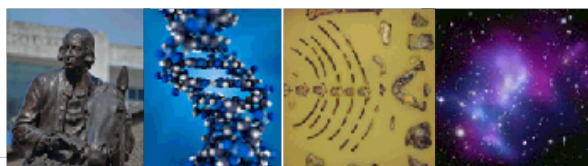


WesleyNexus

Science and Religion within the Wesleyan Tradition



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Dear WesleyNexus Colleague:

January 18, 2016

We all want to make sense of life.

Most of the time, we ask immediate questions to make sense of what's happening in our world: Why did she look at me that way? Why is it cold? Why can't my team win a championship? Why do I feel hungry? Why can't I relax? Why do I see so many advertisements?

Most of us ask big questions of life too. These questions and their answers are at the heart of the world's religions, the impetus for scientific endeavors and the domain of philosophy. Theology, science and philosophy explore both the minutiae and the big picture to make sense of reality. Big questions and our attempts to answer them are a big deal.

Those who believe in God – and I am a believer – typically think fully adequate answers to big questions include God. Science, philosophy, humanities, arts or other disciplines contribute to our quest to answer life's questions. Everyday experiences matter too. Comprehensive answers draw from all these domains.

So begins Thomas Jay Oord's new book **The Uncontrolling Love of God** (IVP Academic, 2015; ISBN: 9780-8303-40847). In times of rapid change, expanding scientific knowledge and enhanced technology, the traditional answers given to the big questions of life seem to be in need of significant reexamination. No area of understanding has been left unchanged. Medical science in particular has advanced to such an extent that modern societies are asking what it fundamentally means to be human. Every day, significant advances are made in medical science. Research laboratories around the world are discovering new ways to transform human lives. Simultaneously, technological advances are enhancing people at all stages of life. Technology provides access to previously unexplored areas of human physiology. Pharmaceuticals and genetic therapies promise to provide more control over natural processes. Last year's science fiction is today's reality. Just because we can do a thing doesn't necessarily mean we should. So, we need to develop an ethical framework within which to ground our principles, provide hope, and build upon our common humanity. Sources of insights cannot be limited to single disciplines disconnected from others but need to be done within a multi-disciplinary community willing to listen, learn and explore.

As we mentioned in last month's newsletter, on February 14, 2016, WesleyNexus will again sponsor an Evolution Weekend panel discussion. The topic for this year's program is "**Technology and Biomedical Ethics**". The discussion will be moderated by **Professor Sondra Wheeler**, bioethicist and Professor of Christian Ethics at **Wesley Theological Seminary** in Washington, DC. The panel, whose biographies are listed below, represents a diverse set of biological and technological specialties and religious perspectives. We hope you will add to your schedule time to come and share with us some food, conversation and reflection that is too often bypassed in our over-worked, over-scheduled society. If you cannot make it in person, we hope you connect with us on-line. We have again committed resources to enable those restricted by distance, bad weather or whatever else, to join us virtually. **NOTE: Each person in the**

network should regularly check our website during the next month for weekly news updates and details on this event as they become available, because we likely will not have another newsletter distributed prior to the event.

WesleyNexus is an all-volunteer organization and relies on our participants to continue our presence on the web and to develop in-person programs. This year in particular, we committed to Evolution Weekend program without having the cash on hand to cover the projected expenses. We are grateful to those who responded to our request to contribute and are happy to say that we now have the needed funds needed to pay for this program. **THANK YOU TO THOSE OF YOU WHO ALREADY SENT RECENT CONTRIBUTIONS.** We offer our special thanks to the Clergy Letter Project and to the Institute for Religion in an Age of Science (IRAS) who again serve as our partners for this endeavor. We want to stress that 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. While we have met our current needs, please consider contributing so we can continue our mission. **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 14, 2016: 3:00 pm Eastern time
Gathering and Registration @ 2:15 Eastern time
Technology and Biomedical Ethics
The Baltimore-Washington Conference Mission Center
11711 East Market Place, Fulton, MD 20759



WesleyNexus has been the host of an **Evolution Weekend event in Maryland** for the past three years. Evolution Weekend is sponsored nationwide by the Clergy Letter Project which promotes a wide spectrum of discussion affirming the compatibility the religion and science and efforts to increase the quality of the conversations between them. As mentioned above, WesleyNexus is pleased once again host the premier event in Maryland, at the Baltimore-Washington Conference United Methodist Mission Center in Fulton, Maryland. For the fourth year we will be live-streaming the event from our webpage. We invite of our WesleyNexus participants, friends and all in our network who are able to plan on attending. Please bring your friends and members of your congregations to this wonderful event. Our moderator this year will be **Professor Sondra Wheeler**, bioethicist and Professor of Christian Ethics at **Wesley Theological Seminary** in Washington, DC. Dr. Wheeler is well known to many pastors and lay people within the

Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, who have attended her courses on biblical ethics, virtue ethics and Christian moral theology. In particular, she is the author of **Stewards of Life: Bioethics and Pastoral Care** and has taught courses in bioethics. The panel that will be addressing the theme of Technology and Biomedical Ethics 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
- K. N. Siva Subramanian, 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

We have built a separate webpage that can be reached from our main webpage (www.wesnex.org) with links to our program flier, our registration form, and biographical summaries of our panel members. You may get to this page by going to:

<http://www.wesnex.org/EvolutionWeekend2016MainT.html>

The program is free and light refreshments will be provided. Parking is also free and plentiful. Those who attend the event in person will each have the opportunity to win several of our door prizes: books, DVDs, and this year our special tour will be hosted at the newly opened Multidisciplinary Research Center at Howard University, Washington DC, which include a rooftop launch pad for weather balloons. Others who cannot attend should begin planning now to host a small discussion group in their churches by downloading the webcast. We anticipate that each of these groups will have the opportunity to email their questions to the panel in real time.

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Biographical Summaries

Jaydee Hanson

Policy Director, International Center for Technology Assessment (ICTA)

Jaydee Hanson is the policy director for the International Center for Technology Assessment (ICTA). At ICTA, he is responsible for the assessment of new technologies like synthetic biology, new genetic engineering techniques and human genetic research. He also works for the Center for Food Safety on the food related aspects of the same technologies. He is one of three principal authors of the "Principles for the Oversight of Synthetic Biology" adopted by more than 120 civil society and religious groups. Jaydee worked for the General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church prior to coming to work for ICTA. At the GBCS, he was responsible for the board's work on environmental justice issues and genetic science issues. He also chaired the National Council of Churches committee on genetics and served on the World Council of Churches bioethics committee. He has attended every United Methodist General Conference since 1984. In 2008, his resolution calling on the United Methodist Church to repent of its past support of eugenics was adopted by the General Conference. He is a member of Mt. Olivet United Methodist Church in Arlington and chairs the Virginia Annual Conference Board of Church and Society.



Dr. Fatimah Jackson

**Professor of Biology and Director, W. Montague Cobb Research Laboratory,
Howard University**

Fatimah L. C. Jackson, Ph.D is currently Professor of Biology at Howard University and Director of the W. Montague Cobb Research Laboratory where she oversees research on the Cobb Collection and the New York African Burial Ground Collection. Prior to that, Dr. Jackson was a Professor at the University North Carolina - Chapel Hill in North Carolina, and Professor Emerita, University of Maryland, College Park. Dr. Jackson received her BA, MA, and PhD from Cornell. She is an expert on the biohistory of African peoples and their descendants in the transatlantic diaspora. She is widely recognized for her emphasis on interdisciplinary and integrative approaches to scientific research. In 2002, she co-founded the first human DNA bank in Africa (based at the University of Yaounde in Cameroon) with the aim of changing the way that anthropological genetic research is done on the African continent (moving away from the colonial approach), enhancing local infrastructure and expertise, and dramatically improving the potential for scientific understanding of the interactions of genotypes and environmental factors in producing specific phenotypes (by providing a local context for data analysis and interpretation). Dr. Jackson's research currently focuses on gene-environment interactions and the potential for changes in the epigenome.



**Robert Morell, Ph. D.
Director, Genomics and Computational Biology Core
NIHCD**

Robert J. Morell, PhD, is the Director of the Genomics and Computational Biology Core at the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, which is one of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Dr. Morell has co-authored numerous papers on the genetic causes of hereditary hearing loss, auditory processing deficits and language disorders. His current research is focused on genes that mediate susceptibility to noise-induced hearing loss. Dr. Morell frequently lectures on the ethical issues arising from studying genes that cause deafness, and has taught courses in genetics at Michigan State University and the University of Maryland. He and his family are members of Salem United Methodist Church in Brookeville, Maryland.



**K. N. Siva Subramanian, Ph.D., M.D.
Professor of Pediatrics and Chief of Neonatology
Georgetown University Medical Center**

Dr. Siva Subramanian is board certified in Pediatrics and Neonatal-Perinatal Medicine. He is currently Professor of Pediatrics & Obstetrics and Gynecology, and Chief of Neonatology in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Georgetown University Hospital. An award winning teacher, he teaches at Georgetown University Medical Center about Pediatrics, Neonatology, Bioethics, Religious Traditions in Health Care, and Complimentary & Alternative Medicine. He is the Founding Chairman of Sri Siva Vishnu Temple (1976), Founding Co-Chair of the Association of Hindu Jain Temples of Metropolitan Washington DC (1990), and Founding Member of the Council of Hindu Temples of USA (1984). He helped to unite the temples in Metropolitan Washington D.C. and guided the group to join the Interfaith Conference (IFC). In 2006 he received the IFC "Inter Faith Bridge Builder Award" given by the Vatican Ambassador and Dr. Deepak Chopra and is one of the first Board of Directors of Upakar, an organization that helps Indian-American students realize



their educational goals by providing annual scholarships.

Sandra Ely Wheeler, Ph. D.
Bioethicist and Martha Ashby Carr Professor of Christian Ethics
Wesley Theological Seminary



Sandra Wheeler is the Carr Professor of Christian Ethics, at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington D.C. She works in bioethics, the history of theological ethics, and the virtue tradition as well as in biblical ethics. Her publications include *Wealth as Peril and Obligation: The New Testament on Possessions* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995), *Stewards of Life: Bioethics and Pastoral Care* (Abingdon, 1996), *The Love We Were Made For* (Jossey Bass 2007) and a number of other articles and book chapters. Current projects include a pair of books in the arena of ethics and pastoral practice, forthcoming 2016, and an interdisciplinary work at the intersection of bioethics, law and public policy regarding parental power over children.

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Book of God's Words by John H Walton
February 6, 2016
Bridgeway Community Church in Columbia, MD



On Saturday, February 6, from 1:00-5:00 pm, at Bridgeway Community Church in Columbia, MD, Dr. John H. Walton will discuss the topic of understanding Scripture from the perspective of those for whom it was originally written. His conclusions about the "Book of God's Words," the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, are in remarkable harmony with scientific understandings of nature, the "Book of God's Works."

Dr. Walton is Professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College and author of **The Lost World of Adam and Eve** (InterVarsity Press, 2015), **The Lost World of Scripture** (InterVarsity Press, 2013), **Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology** (Eisenbrauns, 2011), and **The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate** (InterVarsity Press, 2009).

Schedule of Events:

- 1:00-2:30 John Walton: "Origins Today: The Lost World of Genesis 1"
- 2:30-2:45 Break
- 2:45-3:45 John Walton: "Origins Today: The Lost World of Adam and Eve"
- 3:45-4:00 Break
- 4:00-4:30 Jim Walton: Science and Faith in the Cultural Marketplace
- 4:30-5:00 Q&A

WHAT: Dr. John H. Walton, Professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College, on the topic of understanding Scripture from the perspective of those for whom it was originally written

WHEN: Saturday, February 6, 2016, from 1:00-5:00 pm

WHERE: Bridgeway Community Church, 9189 Red Branch Rd, Columbia, MD 21045

Free; no advance reservation or ticket required.

Christianity and Science in Historical Perspective

Three free lectures sponsored by Derry Presbyterian Church (Hershey, PA)
Dr. Edward B. Davis, Distinguished Professor of the History of Science
Messiah College



Sunday, January 31, 2016. Why History Matters. The myth of ongoing, inevitable conflict between science and Christianity remains prevalent, despite the fact that historical scholarship has thoroughly discredited it. In this lecture, Dr. Davis shows how and why this myth arose in the United States after the Civil War. He also explains the criticisms of modern historians, closing with a famous example: the false story of Columbus and the flat earth, which Washington Irving promoted as a form of anti-Catholic propaganda.

Sunday, February 7, 2016. The Galileo Affair: What Really Happened. In 1633, the Italian mathematician and astronomer Galileo Galilei was tried for suspicion of heresy by the Roman Inquisition. No event in the history of science is more famous than this. The Galileo affair is typically offered as the premier example of “warfare” between science and Christianity. Many people erroneously believe that Galileo was tortured, imprisoned, or even put to death for claiming that the Earth moves around the Sun. In this lecture, Dr. Davis reviews Galileo’s scientific discoveries, places them in the cultural, religious, and political context of Renaissance Italy, and shows that personalities and politics were the most important factors leading to this famous trial.

Sunday, February 14, 2016. Robert Boyle’s Religious Life, Attitudes, and Vocation. One of the most important features of the “Scientific Revolution” of the 17th Century was the creation of the modern scientific laboratory and the experimental method. The great English chemist Robert Boyle had a major role in this. Nature can be understood best, he argued, by studying the God-given properties of matter in the laboratory. In this lecture, Dr. Davis focuses on Boyle’s religious life and attitudes, explaining how and why he chose to make science his Christian vocation—and why he believed that empirical investigation was the right method for studying the world that God had made.

Each lecture begins at 9:15 am and lasts about 45 minutes, plus questions and answers. Directions to the church are at <http://derrypres.org/contact-us/directions>.

Recent Events:

On Friday, January 15, in the Hall of Human Origins in the Museum of Natural History in the Smithsonian Institution, the “Hot Topic” of the month was “Evolution and the Evangelical Community.” Guest speaker for the discussion was Michael Beidler, President of the DC Metro Section of the American Scientific Affiliation (a 75 year old network of Christians in the sciences). Beidler is a retired Naval Officer, a civilian policy agency director, and a contributor to **BioLogos**, founded by Dr. Francis Collins.

Beidler is also a local colleague and an occasional contributor to the newsletter distributed by WesleyNexus. This monthly program is one of those coordinated by Dr. Briana Probiner, a paleoanthropologist on the Smithsonian staff who has published numerous articles and last year hosted a special tour of the Hall of Human Origins for participants in the WesleyNexus network. The January 15 program was introduced and moderated by Dr. Connie Bertka, who serves on the WesleyNexus Advisory Board and is co-chair of the



Smithsonian's Broader Social Impacts Committee of the Human Origins Program. Beidler provided a brief biographical overview of his own personal story, conveying how he has grown in his evangelical convictions to now “fully accept” the whole evolution story, stretching from the “Big Bang” 13.8 billion years ago to the present when humans as we now identify ourselves bear the image of God and the responsibility for sustaining a habitable planet. Beidler presented a compelling case for maintaining a strong Christian faith while accepting the evolution story and its implications for human origins, and in response to many questions from the audience, he conveyed a consistent argument for affirming the compatibility of faith with the best of science as it unfolds new truths about the natural world. We look forward to Mike's participation in some of our future WesleyNexus dialogues. And we look forward to the February “Hot Topic” at the Smithsonian which will feature a talk by American University graduate student Becca Peixotto on her experience as a member of the expedition in 2013 to the Rising Star caves in South Africa where the remains of Homo naledi were discovered and excavated. See the poster attached [here](#).

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 <http://humanorigins.si.edu/exhibit/human-origins-traveling-exhibit>

