Project website, the author, David Warmflash, an astrophysicist and physician, introduces his readers to this subject which was discussed in 1924 by J. S. B. Haldane with the term ectogenesis. This term may become more familiar as the years go by. The article can be found [here](#).



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### **United Methodist Church: What We Believe**

The United Methodist Church has proactively addressed issues related to genetics and reproductive science. The link below provides information on the UMC position on human cloning, genetic science, and stem cell research.



<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/new-developments-in-genetic-science>

A related issue is the use of technology to perform gender selection. The UMC position can be found here:

<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/gender-selective-abortion>

In addition, there is an important paper that apologizes for the churches misguided participation in eugenics research. The final paragraph reads as follows: “The United Methodist General Conference formally apologizes for Methodist leaders and Methodist bodies who in the past supported eugenics as sound science and sound theology. We lament the ways eugenics was used to justify the sterilization of persons deemed less worthy. We lament that Methodist support of eugenics policies was used to keep persons of different races from marrying and forming legally recognized families. We are especially grieved that the politics of eugenics led to the extermination of millions of people by the Nazi government and continues today as "ethnic cleansing" around the world”.

<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/repentance-for-support-of-eugenics>

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### **Gravitational Waves Discovered**

Persons in our network may or may not have seen the bulletins released last week that, at last, gravitational waves have been discovered and identified by the Laser Interferometer Gravitational Wave Observatory

(LIGO), an international collaboration spearheaded by seed funding from the National Science Foundation. When initiated in 1992, it was the largest project ever funded by NSF, and after almost 25 years, the project met success. It is the first scientific confirmation of Sir Isaac Newton's theory of gravity, and Einstein's prediction 100 years ago about the forces that warp the fabric of space/time. This discovery means that we now must shape our theology and cosmology. Theory has been confirmed. There will be a number of stories emerging in documentaries, some of which are already available, so it is important to keep an accurate perspective in place as the discussion proceeds. This video of the announcement itself from the National Science Foundation should be foundational. Of course, once you are on YouTube, there are quite a few auxiliary renditions in the string. But this one is basic in explanation.

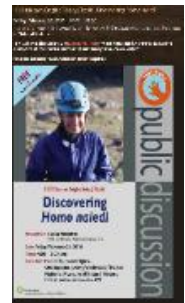


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aEPIwEJmZyE>

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**Upcoming Events:**

**Smithsonian Public Discussion: Discovering Homo naledi**  
**February 26, 2016, 4-5 PM @ The Hall of Human Origins**  
**National Museum of Natural History, Washington, DC**



**For more information click on the flyer image on the right >>>>>>**

Persons in our network should also remember that the Smithsonian Institution’s Human Origins Program is presenting a new traveling exhibit at selected locations across the United States, *Exploring Human Origins: What Does It Mean To Be Human?* Developed in partnership with the [American Library Association](#) and made possible by a grant from the [John Templeton Foundation](#) and support from the Peter Buck Human Origins Fund (Smithsonian), this exhibition offers the content exhibits of the Smithsonian's Hall of Human Origins to communities around the country by bringing this temporary show to 19 public libraries. The exhibit tour began March 31, 2015, and will be completed April 28, 2017. Among the scholars who lead discussions in these communities each month are Dr. Bertka and Dr. James Miller, both of whom chair the Smithsonian's Broader Social Impacts Committee and serve on the WesleyNexus Advisory Board. The exhibition and its associated public events, including formal community conversations and science programs, engage audiences to explore the wonder of the scientific discoveries concerning human evolution and how these findings connect to diverse personal and societal perspectives about who we are as a species and why it matters. The exhibit is currently in the Spokane County Library in Washington, and will travel next to Cottage Grove, Oregon for a month in the Public Library there. Persons in the WesleyNexus network are encouraged to go to the Hall of Human Origins webpage and access the full schedule of the traveling exhibit coordinated by the Broader Social Impacts Committee.

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**WesleyNexus and IRAS in Partnership**

WesleyNexus is pleased that the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science (IRAS) – an international organization that is now more than 60 years old, and one of the first groups to promote the dialogue in science and religion – is now in a formal collaborative relationship with WesleyNexus. IRAS has helped us by co-sponsoring the Evolution Weekend event for two years now, and WesleyNexus has promoted the IRAS summer conference since we initiated our newsletter in 2010. Now WesleyNexus participants will benefit with a 30% discount at the IRAS Summer Conference. **The motto of IRAS is “working for a**

**dynamic and positive relationship between religion and science since 1954.”** The Summer Conference is IRAS’s flagship event. It is an exceptional opportunity to get away from daily routines long enough to engage in deep and trans-formative learning; to encounter others with a passion for human well-being; to participate in respectful and informed dialogue illuminated by the best scientific, religious and philosophical insights. All of this occurs in a setting that is physically beautiful, ecologically responsible, psychologically safe, intellectually reliable, personally challenging, spiritually uplifting and family/child friendly. Each Summer Conference explores a focal question that demands the best of science, religion, spirituality and philosophy to map its dimensions. The theme of the 2016 IRAS Summer Conference, scheduled for June 25-July 2 on Star Island (off the coast of New Hampshire) is **How Can We Know? Co-creating Knowledge in Perilous Times: *What does knowing and living reliably, inclusively, sustainably and humanely now require of us – as persons, communities, institutions and whole societies?*** As a collaborating partner with IRAS, WesleyNexus benefits from the following discounts available to those in our network. Any person in the WesleyNexus network – any of you who subscribe to our monthly newsletter – can take advantage of these discounts:

Conference registration at a 30% discount

Room and Board 30% discount on Star Island, plus another \$50 back.

More information on our website [www.wesnex.org](http://www.wesnex.org)

**More information on the IRAS website [www.iras.org](http://www.iras.org)**

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University of Toronto's Religion and Society Series

As part of the University of Toronto's Religion and Society series, on Saturday March 19, the University is hosting a 2-hour dialogue (7:00-9:00 pm) between theoretical physicist Lawrence M. Krauss, Intelligent Design advocate Stephen C. Meyer, and evolutionary creationist Denis O. Lamoureux. During this 2-hour dialogue, which will be live-streamed, Krauss, Meyer, and Lamoureux, in a 3-person panel, will discuss whether scientific explanations of the universe's origin has replaced the need for God as Creator, whether life on our planet could exist apart from divine intervention, and whether there is evidence in nature for a Designer. This event will be web-streamed live and can easily be downloaded by local groups that may want to host their own discussion session.



<https://www.wycliffecollege.ca/about/events/god-science-and-universe-religion-and-society-series>

**Such an event will be hosted by the DC metropolitan section of the American Scientific Affiliation on Saturday, March 19, at 6:45 pm at the Rockville United Methodist Church (RUMC), located at 112 West Montgomery Ave, Rockville, MD (<http://www.rockvilleumc.org>). Doors will open at 6:30 p.m. Ample parking is available in lots adjacent to the church. Those interested are asked to RSVP to ASA Metro Section President Mike Beidler at [mike.beidler@gmail.com](mailto:mike.beidler@gmail.com).**

\* Lawrence Krauss (<http://krauss.faculty.asu.edu/biography>), Director of the University of Arizona's Origins Project (<https://origins.asu.edu>), is an internationally known theoretical physicist with wide research interests, including the interface between elementary particle physics and cosmology, where his studies include the early universe, the nature of dark matter, general relativity and neutrino astrophysics. He has investigated questions ranging from the nature of exploding stars to issues of the origin of all mass in the universe. His most recent book is NYT bestseller *A Universe from Nothing: Why There Is Something Rather Than Nothing* (Atria Books, 2012).

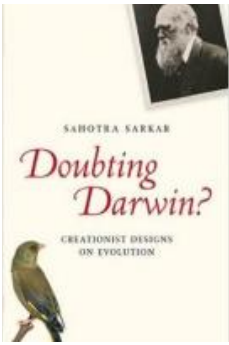
\* Stephen Meyer (<http://www.stephencmeyer.org/biography.php>), a former geophysicist and college professor who received his PhD in the philosophy of science from the University of Cambridge, is Director of the Discovery Institute's Center for Science and Culture (<http://www.discovery.org/id>). He has authored *Signature in the Cell: DNA and the Evidence for Intelligent Design* (HarperOne, 2009) and NYT bestseller *Darwin's Doubt: The Explosive Origin of Animal Life and the Case for Intelligent Design* (HarperOne, 2013). In these books, Meyer addresses the deepest mystery surrounding the origin of life and the origin of animal life: the origin of biological information necessary to produce it.

\* American Scientific Affiliation (ASA) Fellow Denis Lamoureux (<https://www.ualberta.ca/~dlamoure>) holds three earned doctoral degrees—dentistry, theology, and biology—and is a member of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS). Lamoureux is an Associate Professor of Science and Religion at St. Joseph's College in the University of Alberta, and he lectures throughout Canada and the U.S. in both Christian and public academic institutions. With Phillip E. Johnson, Lamoureux co-authored *Darwinism Defeated? The Johnson-Lamoureux Debate on Biological Origins* (Regent College Publishing, 1999). Lamoureux has also written *Evolutionary Creation: A Christian Approach to Evolution* (Wipf & Stock, 2008) and condensed this book into a more accessible version titled *I Love Jesus & I Accept Evolution* (Wipf & Stock, 2009). Lamoureux has also debated John Walton, C. John Collins, and William Barrick in *Four Views on the Historical Adam* (Zondervan, 2013).

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**Book Review of Doubting Darwin? Creationist Designs on Evolution**

Of related interest, WesleyNexus president Dr. Maynard Moore has reviewed a book on this same topic, that can be found on our website: Sarkar, Sahotra. **Doubting Darwin? Creationist Designs on Evolution.** Blackwell Publishing, Malden, MA, 2007. 214 pages. ISBN: 9781405154918 (paperback).



At the conclusion of that review, Dr. Moore states “Most importantly, Dr. Sarkar rehearses all the important points in the development of a robust theory of evolution. He discusses the legacy of Gregor Mendel and the contribution that genetics now plays in the neo-Darwinian synthesis. He explains the true meaning of selectionism and neutralism within the framework of Modern evolutionary theory, and presents some of the ongoing legitimate debates within the field of evolutionary biology (such as, how to define the boundaries of “species”). In an important chapter, Dr. Sarkar addresses the issue of complexity, and engages the creationists once again on Michael Behe's argument concerning “irreducible complexity,” a system that requires the intervention of an intelligent designer. Sarkar addresses all of the creationists' examples of this so-called “irreducible” complexity and in detail shows how their arguments are based on specious assumptions. Finally, Sarkar addresses some of the contemporary arguments involving information theory, pointing out the metaphysical assumptions on which the arguments for the ontology of information is based. The conclusion: arguments for “intelligent design” are vacuous and must be rigorously denied access to the scientific classrooms in our schools.” The review can be found [here.](#)

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**Christian Century Review of the Film Spotlight**

Dr. Thomas Jay Oord, recently professor of theology at Northwest Nazarene University in Idaho, and WesleyNexus Advisory Board member, has a film review in the February 17 issue of *The Christian Century*, found online [here](#). The film, *Spotlight*, is a fictionalized account of the Boston Globe's investigative reporting team that found widespread child molestation and cover-up in Boston's Catholic

Archdiocese. Among other analytical comments, Dr Oord says, “in this film there are few heroes,” but he concludes that the film is worth attention because it succeeds in “bringing the message home.” Tom Oord is a widely-respected theologian and author, whose latest book, *The Uncontrolling Love of God: An Open and Relational Account of Academic*, (2014) has been featured in this newsletter with a review that is available on



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**Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference, June 3 @ Wardman Park Hotel**  
**WesleyNexus holds its annual Breakfast Briefing for Conference**



During the Baltimore-Washington Conference session June 1-3, at the Wardman Park Hotel in Washington DC, WesleyNexus will hold its fourth annual breakfast briefing for any Conference delegate who wishes to attend. Registration is now open for Annual Conference, and one simply needs to register for the meal on Friday June 3 using the regular meal registration process. This is an informal discussion around the breakfast table in a private room, and will feature a short presentation by Mr. Curtis Baxter, who will speak about the “Science and Seminaries” project being implemented by the American Association for the Advancement of Science. NOTE: Any interested clergyperson or lay delegate to the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference is encouraged to register for the Friday morning breakfast using the standard registration form on the BWCUMC website. If you have already registered for the Conference but did not buy the Friday breakfast, an email to the Conference staff will serve to make the addition to your registration.. If you already bought the general meal ticket for Friday morning, just use it, follow the signs and come to the breakfast. Finally, our colleagues in other Annual Conferences might follow this lead and organize a sharing session at your own Annual Conference. It is a good way to discover who might be interested in participating in the ongoing science and religion dialogue.





