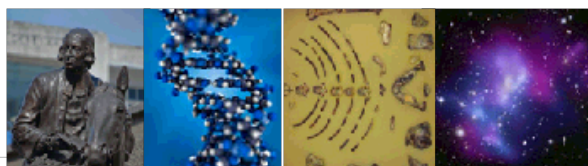


WesleyNexus

Science and Religion within the Wesleyan Tradition



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Dear WesleyNexus Colleague:

April 27, 2016

In April of 1966, Time magazine published a cover provocatively labeled “Is God Dead?” The issue chronicled the explosion of interest across the country, among the religious and non-religious, in the so-called God is Dead theologians. The current April 8 edition of Time revisits the controversy and compares the chaotic times of the '60s with the current challenges facing the country. Needless to say, both in our time and a half century ago, people take sides, demonize those on the other side, and justify themselves as the guardians of truth and light. Little noticed in 1966 was a book published by a physicist teaching at a small college in the mid-west that would have ground-breaking impact on a discipline that would become known as science and religion. In the book, Professor Ian Barbour compared and contrasted the methods and truths associated with these two great cultural accomplishments, science and religion. From this unnoticed beginning, Barbour spawned a wide range of initiatives by scholars from across the scientific and religious spectrum. His innovative typology of Conflict, Independence, Dialogue, Integration has become a standard framework on how religion and science relate. WesleyNexus has consistently tried to promote the later two options as an alternative to the others. The conflict stirred by the Time article had been answered with a third option which in various forms has stressed the need to respect both domains. In this issue of our newsletter, we have provided links to various resources that capture this controversy and how it can be addressed.

WesleyNexus is an all-volunteer organization and relies on our participants to continue our presence on the web and to develop in-person programs. We thank everyone who helped contribute to this effort. Going forward, we will need support for our ongoing programs and to accumulate funds for the rest of the 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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Is God Dead?: A Time Cover Turns 50 By Leigh Eric Schmidt

You can find the current Time cover commemorating the 1966 article asking the question “Is God Dead?” Ironically, after 50 years, it appears that we are no closer to agreement on the answer than we were then. The US in particular continues to be extremely religious and pluralistic at the same time. Perhaps refocusing on the question away from the death of God to the positive question of faith in God in a critical scientific age would be more fruitful. We at WesleyNexus think so. You can read the recent article by Leigh Eric Schmidt on Religion and Politics [here](#).



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Methodist Heretic: Thomas Altizer and the Death of God at Emory University by Christopher Demuth Rodkey

Methodists found themselves in a unique position in 1966 when one of the professors at Emory University was placed in the center of the Time article. Christopher Rodkey published an article in 2010 highlighting the specific responses within The Methodist Church. The Methodist Church was formed in 1939 by conjoining three historic denomination: The Methodist Episcopal Church, The Methodist Protestant Church, and The Methodist Episcopal Church, South. While officially one, The Methodist Church continued to reflect the local interests and perspectives of the predecessor institutions. In this article, Rodkey discusses the events leading up to the Time article and the varied responses that the “God is Dead” movement caused within the church. Rodkey closes his article with the following question: “Could it be that their abject reaction to a theology of the death of God was that Altizer was speaking the unspeakable in the American South as the “last straw” between the established mainline church and the practice of theology, so as to render philosophical theology to be irrelevant to the training of clergy and the proclamation of the faith ever since?” The article can be found [here](#).



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God dies, Protestants divide by Neil J. Young (The Christian Century)

In April, The Christian Century noted the Time article mentioned above and pointed out that the response by the evangelical and mainline churches was significantly different. Noting a response in Christianity Today, evangelicals noted that “Never has the burden of presenting historic Christian theism fallen so heavily upon the shoulders of a vanguard of evangelical theologians.” For the mainline, including Methodists, it was more of a shrug or a fad that would pass. However, the difference merely reflected the growing divide between evangelicals and the mainline churches, differences that seem deeper and broader today. Click [here](#) for the article.



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Science and Religion: Barbour’s 4 models

As mentioned above, 1966 was also the year of a lesser known but perhaps more far reaching event. Ian Barbour professor of physics and religion at Carleton College published his ground breaking book

Issues in Science and Religion. With this book, Barbour kicked off what would become the modern discipline of science and religion. Barbour would later provide as a framework for discussion the four possible relationships within the science and religion field. These relationships were identified as Conflict, Independence, Dialogue, and starting point for conversation ever since. In 2010, the blog “A biologist presents this framework from the perspective of a professor tasked with introducing the field to undergraduate students, which can be found [here](#).



Also available online are two of Dr. Barbour's full length books, Religion in the Age of Science and Myth, Models and Paradigms. The first book is quite readable and is based on Barbour’s 1990 Gifford lectures – it provides the general user with a solid introduction to science and religion. The later book, published in 1974, has Barbour focusing on issues of methods and ways of knowing in science and religion. These books and can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

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A Voyage of Belief by Robert E. Lauder

John Haught is one who has been deeply impacted by Barbour’s engagement of science and religion. Haught restated Barbour’s model in his book Science and Religion by identifying the four ways as conflict, contrast, contact and confirmation. In 2015, Rev. Robert E. Lauder assigned Haught’s book for a class on “The Problem of God.” He used Haught’s book *What is God?: How to Think about the Divine*. Haught addressed the important question of what is meant by God. With that beginning, Lauder presents Haught as one who has successfully addressed the answer “Is God Dead?” Read the Lauder article [here](#).



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**Upcoming Events
IRAS Conference**

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
- More information on the IRAS website www.iras.org

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The Story of God

The Story of God with Morgan Freeman, premiering Sunday, April 3 at 9/8c, will take viewers on a trip around the world to explore different cultures and religions on the ultimate quest to uncover the meaning of life, God and all the questions in between.



Go to National Geographic's **The Story of God** [here](#).

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**Gerald May Seminar with Iliia Delio
April 29 -30, 2016
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rockville, MD**

(From the website)

The Gerald May Seminar is offered in memory of the life and legacy of Gerald (Jerry) May. Jerry served on Shalem’s staff for many years and was our Senior Fellow for Contemplative Theology and Psychology. The Seminar is held every year to strengthen the great themes of contemplative understanding and practice that Jerry so valued.



Iliia Delio, OSF is a Franciscan Sister and the Josephine C. Connelly Endowed Chair in Theology at Villanova University. She holds a doctorate in Historical Theology from Fordham University and is the author of fourteen books, including Care for Creation; The Unbearable Wholeness of Being: God, Evolution and the Power of Love; and From Teilhard to Omega: Co-creating an Unfinished Universe.

Friday, 7-9: “Have We Lost Our Minds (Literally): Ecology in an Age of Technology”
Saturday, 10 AM – 4 PM: “Consciousness and Christogenesis: Teilhard’s Two Energies”

Registration and additional information can be found [here](#).

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

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 remains open for Annual Conference, but the deadline to sign up for the special breakfast event has passed. We will enjoy 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: We have been notified that we have twenty persons registered, which is capacity for these breakfast rooms, so we expect a lively interaction. 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.

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The General Conference of the United Methodist Church in Portland May 10-20, 2016

All eyes will be focused on Portland less than three weeks away, as delegates to the quadrennial General Conference opens. There is no need for us here to rehearse all of the issues that will come before the sections and sub-committees for review and formulation.... that information can be found on the web for the United Methodist Church – <http://www.umc.org/>--, as well as directions as to how the general sessions during the second week can be viewed around the world through the video livestream. Of much interest to us will be the treatment of the several petitions on science and religion, several of which were supported by WesleyNexus and affirmative votes by the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference last May. Authored by our colleague Dr. Gary Sherman, these petitions can be found on our WesleyNexus website [here](#). The petitions are now in the hands of the delegates assigned to the Church and Society Section of General Conference:

Resolution 1027: God's Creation and the Church.

Social Principles # 164: V. The Political Community (c)

Social Principles # 160: 1. The Natural World F. Science & Technology.

Another colleague, Dr. Henry Schwarzmann, retired, submitted a petition titled “Evolutionary Scientific Thinking,” which was passed by the Baltimore-Washington Conference in 2013, petition # 60842-CA-R9999-G. Although this text is different from the edited version, it may also be considered, but it remains a mystery to us where it might have been assigned. In any case, we encourage all interested parties to keep in touch with the delegations from your own Annual Conference and spend some time watching the live-stream during the third week in May.

