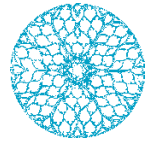


The SHORELINE



Walking together on the shoreline of an infinite sea of mystery...

Walking Together at the Shoreline

By Frank Villa, Editor

This new volume of the BTI Science and Religion newsletter is launched with a clear objective in view - to explore the common ground between science and religion and to realize the benefits of fruitful dialogue between the two fields. The new name - The Shoreline - reflects this collaboration. The metaphor of humankind dwelling on an island of knowledge in an infinite sea of mystery comes to us through Chet Raymo in his now defunct "Science Musings" column in the Boston Globe and he borrowed it from Joseph Priestley and others before him. In Raymo's usage, the island of knowledge is a product of science, but it is used in this newsletter in the broader sense of human understanding. The scientist and the theologian together walk hand in hand, sharing the awe and wonder of the universe, and look together out from the shoreline and toward the horizon to probe the secrets of the infinite sea.

From string theory to strange energy, our latest discoveries about the workings of the cosmos build our island of knowledge in ways that only make us appreciate more deeply the mysteries of the infinite sea. Indeed, the world of science has brought us an understanding of the fourteen-billion-year saga that has progressed through layer after layer of increasing complexity to create planet earth, the web of life, and humankind. This story, whether or not it is unique, is our story, and it is an amazing one. As people of faith, we can only look with reverence at the wonderful gifts we have been given: a beautiful earth perfectly suited to sustaining our existence, and inquiring minds to learn more about it all. And - as people of faith - we can appreciate these wonderful gifts and how important yet fragile they are. We can accept the guiding principle in our theology to live responsibly in harmony with the earth and preserve the integrity of its web of life

From a detailed study of the human genome to the wonderful promise of embryonic stem cells, we

build our island of knowledge in ways that raise questions about the very nature of what it means to be human. As people of science, we can only welcome the voice of enlightened theologians in helping to shape the answers to these questions. As we stand together on the shoreline of this infinite sea of mystery and listen to the small quiet voice that calls to us from somewhere beyond the horizon, we answer, not in dogma and certitude on either side, but in awe and wonder at the marvelous mysteries of creation and human existence.

This newsletter is dedicated to the exploration of the infinite sea, science and religion together in grace and graciousness, in a cooperative spirit of understanding.

Spring Courses in Science and Religion

ANDOVER NEWTON

Medical Ethics

The focus of this course is to examine the diversity of cultural and religious assumptions that are currently coming into play in the field of health care ethics regarding health and illness, life and death, and the status of the individual. Internet access required.

ETHI 760 Weagraff

GORDON-CONWELL

Frontiers of Science

A study of the Galileo controversy, the rise of modern geology and the age of the earth, Darwin's theory of evolution, the biblical Flood, quantum physics and "Big Bang" cosmology, genetic engineering, and the environmental movement.

TH 685 Davis F 1:15-4:1- 5pm Spring

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Frank Villa, Editor

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SCIENCE and RELIGION at the BTI

STUDENT CORNER

Opinions, ideas, and musings of students in the Science and Religion Certificate Program

Starry, Starry Nights

By Alan G. Yost, SJ

Any stargazer, no matter how amateur, awaits the coming of the annual Perseid meteor showers. Every year, for several days around mid-August, the earth passes through a trail of dust and small rocks left behind centuries ago by a passing comet. Some of these particles are caught by Earth's gravity and enter the atmosphere, where they eventually heat themselves up to "flash point." They burst into a bright streak of light as they burn away, the brightest ones leaving a trail of smoke that for a few seconds, records that something dazzling this way came. Usually the best time to view any meteor shower is in the middle of the night. The best place is far away from the "light pollution" of the city.

Meteor-watching and God-watching are not entirely different activities. There are several parallels:

For one thing, we can find huge numbers of books on the subject of astronomy that will explain the science of meteors and provide amazing photos. We can go to lectures or find TV programs on astronomy. But until we experience a meteor shower for ourselves, there remains a certain lack of fulfillment. We can find at least as many books on spirituality out there as we can astronomy books. We can go to church and listen to the preacher talk about God weekly or even daily. But until we have our own personal experience of God, we remain either unsatisfied and skeptical, or hungry and eager for the real thing. This is no accident. St. Augustine's famous line from *The Confessions*, "Our hearts are made for Thee, and are restless until they find

rest in Thee," explains where this hunger comes from. Books, lectures, and homilies are great for the head. But nothing beats the real thing.

As I mentioned above, to have the best shot at seeing an awesome meteor shower we have to get up in the middle of the night, usually against all our body's tendencies to the contrary. Similarly, we have to make time for God, sometimes in the midst of a hectic schedule, when we think we can't squeeze in one more activity. Our hunger for God drives us to go looking – in prayer, at Liturgy, in communion with others, in nature. Sometimes that drive means rousing ourselves from the comfort of a warm bed, literally or figuratively.

While we are out there in the middle of the night waiting, we know we have done all we can to improve our chances of seeing shooting stars. No force of will on our part is going to alter the course of a single fleck of interstellar dust. All that is left is to wait. God is the same way. Once we've done all we can to dispose ourselves toward God – quieting ourselves and listening – all that's left is to wait patiently. God's grace will reveal itself in God's own time.

And even when we don't see a single meteor, our time is not wasted. We are developing a deeper appreciation of the beauty of the night sky. The ordinary sky starts to look brighter and more beautiful, and the sounds and smells grow more acute. The promise of fireworks is not broken; it's just happening somewhere else, outside our experience. Similarly, even if our search for God doesn't result in tremendous insights and grand visions, the very search refines our awareness and appreciation of the presence of God in everyday life. We become aware, even in the mundane, that God's grace surrounds us

and is at work in unseen but very real ways. The Buddhists call this attitude *mindfulness*; St. Ignatius of Loyola calls it *finding God in all things*.

Finally, sometimes when we know nothing about the night sky and have done nothing to prepare ourselves, or the star charts say it's the wrong night, we look up just in time to be amazed by a glorious shooting star. Likewise, sometimes God will intrude into our lives even when we're not looking. God will do whatever God wants, whenever God wants. The Spirit, like interstellar dust, blows where it will, and the God of all creation does not feel obliged to wait for us, or to rely on our knowledge of learned techniques. God strikes up the fireworks and dazzles us just for the sheer joy of it.

Alan G. Yost, SJ, is a Jesuit of the Oregon Province, in his second year of studies toward the M.Div. at Weston Jesuit School of Theology. His interest in science and religion is focused largely on spirituality, and how science and nature can help to expand our relationship with the Creator.

Spring Courses

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HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL of EDUCATION

Developing Family-Based Intervention Strategies: Hope, Meaning, and Continuity

See Harvard Graduate School of Education website for complete course description

H-310P Beardlee

For other course listings, please consult school catalogues and BTI 2004-2005 catalogue online

interFASE News

International Faith and Science Exchange

interFASE Offers Courses to Local Religious Groups

Four new courses are available for presentation to adult education classes to bring the dialogue between science and religion to church groups. These discussion groups have proven successful in appealing to a broad range of church attendees, including many who are not in the mainstream of traditional church activities. Courses are available for a modest fee and are led by interFASE personnel in conjunction with local church leaders.

Science and Religion – A Course in Five Parts

This course will present established scientific principles and discuss how they interact with traditional faith issues to lead to deep personal insights, informed cultural dialogue, and a basis for evaluating new technologies. Topics include: Mystery and Awe in the Cosmos from Genesis to Einstein, The Common Creation Story, Evolution of Species, The Theology of Ecology, Medical/Human Issues in Science and Technology

The Greening of Theology: The Voice of Religion in the Ecological Crisis

A discussion on views of ecology from a faith perspective based on readings from modern theologians. Topics include: The Bible and Ecological Awareness: Rachel Carson and Lynn White, Jr., The Overriding Concern of 21st Century Theology: Gordon Kaufman and Sallie McFague, Reli-

gion and Ecology in the Public Square: Do people of faith have environmental responsibility?

Topics in Technology and Religion

Religious faith offers a long tradition of personal ethics and loving outreach that has changed society for the past 2000 years. Is it powerful enough to deal with the cultural questions posed by twenty-first century technology? We will explore the potential benefits in these new developments – and the risks to our place in creation and what it means to be human. The guidance of our faith traditions will be at the heart of our discussions. Topics include: Stem Cells, Human Cloning, and the Voice of Faith; Modern Warfare: High Tech Weaponry, Just War, Just Peace and Christian Duty, God in Creation: The Theology of Ecology
NOTE: Program can be modified to include any combination of the above topics

Medical and Ethical Issues at the End of Life

Technological developments in modern medicine are nearly miraculous in their ability to add quality years to human life. They also require us to make decisions at the end of life – for ourselves or our loved ones - that can stretch ethical and moral boundaries. Our religious traditions provide some guidelines that can be a valuable resource in a trying and difficult time. We will explore the nature of some of these decisions and the help in reaching them that faith can offer. Topics include Medical Ethics in the 21st Century: Competing Wishes at the End of Life. How Do We Decide?;

Speaking for Loved Ones Who Have Lost Their Voice; Speaking for Ourselves – Living Wills and Health-Care Proxies.

COURSE STRUCTURE: Each session is divided evenly between presentation of topic and discussion and interaction. Preparation will involve approximately 1 hour of reading. Courses can be tailored to meet local needs.

For more information, contact science@bostontheological.org. Course fees include all readings, InterFASE leader, and orientation of local leader.

Wellesley Church to Offer Course

In January, 2005, a six part program on Science and religion will be offered by Wellesley Village Church in collaboration with InterFASE. Topics will include cosmology, evolution, and discussions of modern technology-based ethical issues from the standpoint of established scientific principles and the Christian faith. Contact Catriona Grant at catriona@wellesleyvillagechurch.org for more information.

Website to Undergo Major Revisions

A project is currently underway to rebuild the InterFASE website to reflect more accurately its new direction. The new address will be www.interfase.cc and the unveiling is planned for early winter, 2005

Episcopal Diocese Sponsors Faith and Genetics Study Group

The Diocese of Massachusetts has sponsored a Faith and Genetics Working Group for several years, as part of its Social Ministries and Public Policy Ministry Area. The Working Group is constituted anew after each of its projects is completed. For 2004, the group is ecumenical in constituency and is convened by the Rev. Barbara Smith-Moran, S.O.Sc, assisted by Andover Newton Theological student Carole Belgrade.

Most of the ten group members have training in both science and religion. They represent 7 Christian denominations (Episcopal, Evangelical Lutheran, Mennonite, Presbyterian (USA), Roman Catholic, United Methodist, and UCC).

Churches across the country are struggling with decisions about the value and place of homosexuals in society and

in church life and structure. The Working Group members agree that these decisions are being made, for the most part, before the churches have dealt adequately with human sexuality in general. The churches tend not to be cognizant of recent developments in biology, psychol-

The churches tend not to be cognizant of recent developments in biology, psychology, and neuroscience, relying instead on theology and theological ethics based on earlier understandings of human nature and free will.

ogy, and neuroscience, relying instead on theology and theological ethics based on earlier understandings of human nature and free will.

The Working Group felt that it could make a contribution to all the churches if they reviewed and recommended the strongest findings of modern science that are relevant to the area of sexual behavior. The members work with the following purpose statement:

“The Faith and Genetics Working Group will study the natural science of sexuality in humankind and other species (the biology of attraction, relationship formation, and sexual behavior), and will make recommendations about which scientific studies are best taken into account as the churches formulate their positions and policies touching upon human sexuality.”

The Working Group has been convening monthly since August and plans to draw this study to a close in January. Their report will be forthcoming soon after that. The intent is to distribute the report as widely as possible, in the hope of being of service to the churches in their struggles around sexuality, including homosexuality.

When the report is completed, it will be posted at the website of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts, on the Faith and Genetics page: <www.diomass.org/content/main.cfm?scapid=177&cu_id=1064>.

The convener may be reached by email at smithmoran@earthlink.net

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