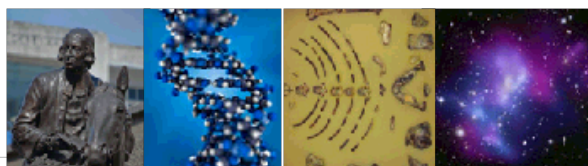


WesleyNexus

Science and Religion within the Wesleyan Tradition



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Dear WesleyNexus Colleague:

June 21, 2017

The first Sunday in June, Christians all over the world celebrated Pentecost, remembering the time when Jews from many nations came together to form the community of Jesus. In Acts 2, Luke tells the story of how the spirit like a great wind descended upon them. They suddenly were able to understand one another even though they did not speak the same language. All were amazed. This legendary story was written over half a century after the events leading to the founding of Christianity. While scholars can debate how much is history and how much is legend, one thing is clear. Once the Christian community came together under the lordship of Jesus, a critical question needed to be addressed: “what next”? It is clear that something profound happened. However, after the excitement of the moment faded, the early church had to face an uncertain future. The band of spirit-filled followers was transformed by an experience of power and hope. Then what? What were they called to do? What was their mission? What was their purpose? The rest of Acts provides a narrative of how this community pulled together to live in the world dominated by Roman power and Greek learning. It was a pagan world filled with many gods and many faiths. Our era, after 2000 years of being defined by Christianity, is now fragmenting into many pieces, both secular and religious. But one force affects them all: science. Science and its technological offspring are ubiquitous. North, South, East or West, there is no place on the globe where scientific knowledge has not reached. This month we are focusing on the resources and insights of Biologos. Biologos began in 2007 as the brainchild of Dr. Francis Collins. In 2006, his book **The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief** became a national best seller. Responding to the many questions his readers sent to him by email, he and a group of students built a website and began to answer the question “what next?” Like the community in Acts, Collins and his fellow Biologos companions proceeded to present what it means to be a believing Christian in our time. Please check out the information below and the links included. Biologos is within the spirit of Pentecost when they say: “BioLogos invites the church and the world to see the harmony between science and biblical faith as we present an evolutionary understanding of God’s creation”.

Perhaps a bigger challenge for the Christian community is to pull together in spirit the various strands of understanding across the entire fabric of the world-wide church. The focus of Biologos is strongly credal and evangelical. In last month’s newsletter, views from the pluralistic progressive perspective were presented. Can these threads be brought together to form a single fabric with many colors and designs? We at WesleyNexus hope so and try to encourage understanding across various perspectives. We will continue to include a wide range of viewpoints since the Wesleyan tradition has never been a single thread but a weaving together from many strands. The Wesleyan tradition stands for unity in loving spirit but non-uniformity in ideas or practice.

We continue to appreciate the collaborating groups and sponsors that helped us underwrite expenses for our February live-streamed event, especially The Clergy Letter Project and the Institute for Religion in an Age of Science, but also the several churches and individuals who have sent donations since January 1. Hundreds will be coming together at Star Island this month for the yearly IRAS conference asking the question of “what’s next?” in a world threatened by climate change. Over the summer, we will continue to

receive funds for our programs this coming fall and spring, so if you can manage a contribution, large or small, it will help us tremendously. WesleyNexus is a 501(c)(3) charitable, educational organization, and we will acknowledge all gifts from individuals for tax reporting purposes.

Please send us your pictures of the March for Science to WesleyNexus@aol.com. When we receive them we will post them [here](#).

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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WesleyNexus updates our mission statement.

On June 10 this year, the WesleyNexus Board of Directors met with the primary purpose of revisiting the organizations mission, vision and purpose. While not a dramatic redirection from our prior statement, there was significant work done to clarify what we do and why we do it. Below you will find the outcome of that work. We hope that you will concur with these statements and continue to join us in our efforts. Please feel free to send comments or questions to WesleyNexus@aol.com .

Our Mission

We draw on the Wesleyan tradition to equip persons for the practices of faith, mission, and ministry in a world shaped by science.

Our Vision

We envision a network of persons within the Wesleyan tradition who share a common interest in: 1) the promotion of sound information on science and Christianity through an ongoing, constructive dialogue on issues and ideas in this broad conversation; and 2) understanding how issues at the interface of science and Christianity impact the practices of faith, mission, and ministry. Our conviction that science and faith are not in conflict, but are compatible ways of knowing, drives us to invite others who share this conviction to join our community of dialogue.

Our Work

We seek to equip pastors, lay people, churches, bishops, and other church leaders within the Wesleyan tradition for ministry in a world that is increasingly shaped by science. We focus on enabling and furthering open, informed dialogue, especially at the local level, and to do so in a manner consistent with the Wesleyan tradition. We do not promote governmental legislation aligned with political parties or purposes, or lobby for religious intervention into the affairs of government.

Our online community is a mechanism through which we can meet, get to know one another, share ideas, engage in conversation, pursue reconciliation and receive mutual support, so that clergy and laypersons within the Wesleyan tradition will have access to contemporary and relevant resources which will support science-and-religion discussions within local faith communities.

We provide educational resource materials and occasional gatherings that promote critical thinking in the broad fields of science and religion. Specifically, we:

- Host an annual program, coinciding with Evolution Weekend, that is geographically located within the Baltimore-Washington conference of the United Methodist Church and live-streamed worldwide.
- Partner with local congregations to host guest speakers and programs that invite the community for conversation
- Publish a monthly e-newsletter highlighting the most recent developments at the interface of science and Christianity

Our Story

WesleyNexus emerged from the dialogue among a core group of dedicated clergy, academics, and lay persons in greater Washington, D.C. WesleyNexus was created in 2009 as a nonprofit corporation dedicated to the dissemination of sound information about the dialogue between science and Christian faith within the Wesleyan tradition.

This group now seeks to support others who share the conviction that science, religion, and theology should not be mutually exclusive. Instead, each field should inform the other on a whole array of contemporary issues.

Our Website

A rich resource of articles, book reviews, videos, prayers, sermons, opinions, and announcements all related to science and the Christian faith. Includes a calendar of upcoming science-and-faith events taking place in greater Washington, D.C., and nationally.

Dr. Bertka is Co-Chair of the broader Social Impacts Committee and team leader at the Hall of Human Origins at the Smithsonian Institution. She, and her Colleague Dr. James Miller, both serve on the WesleyNexus Advisory Board. They have been traveling the country over the last twenty months as the Hall of Human Origins mobile exhibit has been presented in community libraries from coast to coast. As part of those exhibits, the Smithsonian, in partnership with the libraries, organized workshops for clergy, broad community discussions, and informative hands-on events for youngsters. Dr. Bertka spent 40 minutes or so with us at the breakfast reviewing the comments and questions that came from people visiting these exhibits, and those participating in the evaluation sessions in each location. What was so interesting was to see how closely the evaluations of people visiting the exhibits tracked almost perfectly the red state / blue state divide, indicating (among other things) that religious traditionalism is embedded with political conservatism, and does so across the spectrum of age. Nevertheless, Dr. Bertka reported that the discussions and the workshops (even in the smaller towns) had high levels of participation and seemed to be widely appreciated.

Beyond this informative part of her breakfast presentation, Dr. Bertka helped those of us in attendance think creatively as to how we can present a more positive outlook for science for those in our pews, especially with reference to human origins and evolution. The main point, of course, is for us all to continue the affirmation that believing Christians should NOT be forced to choose between the bible and evolution. It is a mistake to support or even infer that this is an either / or decision. Our task is one of moving people from “biblical literalism” to “biblical literacy.” It is only then that we can begin to develop such concepts of emerging life and the process toward complexity that parallels the best in contemporary scientific thinking. In particular, we must do a better job of educating our young people in our Sunday School programs, presenting the truth of the bible stories without insisting that the stories are true. This is one of the grounding principles of the Discovery & Faith program that WesleyNexus is developing under the leadership of our Board member Jennifer Secki-Shields. Please read her report elsewhere in this newsletter and visit the website discoveryandfaith.org.

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Why it Matters and What to do Next

Biologos

Biologos was formed in 2009 and has grown into a prominent institution in science and religion supplying a wide variety of resources and insights. Being true to their evangelical and creedal roots, many of the contributors have backgrounds from within traditional Protestantism. The current President is Deborah Haarsma, an astronomer who took over that responsibility in 2012 after 14 years of teaching at Calvin College. Biologist Jeff Schloss who taught at Westmont College joined as a Senior Scholar at the same time. Biologos moved to Grand Rapids, MI the next year, the same town as Calvin College. Within the Wesleyan tradition, there are many whose perspectives are similar to those of Biologos. And while some will also differ from many of the ideas presented, Biologos, given the thoughtfulness of their reflection and quality of their products are worthy of engagement. We hope you will find something worthwhile, as we have.

Biologos Beliefs and Mission

<http://biologos.org/about-us/our-mission/>

BioLogos invites the church and the world to see the harmony between science and biblical faith as we present an evolutionary understanding of God's creation.

What We Believe

1. We believe the Bible is the inspired and authoritative word of God. By the Holy Spirit it is the “living and active” means through which God speaks to the church today, bearing witness to God’s Son, Jesus, as the divine Logos, or Word of God.
2. We believe that God also reveals himself in and through the natural world he created, which displays his glory, eternal power, and divine nature. Properly interpreted, Scripture and nature are complementary and faithful witnesses to their common Author.
3. We believe that all people have sinned against God and are in need of salvation.
4. We believe in the historical incarnation of Jesus Christ as fully God and fully man. We believe in the historical death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, by which we are saved and reconciled to God.
5. We believe that God is directly involved in the lives of people today through acts of redemption, personal transformation, and answers to prayer.
6. We believe that God typically sustains the world using faithful, consistent processes that humans describe as "natural laws." Yet we also affirm that God works outside of natural law in supernatural events, including the miracles described in Scripture. In both natural and supernatural ways, God continues to be

directly involved in creation and in human history.

7. We believe that the methods of science are an important and reliable means to investigate and describe the world God has made. In this, we stand with a long tradition of Christians for whom Christian faith and science are mutually hospitable. Therefore, we reject ideologies such as Materialism and Scientism that claim science is the sole source of knowledge and truth, that science has debunked God and religion, or that the physical world constitutes the whole of reality.

8. We believe that God created the universe, the earth, and all life over billions of years. God continues to sustain the existence and functioning of the natural world, and the cosmos continues to declare the glory of God. Therefore, we reject ideologies such as Deism that claim the universe is self-sustaining, that God is no longer active in the natural world, or that God is not active in human history.

9. We believe that the diversity and interrelation of all life on earth are best explained by the God-ordained process of evolution with common descent. Thus, evolution is not in opposition to God, but a means by which God providentially achieves his purposes. Therefore, we reject ideologies that claim that evolution is a purposeless process or that evolution replaces God.

10. We believe that God created humans in biological continuity with all life on earth, but also as spiritual beings. God established a unique relationship with humanity by endowing us with his image and calling us to an elevated position within the created order.

11. We believe that conversations among Christians about controversial issues of science and faith can and must be conducted with humility, grace, honesty, and compassion as a visible sign of the Spirit's presence in Christ's body, the Church.

Core Commitments

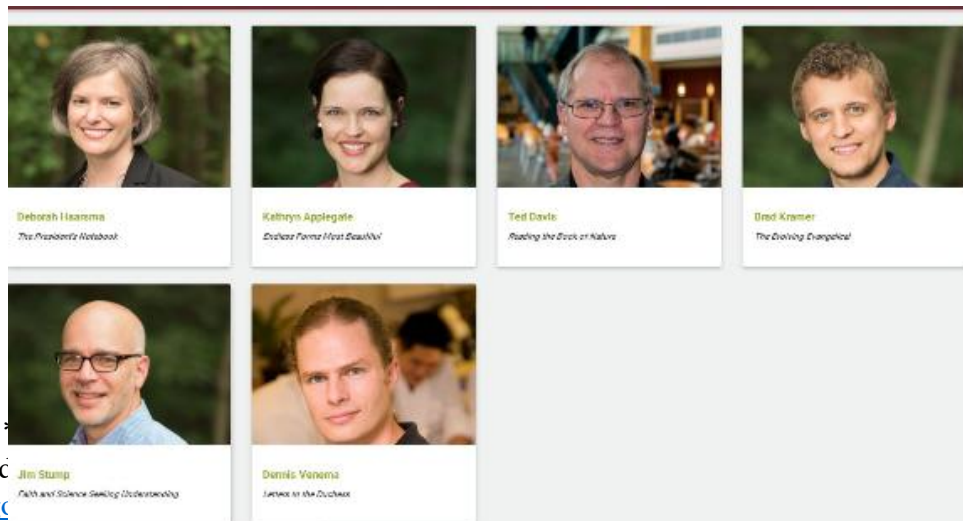
- We embrace the historical Christian faith, upholding the authority and inspiration of the Bible.
- We affirm evolutionary creation, recognizing God as Creator of all life over billions of years.
- We seek truth, ever learning as we study the natural world and the Bible.
- We strive for humility and gracious dialogue with those who hold other views.
- We aim for excellence in all areas, from science to education to business practices.

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Biologos Bloggers

<http://biologos.org/blogs>

Biologos has a team of bloggers with a wide range of specialties. As mentioned above, Deborah Haarsma, President of Biologos is an astronomer and former professor of physics and astronomy at Calvin College. Given her new role, her blog has expanded to reflecting on a broad range of topics from education, current events (such as the March for Science), and current social science research on religious attitudes. Kathryn Applegate, a former computational cell biologist at The Scripps Research Institute, blogs on biology and evolution, a particularly important topic given evangelical opposition to biological evolution. Ted Davis, a science historian at Messiah College, provides the long view of the science and religion relationship, while Brad Kramer brings in the perspective of reformed theology. Jim Stump, whose Ph.D in philosophy was earned at Boston University, an historically Methodist school, provides insights from that discipline. Rounding out the team is Dennis Venema, another biologist with a focus on genetics. All six of the bloggers invite guest writers on a regular basis making all of them worthy of regular visits. While one may not agree theologically with what is presented, Biologos none-the-less is a valuable resource for anyone who wants careful thought about the science and how one can interpret that science for faith.

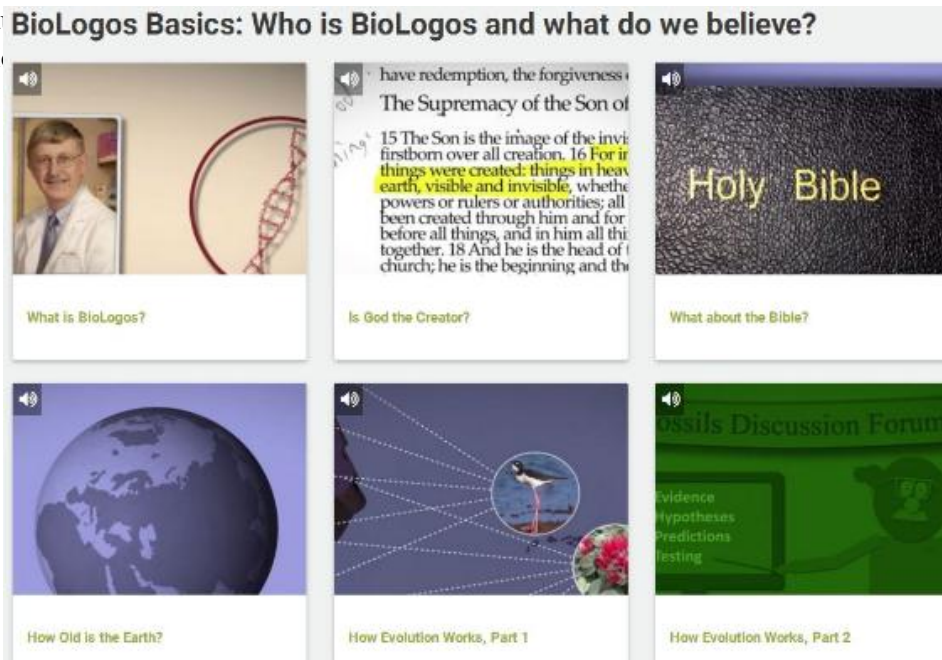


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Biologos Videos
<http://biologos.org>

Biologos provides a series of videos that give persons new to the science and religion dialogue resources to begin learning and also numerous clips that help one dig deeper into topics ranging from the intersection of science and Christianity, Biblical interpretation and scientific evidence for biological evolution. Since so much controversy within evangelical circles centers on evolution, the majority of the videos focus on this area. There is also a series of four videos targeting educational topics. For those responsible for

developing educational materials, there are also materials designed particularly for students.



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Religion and Science: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy recently posted an article providing a comprehensive, informative view of science and religion. Here is the table of contents:

- 1. What are science and religion, and how do they interrelate?
 - 1.1 A brief history of the field of science and religion

- 1.2 What is science, and what is religion?
- 1.3 Models of the interaction between science and religion
- 1.4 The scientific study of religion
- 1.5 Religious beliefs in academia
- 2. Science and religion in Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism
 - 2.1 Science and religion in Christianity
 - 2.2 Science and religion in Islam
 - 2.3 Science and religion in Hinduism
- 3. Contemporary connections between science and religion
 - 3.1 Divine action and creation
 - 3.2 Human origins
- 4. Future directions in science and religion
 - 4.1 Evolutionary ethics
- 4.2 Implications of cognitive science of religion for the rationality of religious beliefs
- Bibliography
- Works cited
- Other important works
- Academic Tools
- Other Internet Resources
- Related Entries

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/religion-science/#WhatScieWhatReli>

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WAY BEYOND THE NEW ATHEIST NONSENSE

by George Weigel

“So unless one wishes to assert that Mendel and Lemaitre were split personalities who said Mass in the morning and did science in the afternoon, thereby dividing their lives into hermetically-sealed containers, the cutting edges of modern science itself would seem to rebut the claim that “believer” and “scientist” are mutually incompatible human types.” So says George Weigel in a recent issue of First Things which can be found [here](#).



George Weigel is Distinguished Senior Fellow of Washington, D.C.’s Ethics and Public Policy Center, where he holds the William E. Simon Chair in Catholic Studies.

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