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Boston Theological Institute

Journal of Faith and Science Exchange

2012-08-21

Introduction

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What can scientific observations contribute to knowledge about God and divine action? The belief that observations of nature do inform theology is at least as old as the biblical record. Like biological evolution itself, the development of a theology of creation has been episodic, with extended periods of stability and “user satisfaction,” followed by periods of innovation and change. The 1998 Essay Contest in the field of science and religion, organized by the Boston Theological Institute for graduate students in seminaries and theological programs in the Northeast U.S., has strongly encouraged such innovation and change. Working out a theology of creation is the concern of most of the award-winning essays, presented here, one that is reflective of and responsive to the vocabulary and concepts of our time. Three additional essays, by speakers from the Lecture Series of the Center for Faith and Science Exchange, provide a broader context for presenting these “evolutionary experiments” in theology to study creation and thereby learn about its Author.

Rolf Bouma opens this volume of *The Journal of Faith and Science Exchange* with his essay entitled “Patterns of Speciation and Extinction and the Divine Valuing of Creation.” He challenges the often-heard anthropocentric claim that a uniquely human role in Creation is to assign value to living creatures. He makes a case for a system of valuation intrinsic within nature—pre- and, presumably, post-human—as evidenced in an ecological study of which species become extinct and which survive for continued evolution. He extrapolates from observed patterns to knowledge about the Creator’s work and love for the world.

In an essay on “Theology of Creation and Natural Science,” Wolfhart Pannenberg refers to his own experience of the importance of philosophy to help negotiate through the maze of misunderstandings the dialogues between science and theology. He makes the case for an effective triad: science and theology with philosophy, their common “cousin.” In a talk given at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, he explored how a return to the philosophical sense of “field”—which is actually the precursor of current scientific usage—might contribute to a fresh understanding of some of God’s attributes.

In “Cog and the Creativity of God,” Peter Heltzel probes human creativity in the field of artificial intelligence and in the fabrication of humanoid robots, and he draws conclusions about God’s own creativity. Troy Catterson, in his essay, “No Time for Time,” works within the formalism of quantum theories of origination to find new understanding of God’s creative work.

Karl Schmitz-Moormann, in his paper on “Theory of Evolution and Faith in Creation,” traces the history of the development of biological evolution as a concept, as well as the fits and starts of theology to make friends with it. The details covered in this historical overview are all too rarely included in seminary or university survey courses. Dan Kaplan looks at the fifteen-billion-year evolution of the universe as a whole and regards it as a long quest for God on the part of a cosmos that longs to know. His essay, “Fifteen Billion Years of Searching for God” shows his own delight and wonder to be a member of the search party, as well as some frustration that it progresses so very slowly.

Nicole Roskos finds some serious shortcomings in Paul’s understanding of resur-

rection, in her essay, "The Missing Face of Ecology in Pauline Theology." She argues for reclaiming the scientifically sound ecological relationship of earth and earthling, as found in Genesis. She points up the positive theological view of death found in the Creation stories, which is gone by the time of Paul's writings.

The reductionism of contemporary neuroscience and its clash with theology is the subject of Andrew Irvine's study. His essay, "Limit Conditions on an Encounter of Theology with Neuroscience," looks at a possible resolution in the dispute over beliefs and claims regarding personhood and soul.

In the only essay concerning the social sciences, Andrew Irvine presents the classic critiques of "old time religion" (biblical literalism) leveled by "old time psychology." Itself the object of postmodern critique, psychology has examined the cultural context of its own beginnings. Fundamentalism is now being reassessed as a sort of buffering

strategy used by some communities for cultural preservation.

At the close of his essay, Karl Schmitz-Moormann observes, "[t]he question of whether, in the long run, theology can survive while continuing to ignore the results of science, especially evolution, has yet to be answered." The scholars who have contributed their work to this volume are clearly engaged in the enterprise to help our religious traditions respond, adapt, evolve, survive—and thrive.

NOTE: The Boston Theological Institute and the Center for Faith and Science Exchange express their gratitude to the John Templeton Foundation for the grant that supported the 1998 Student Essay Contest in Science and Religion. This program has encouraged the innovative work of graduate students in an important field of research, development, and application.

The Reverend Barbara Smith-Moran, S.O.Sc., was trained as an astronomer at Harvard University before studying theology at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific (Berkeley, California) and Episcopal Divinity School (Cambridge, Massachusetts). She is a life-professed member of the Society of Ordained Scientists (an Anglican religious order of preachers and teachers) and serves as Co-chairperson of the Episcopal Church Working Group on Science, Technology, and Faith. She was a producer of the educational video, Living in Nature, the companion for the book, Consumption, Population, and Sustainability: Perspectives from Science and Religion (Island Press, 1999), which she edited with Audrey Chapman and Rodney Petersen. Her recent book, Soul at Work (St. Mary's Press, 1997), is a collection of retreat meditations that encourage a Christian spirituality of scientific and technological work.