

# Quaerens

Newsletter of The John Templeton Oxford Seminars  
on Science and Christianity

## John Templeton Oxford Seminars on Science and Christianity

Volume No. 2, January 2000

### 15 July-12 August 2000 Seminars

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The following lecturers have agreed to speak at the 2000 Seminars:

- John Barrow, University of Cambridge, *Fine-tuning in Nature*
- John Hedley Brooke, University of Oxford, *18th & 19th Century Natural Theology*
- Philip Clayton, Sonoma State University, *Science and Hermeneutics*
- Ted Davis, Messiah College, *Natural Theology in the 17th Century*
- John Hick, University of Birmingham, *Evil in Nature and in Man*
- Larry Laudan, University of Mexico, *Scientific Explanation & Thinking*
- Alister McGrath, University of Oxford, *The Copernican Debate*
- Ernan McMullin, University of Notre Dame, *Philosophy of Science*
- Mary Midgley, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, *Science as Salvation?*
- Nancey Murphy, Fuller Theological Seminary, *Methods in Theology*
- Michael Ruse, University of Guelph, *Man as an Animal?*
- Bill Shea, Université Louis Pasteur de Strasbourg, *The Darwinian Debate*
- Fraser Watts, University of Cambridge, *Can the Mind Be Reduced to the Brain?*

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### Adventures in Oxford and Beyond

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Alun Jones, Oxford archaeologist and city historian guided a walking tour of Oxford. We walked round locations known to **Oxford** scientists of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. These included Edmund Halley's House, the Botanic Gardens, the High Street known to Thomas Harriot, Robert Boyle, and Robert Hooke, the Museum of the History of Science, as well as the central area of the University Church, the Bodleian Library and Radcliffe Square. Seminar photographs (by Trey Buchanan) are available on the project website at [www.cccu.org/templeton](http://www.cccu.org/templeton).

Alun also guided us through **Salisbury Cathedral** with its soaring spire, illustrating the strong link in the Middle Ages between technology and faith; the urgency that drove stonemasons to excel in engineering in stone, combined with an appreciation of the beauty of proportion in design.

We visited **Grantham** and saw the Grammar School, still in use, that Sir Isaac Newton attended. The town is a few miles away from **Woolsthorpe Manor**, his birthplace and home during the formulation of his most famous text *Principia Mathematica*. The famous apple tree is still there (so it is claimed).

A punting tutorial was organised on the river **Cherwell**. Punting on the Chewell is a time-honoured pastime for academics in Oxford and the skills involved are not inconsiderable.

Dr. Robert Harnish, Chaplain and Dean of Divinity at New College, Oxford, Dr. Charlotte Kroeker, Goshen College and Dr. Mary Ellen Sutton, Kansas State University organised a musical celebration for the Templeton Oxford Seminars at **New College Chapel**. Parts I, II, and III were in the Ante-Chapel. Part IV, the organ recital, was held in the Chapel by candlelight.

A group saw Michael Frayn's play **Copenhagen**, built around the German physicist Werner Heisenberg's visit to Neils Bohr in occupied Denmark in 1941. The nature and purpose of the visit has engaged scientists and historians ever since. The play raises issues of science and ethics under the particularly fraught circumstances of war. The action imaginatively recreated Heisenberg's visit to Bohr in 1941. Shortly afterwards, Bohr fled to Sweden and then the UK, eventually joining the Manhattan Atomic Bomb project in Los Alamos. Heisenberg played an influential role in the much more modest German wartime atomic bomb effort. The play piles

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### The First Seminar

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The first Templeton Oxford Seminar was designed to fulfil a series of basic objectives: to articulate more effectively the vision of the seminars; to build a sense of fellowship among participants; to establish high standards of scholarship for the programme; to help participants define their projects more clearly and to launch them into research; to stress the importance of a sense of history when tackling current issues; and, to put the participants into contact with senior scholars in this field and to provide them with the necessary background for their investigations.

The seminars sought to realize these objectives in various ways. The provision of a broad overview, scientific, philosophical and theological, which is both historical and deals with current issues, was felt to be a necessary prerequisite of any in-depth study of any aspect of this field. A series of lectures provided such an overview of key points of interaction between science and religion from the Middle Ages to the present. Major current issues were also included in the lecture series. Workshops accompanying the lectures sought, where appropriate, to bring out the relevance of past to present and gave participants the opportunity to raise issues of personal interest. Reading lists were provided in advance, participants were encouraged to prepare themselves through reading for the lectures and many volunteered to respond to lectures.

A series of seminars on methodology was felt to be particularly important in encouraging high standards of scholarship and in initiating reflection on the methods appropriate to each subject area in this field. The methodological seminars included

- Science from the perspective of religion: defining a relationship;
- Science and the future of theology: some critical issues;
- Science and religion: the usefulness of historical perspectives;
- Biblical hermeneutics and science: perspectives;
- The relevance of the Early modern experience to contemporary issues;
- Project research: planning for excellence and effectiveness;
- What posture should Christian scientists adopt towards the life sciences?

Specialised lectures by Alister McGrath on techniques of research and publication and by Charlotte Kroeker on grant proposals were particularly relevant to the participants' needs.

The seminars also stressed the importance of creating a scholarly and sympathetic dialogue between the varied disciplines which meet in this highly interdisciplinary field.

In-depth discussion in specialized fields was encouraged by setting up study groups of participants. These included a life sciences group convened by Wayne Norman, a physical sciences group convened by Alexei Nesteruk, an ethics group convened by Robert Harnish, a history group convened by Michael Keas, a theology and philosophy group convened by Samuel Powell and a methodology group convened by Jitse Van de Meer. These groups proved particularly successful, sometimes inviting lecturers to participate in discussions or to join the group for lunch. Sometimes the groups conducted joint meetings. The intention is for these groups to be an enduring feature of the seminars and to be active during the period between seminars.

Each participant gave a presentation on his/her project. The interaction between the presenter, participants, lecturers and mentors was particularly important because a wide variety of disciplines and perspectives was brought to bear on the proposed project. In many cases the presentation initiated fruitful discussions and facilitated a process of fine-tuning the project. Although some participants were already experienced researchers in their field others were embarking on a new research area and benefited particularly from their presentations, and from the methodological workshops and study groups. The lecturers were invited to remain at Wycliffe Hall for as long as they could and to act as mentors to the participants. Many did so and gave their time very generously by making themselves available for consultation with individual participants, or with small groups.

Afternoons were focused on research. All participants were admitted to the Bodleian library of Oxford University. They also had access to Wycliffe Hall library and some gained permission to read in departmental libraries. The series of public lectures at Harris Manchester College, Oxford, gave an opportunity for a larger public to enjoy the expertise of the lecturers. It was also an opportunity for participants to meet members of the large constituency in Oxford who are interested in Science and Religion.

A high proportion of the participants are scientists who are embarking on research in the field of science and religion. In order to carry out this research in a fully professional manner it quickly became evident that the same balance of a broad background knowledge combined with specialization in depth is required both for research in the religious aspects of the field and in its scientific aspects. Professionalism in one field and amateurism in another would not lead to truly cutting edge research and it would not win the respect of the Academy. It is, of course, quite common today for professionals to change career and to retrain in an entirely different discipline. However, it became clear during the first seminar that something quite different is required for an interdisciplinary field such as science and religion. If scientists entering the field wish to retain the respect of their scientific colleagues and contribute significantly to the debate on science and religion it would be inappropriate f

One of the successful aspects of the seminars was the fellowship that was generated. Meals in common at Wycliffe Hall, together with a morning break, gave participants many opportunities to get to know one another and to try out their ideas within a group which had a wide cross-section of scholarly backgrounds. The various excursions, which included Newton's birthplace, Stonehenge and London provided more relaxed opportunities to get together. Participants found other ways to meet informally including exploring Oxford's churches and visiting some of the famous stately homes and country hostelry's outside Oxford.

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### Oxford News

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John Hedley Brooke, formerly Professor of the History of Science, Lancaster University, has been elected to the newly-created **Andreas Idreos Professorship of Science and Religion** within the Faculty of Theology at Oxford. The position is an interdisciplinary chair devoted to research and teaching in questions raised for theology by the natural, human and social sciences. Idreos studied medicine at the University of Athens and spent the majority of his career working for the World Health Organization. He became increasingly aware that science and religion could both foster understanding between cultures and provide a basis for unity and the alleviation of suffering. In 1990 he founded the Idreos lectures in Science and Religion at Oxford, and, before his recent death, completed the endowment for the new chair. Harris Manchester College is much to be congratulated for its work in establishing this chair and for promoting the study of this field at Oxford.

Brooke has taught many courses ranging from the history of the physical and life sciences to the philosophy of religion at the universities of Cambridge, Sussex, and Lancaster. Until recently, he was President of the British Society for the History of Science and of the Historical Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. His research interests include the use of historical analysis to construct critical perspectives for the discussion of sciences as they bear on religious beliefs and beliefs as they bear on sciences. His most recent book is *Reconstructing Nature: The Engagement of Science and Religion* (T. & T. Clark, 1998). Since the inception of the Templeton Programme for improving the quality of teaching in courses on "science and religion," he has lectured at workshops in Berkeley, Manchester, and Toronto. He joined the Templeton Oxford Seminars Steering Committee in 1998. He gave several lectures at the 1999 seminars and led workshops at Wycliffe Hall. He is a Fellow of Harris Manchester College, Oxford.

Alister McGrath, Principal of Wycliffe Hall and codirector of the Templeton Oxford Seminars, has been appointed **Professor of Historical Theology** at Oxford. This is a recognition of distinction, and in particular of publication of more than twelve scholarly historical studies of Christian theology. Recently, fulfilling a long-term ambition, he has turned his attention to science and religion and has engaged in an ambitious research project which has led to three substantial publications: *Science and Religion: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998); *The Foundations of Dialogue in Science and Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998) and *Thomas F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999). He is currently working on a five-volume work with the running title *A Scientific Theology*, which aims to integrate theological methodology with the working assumptions and approaches of natural sciences.

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### **Science and Religion--A New Research Discipline**

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We are privileged to witness a period of rapidly growing international interest in the field of science and religion, for which the Templeton Foundation is universally acknowledged as deserving no small part of the credit. It is possible to sense a palpable excitement in this field as scholars participate in the foundation of a new research discipline. More, it is recognized that this field of enquiry is not simply of academic interest, important though that is. It is a study that goes to the heart of the predicament of a secularized age: an age which is encouraged to believe that we live in a bleak purposeless universe, one governed by blind chance, one without explanation for its beginning, without meaning and which may end as it began, crushing all memory of the great adventure of life; an age that offers no positive explanation for apparent design, the beginnings of life, consciousness, our sense of freedom, our experience of altruism, religious experience or for the presence in nature of beauty, pain, and evil.

One of the most encouraging aspects of recent developments is the growing number of first-rate scholars--scientists, historians, philosophers and theologians--who are taking a serious interest in this field, who are learning the cross-disciplinary knowledge and analytical skills required. The more frequently this occurs in a field now so open to new initiatives and approaches, the more likely it is that superior contributions will occur which transform the whole perspective. Happily, at present, the field of science and religion has not fallen apart into specialized subdisciplines which do not talk to each other. We think it is highly important that this never occurs and that all contributors to this field write in a manner that is accessible both to other scholars and to the educated lay public. Without accessibility the impact of this research will be diminished.

Although great methodological strides have been made in several areas of investigation, there is, perhaps, still some way to go before this discipline becomes fully coherent and rigorous. Sometimes the professionalism on each side of the interdisciplinary union involved is not equally apparent. Perhaps this is inevitable in a rapidly developing field that is almost daily creating new analytical tools and concepts and which is continuously opening up new subject areas for research. Those who are vigorously engaged at present in constructing a new natural theology, for example, are fully aware that arguments and evidence must be more sophisticated than those at present ranged against natural theology. None of this is easy to achieve quickly, and presentations can lack the weight and polish which another twenty years of debate and reflection will surely provide. Also, elements of an adversarial posture--towards science or towards religion--do not seem to be entirely absent. It is much to be hoped that the study of this new field, which requires sophisticated conceptual

thinking, will make significant contributions not just to science and religion but even to the self-understanding of science itself, which today does not always engage in such thinking.

Some scientists find this movement threatening. Would the methodological commitment of science to naturalism perish if persuasive arguments for design were newly formulated which were widely convincing? Do religious explanations silence scientific enquiry? Would religious believers use their influence to suppress unpalatable scientific explanations? History shows that a commitment to methodological naturalism has lived alongside religious belief for many centuries without noticeably damaging science--quite the reverse, perhaps, in many instances. Furthermore, recent history together with the spirit which is noticeable among workers in this field (as much those from a scientific background as those who work in the human-ities) strongly suggest that if efforts were made to suppress scientific theories they would often be the first to oppose such tendencies.

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### **CCCU News**

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The Council for Christian Colleges & Universities has named Dr. Ronald P. Mahurin as vice president for professional development and research.

Mahurin was most recently the director of corporate and foundation relations at Gordon College and associate professor of political studies in Wenham, Massachusetts.

In his new role, Mahurin will serve as the CCCU liaison to the Templeton Oxford Seminars. He is also consulting with The John Templeton Foundation's project on "Expanding Humanity's Vision of God" directed by Dr. Robert Herrman.

Mahurin is overseeing the expansion of several CCCU professional development opportunities for faculty and administrators. New programs will include disciplinary workshops, new faculty workshops and regional professional development workshops to be held across the U.S. in the summers of 2000, 2001, and 2002. For more information on these opportunities, visit the CCCU website at [www.cccu.org/projects](http://www.cccu.org/projects).

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### **An American Family Reflects on a Summer in Oxford**

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*Michael J. Boivin, Ph.D., MPH Professor of Psychology, Indiana Wesleyan University*

Two strong impressions remain of my participation in the Templeton Oxford Seminars this past summer. The first was the intense and deep scholarly interaction on faith and science issues that the participants and guest scholars shared. The second was the rich and varied experience that my family had together in Oxford. The memories from this time have been added to our family treasure, to be savored as we reflect back, with a growing appreciation of the true value of our experience.

What is curious is that although we had many experiences in common during our time in Oxford and our travels around England, each family member vividly remembers quite different aspects of these shared images, sights, sounds, and feelings.

For ten-year old Matthew, the castles of England stood tall and strong before him, bringing to life the turbulence and struggle of the land through the ages in a manner that he never before understood. The actors who portrayed the knights, lords, and nobles at Warwick; the bellowing Beefeaters at the Tower of London, and the apparitions and images that prowled in the shadows of the stone walls and parapets at Dunster Castle remain vivid memories. Matthew can now imagine the streets of Oxford during the time of the plague, his father off fighting the Scottish wars, and his mother called to attend as handmaiden to Queen Elizabeth.

For twelve-year old Marjorie, the rivers of Oxford meander gently through her memories, and even, it seems, into her soul. Punting on the Cherwell river; strolling along the Thames as we watched the fish lingering in the shallows; pausing beside it to watch the mist rise off of the cool evening; lingering on the pedestrian bridge over the Cherwell in University Park to admire the geese and swans; flying beside the Thames on the rapid train to London, or walking along the valley stream in Exmoor. We saw an England wild, yet gentle and free. This is Oxford for Marjorie, and this is England: tranquil and gentle, reflective and somber, with a touch of grace and serenity at every turn and bend in the river through the oak, thistle, heather and green evoking a time immemorial.

For eighteen-year old Monique and her friend Misty, the prism through which they saw Oxford were the human

endeavors now and through the ages that have been the glory and the shame of Oxford. Standing in St. Mary's College where Protestant martyrs were tried and burned and where John Wesley first preached salvation by faith in Christ. Worshipping on Sunday in St. Aldates and in St. Ebbe's, where the gospel of Christ has been preached for a thousand years; joining in fellowship with young adults at St. Aldates. Sitting in the chapel of New College, or in the serene cloisters of Queens College, admiring the rows of life-size statues of the saints of the church and wondering what it would be like to have statues fashioned for one: what would it be like to be remembered in history as a world-changing saint?

Men have sought to honor God in Oxford in the midst of scholarship, sacrifice, turmoil, heroism, vanity, and charity, for perhaps 1000 years, and through it all somehow Oxford has survived and grown strong. A beacon of scholarship to be sure, but still a place where there are those who seek God in earnest and combine this with a celebration of the life and endeavors of the mind as one of the many wonders of His creation. And this we also tried to do in our Seminar gatherings at Wycliffe Hall, which Monique and Misty had occasion to attend. Monique and Misty have a renewed commitment to pursue education in earnest and the life of the mind as a sacred trust and stewardship.

For my wife Grace, Oxford was a window into the mysteries of an ancient and modern land so rich in culture and history. I can still see her excitedly pointing out the inscriptions on the cell wall of Beecham Tower in the Tower of London left by her forebear Sir Thomas Abell, hanged by Henry VIII for opposing the divorce from Katherine of Aragon and then the marriage to Anne Boleyn. I see Grace reading at Salisbury Cathedral, the translation of the Magna Carta, signed by her forebear 26 generations removed, King John of England. A history familiar to her from family archives but now come more alive for her as she beheld the artifacts and evidence. A history of glory and shame; a history of wars and movements; of colleges and monastery ruins and of Cromwell and roundheads and royalists. Grace marvelled also at a broader panorama: from the antiquity and mystery of Stonehenge to the wonderful intellectual play *Copenhagen* in the West London theater district; from the heather strewn bluffs overlooking the sea off the coast of Cornwall to the large stone lions and flocks of pigeons our children encountered in Picadilly Square.

But perhaps the most salient period of reflection for her was during her walk with our children through the woodlands beside the Kilns, former estate of C. S. Lewis. She imagined Lewis and J.R. Tolkien strolling through these woods, discussing stories and ideas, and could imagine the tree dryads of the forest in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, or the woodland elves in *The Lord of the Rings*. Most evenings, Grace would read *The Hobbit* to Matthew and Marjorie, and she appreciated more fully the role that Oxford had played in giving birth to such a rich and vibrant literature - a literature which we have used to try to shape the imagination of each of our children over the years. From the Fellows Garden in Magdalen College to the quaint stone Meadows Cottage we all came to appreciate more deeply through Grace this debt of gratitude we owe to the writers of Oxford.

And finally I wish to express a final debt of gratitude to the Templeton Oxford program for making the treasure-trove of memories possible for an American family in Oxford.

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### Neuroscience and Religion

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*Highlights of a lecture given at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford 10 August, 1999 by Dr. Fraser Watts, Starbridge Lecturer in Theology and Natural Science and director of the Christianity and Psychology Project in the Centre for Advanced Religious and Theological Studies in the Faculty of Divinity at the University of Cambridge. Dr. Watts is a former research psychologist.*

Dr. Watts drew attention to the enormous scientific and general interest that exists at present in the relationship between brain and consciousness: can human consciousness be scientifically explained in terms of brain processes? This issue has been described as the last great mystery in science. There is a corresponding philosophical interest in discovering how far consciousness can be explained in terms of the brain. There is also a growing religious and theological interest in these questions: they raise fundamental issues about the soul, a concept and a tradition which has been of enormous importance in Christian thought for 2000 years. Watts predicted that the neurosciences would prompt a considerable re-examination of the Christian dualist inheritance, although a careful reading of scripture shows that this is less dualist and more monist than is sometimes supposed. He also foresaw that neurological theories of religious experience would provoke much debate. Some will say that as soon as we have some idea of what the brain is doing during religious experience this shows that the experience has nothing to do with God. Although such a conclusion does not necessarily follow, logically, the debate is likely to be intense.

Another good reason for interest in the nature of consciousness is that it is one of the relatively distinctive things about human beings. The term 'relatively' is appropriate here because of the present debate over the magnitude of the differences between humans and other species. This has been caught up in the controversy between religious believers and non-believers, each side being pulled one way or the other from a sensible neutral appraisal of the facts. The Christian tradition on the whole wants to exaggerate the difference between humans and other higher species while the atheist tradition has wanted to minimize these differences. Watts fails to see what vested interest either tradition has in this question and looks forward to a more neutral appraisal. He feels that there are elements of everything you find in human beings in other higher species, whether it is consciousness, morality, language or whatever. On the other hand these are so much more highly developed in humans that we are justified in saying that there is a radical qualitative difference between human beings and other species. Consciousness, in particular, has reached a much higher level in human beings, especially a reflective kind of consciousness: being aware that we know. Consciousness is one of the key

aspects of relative human distinctiveness.

This field of enquiry is also very important for the religious life. When we come to examine the interface between the neurosciences, the cognitive sciences and the Christian tradition, we are not just looking at the plausibility of theological claims in the way that we are in relation to physics and cosmology. The human mind is a central part of religious life and practice. There are bedrock assumptions in the Christian tradition about how people through prayer, meditation and worship can become attuned to God and moved towards some kind of union with him and reception of his word and will. There are, therefore, fundamental issues about religious life and practice that are raised by the cognitive sciences that go beyond anything raised by the physical sciences.

Watts went on to explore several themes in greater detail. How far is it going to be possible to explain human consciousness in terms of the brain or is there something in principle inexplicable about it? He noted that people tend to pull sharply to one side or the other in this issue. Francis Crick, for example, in his book *The Scientific Search for the Soul* (London: Touchstone, 1995) asserts with some assurance that we are nothing more than a bundle of neurons and that it will without doubt be possible to explain consciousness and soul (which he seems to equate) neurologically. Others react against this and want to assert the irreducibility of human mind to consciousness. There is a need to steer a path here between extremes. Surely it is good sense to say that whenever anything is going on in the human mind or consciousness the brain must be involved somewhere. We surely do not have experiences in which the brain is somehow mysteriously silent and not involved. The brain is doing something relevant in every kind of experience. Those kinds of dualism that deny this, and that assert that we have religious experiences during which the brain is not doing anything, seem unacceptable.

Watts felt it equally important to set strong forms of reductionism on one side. This commonly begins with efforts to explain consciousness neurologically and then attempts a further reduction - that of concepts. There is a question of how far we are going to be able to explain higher level processes like consciousness in terms of lower-level processes like brain function. Science is going to be able to explain them to some extent. The reductionist assumption maintains that we are going to be able to explain them completely, without remainder: there will be nothing left to explain from any other perspective. This is a surprising claim. What do we have a complete explanation for? Especially not for human beings who are so complex and multi-faceted. How can we ever know that there are no factors, not even among those we have not thought of, that may have a role in what we are trying to explain? What would a complete explanation look like? Watts felt that this was a rather odd and not very helpful debate.

Strong reductionists sometimes make another move. If mental processes can be explained completely in terms of brain processes, perhaps the mapping of one on the other may be so complete that we do not need to talk about mental processes at all. The latter is some kind of shorthand. Perhaps we can eliminate talking about mental processes altogether. As a matter of scientific fact, we are nowhere near this kind of mapping, the exact mapping of mind on brain. It is doubtful if it will ever be possible, either empirically or from any other point of view. Also, the kinds of thing we want to say about mind do have a distinctive point of view, a distinctive approach, and distinctive approaches are worth retaining in our language, even if there is an inseparability of the things we are referring to from these different perspectives. Eliminating mind talk seems, therefore, to be a strange fantasy about the future.

A third step sometimes taken in reductionism is to say that mental processes are not real. Does this mean that the things people think they are imagining they are not, in fact, imagining? It is hard to know what is meant by this. The latter view rightly worries people in the Christian tradition since it seems to imply that our conscious awareness of the presence of God, for example, is not real.

It is necessary to steer a middle course between strong reductionism and a view of mental processes as somehow floating free of the brain. Some philosophers have defined this middle course as supervenience, or non-reductive physicalism, but the jury is still out on the coherence and effectiveness of these ideas to fulfil the task claimed for them.

Watts then offered an interpretation of the relationship between the natural sciences and theology as one of complementary perspectives. He illustrated this by describing some of the mind and brain changes which occur when a subject goes to sleep. There is just one process and one person going to sleep but we have different and complementary perspectives of that process. He accepted that the analogy breaks down at certain points: for example, God does not emerge from the natural world in the way in which mind emerges from brain. Also, theology takes a panoramic perspective, while science tends to take a fine-grained, close-up, view of its subject of study and can lose sight of the big picture. He applied this perspective to our concept of body and soul. Perhaps the theological concept of soul needs to be better informed by research in the philosophy of mind over the past fifty years. The latter has moved away from thinking of the mind as a 'thing'. Of course, we have mental processes and powers but it is now recognized that 'mind' is more correctly classified as a verb or adjective than as a noun. This has a direct bearing on our concept of soul. Perhaps it is not helpful to think of the soul as a 'thing' but to think of soul as attributes or qualities. A lot of adjustment is required here. To say that handicapped people have a 'soul' in the sense of a thing is morally helpful and a defense of dignity. Careful thought is required here. Again, what are we going to say of immortality? Is it inevitably wedded to dualism, to considering the soul and body as distinct things? Watts argues that it is not necessary to think in this way: rather than grounding immortality in a human nature conceived dualistically we can ground it in the eternity of God.

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### History Matters

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*A reflective piece by Donald A. Yerxa, Professor of History at Eastern Nazarene College, Massachusetts*

That history matters was a central theme of the first summer of the Templeton Oxford Seminars. An impressive array of distinguished scholars, including John Hedley Brooke, Ernan McMullin, David Lindberg, William Grant, William Shea, Scott Mandelbrote, Owen Gingerich, and Ronald Numbers, made presentations and conducted discussions that reinforced the need to understand the subtlety of the historical interaction between science and religion in order to provide perspective on the current dialogue. Brooke, for example, suggested that historical analysis is important in constructing critical perspectives for the discussion of sciences as they bear on religious beliefs and beliefs as they bear on sciences. Awareness of the historical context and the nature of change over time helps protect one from the appeal of simplistic approaches--such as automatically basing exegesis on the specifics of the latest science. Lindberg and Grant also reminded participants of the enormous contingency of events.

While the particularities of local circumstances matter greatly, so do methodological assumptions that contemporary scholars bring to historical analysis. For example, must our forays into the past be highly sensitive to historical context? If so, the scholar is obliged to make a concerted effort to understand various key texts, people, and events in the light of their historical setting--something requiring meticulous research and broad reading. Or is a more narrowly textualist approach warranted--one in which the researcher scours the literature of the past for antecedents to present issues, lifts them from their contexts, and then structures them in various "genealogies" to speak to essentially present-day concerns? And, of course, are these two approaches--contextualist and textualist--mutually exclusive? Another methodological concern raised last summer was whether the study of science and religion from a historical perspective should be "heroic," whereby the focus is on the great figures and the really towering contributions, or should it be understood also in terms of how this interaction is filtered down to general culture by various means of popularization? The Templeton Oxford Seminars will focus more fully on theological and current issues in the next two summers. But the issues raised last summer promise to inform much of our future discussions because historical analysis, in the broadest sense of that term, remains the key mode of understanding the human experience over time.

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### Lectures and Publications Generated by Participants

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Karl Giberson and Donald Yerxa, both of Eastern Nazarene College, have signed a contract with Rowman & Littlefield Publishers to write a book in their "American Intellectual Culture Series." Their book, ***Species of Origins: Religion, Popular Science, and the Search for a Creation Story in Contemporary America***, will survey the contemporary origins debate in America. Giberson and Yerxa have also collaborated on two articles: **'Providence and the Christian Scholar'** which appears in the current issue of the *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* and **'Darwin Comes to America'** in the November/December issue of *Books and Culture*. Their interview of A. N. Wilson appeared in the September/October issue of *Books and Culture* and will also appear in edited form in *Science and Spirit*. Their interview of Edward Larson, whose book on the Scopes trial won the Pulitzer Prize in History for 1998, will appear in *Science and Spirit*. Giberson has also written several pieces for *Books and Culture*, including an extended essay on Heisenberg. Yerxa has two essays in historiography accepted for publication in *Fides et Historia* and is working on a review essay for *Books and Culture* on the current state of military history as well as several entries for *The Historical Dictionary of the Darwin Controversy* (Praeger).

Randy Maddox presented a lecture "**Evangelicals and Science: A Wesleyan Response**," at Seattle Pacific University on 21 October 1999. This was his annual lecture as holder of the Paul T. Walls Chair of Wesleyan Theology. The audience included students, faculty, area pastors and interested laity. Maddox reflected on the major historical tensions that have shaped the self-understanding of evangelicalism (the Reformation, the Scholasticism/Pietism debate, the Fundamentalist/Modernist debate, and the Neo-Evangelical Movement) and noted how each juncture evidenced distinctive concerns about and types of engagement with science. He then noted how the current diversity among evangelicals about how to engage or accommodate contemporary science reflects this historical diversity (more so than changes in science itself!). Finally, he offered some suggestions about how characteristically Wesleyan concerns might help in sorting through the present diversity.

Stephen Pope and Randy Maddox will make presentations at a conference co-sponsored by Counterbalance and the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, held at Seattle Pacific University on 29 January 2000, titled "Ethics, Values and Personhood in the 21st Century." The conference particularly examines new developments in genetics, evolutionary ethics, and neuroscience, asking what the implications of these are for understanding human nature, ethics and values. Pope's address will be titled "**The Biological Roots of Morality: A Christian Perspective**." Maddox's address will be "**Reclaiming the Body: Religious**

**Implications of Recent Science."** Professor Nancey Murphy, Fuller Theological Seminary and a member of the Templeton Oxford Seminar Steering Committee will also make a presentation.

On 20/21 November 1999 Alan Padgett and Sam Powell read papers at the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature's joint annual meeting in Boston. Padgett read two papers, one on "**God and Time**" for the Evangelical Philosophy Society, and also a paper critical of process theology for the Wesleyan Studies Group. Powell's paper was read to the session dealing with *Issues in the Thought of Paul Tillich*. He examined the influence of Friedrich Schelling on Paul Tillich, especially focussing on his view of God's relation to the world. This paper arises directly out of Powell's Templeton Oxford Seminars research and he intends to incorporate it in a book on the theme of **God's Relation to the World**.

Padgett has completed a book jointly with Steve Wilkens, titled **Christianity and Western Thought**, volume 2, which deals with the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is part of a projected three volume set, and will be published early 2000 by InterVarsity Press.

On 3 November, 1999 Mike Keas served on a panel in Chicago as the "historian of science" among practitioners of the "rhetoric of science" - a new field with only one graduate program and a national organization in its third year of annual meetings (American Association for the Rhetoric of Science and Technology). AARST is part of the National Communication Association ([www.natcom.org](http://www.natcom.org)). This year's AARST conference carried the theme of: *What Lines?: Interdisciplinarity and the Rhetoric of Science and Technology*. Through a series of papers and a final panel discussion, conference participants explored the interdisciplinary nature of the rhetoric of science and technology. While the rhetoric of science and technology has a recognized field of core problems and issues with which it has been grappling, many of these issues overlap with concerns in other disciplines such as media studies, communication theory, argumentation theory, sociology of science, history of science and philosophy of science. The purpose of the panel discussion was to give people who work interdisciplinarily a chance to outline and discuss key issues that they have found while doing so. Keas presented his Templeton Oxford Seminars project in which he is investigating the history and rhetoric of the Cambrian explosion from Darwin to Gould, with special attention on the rhetoric of "reason" and "belief" (Christian and otherwise).

Jitse Van de Meer recently had a paper accepted for publication in the journal *Biology and Philosophy*. The title and abstract of the paper is as follows: "**The Engagement of Religion and Biology: A Case Study in the Mediating Role of Metaphor in the Sociobiology of Lumsden & Wilson.**"

*I claim that explanations of human behaviour by Edward O. Wilson and Charles Lumsden are constituted by a religiously functioning metaphysics: emergent materialism. The constitutive effects are identified using six criteria, begin with a metaphorical re-description of dissimilarities between levels of organization in terms of the lower level, and consist of conceptual and explanatory reductions (CER). Wilson and Lumsden practice CER, even though CER is not required by emergent materialism. They preconceive this practice by a re-description which conflates the levels of organization and explain failure of CER in terms of technical, not ontological or epistemological reasons. I interpret these three practices as a reaction of Wilson against his early Christian religious beliefs. Statements by Wilson indicate this reaction ultimately constitutes his explanations of social, moral and religious behaviour. Tested knowledge about matter at the lower level functions as a metaphysical belief when applied to the higher level because there it is untested. I offer twelve criteria for the diagnosis of religious functions of this metaphysical materialism, five of which are satisfied. I show that the constitutive effects of this materialism in sociobiology are due to its religious functions, are beneficial for*

*science and do not destroy its public nature.*

Van der Meer has also contributed two book reviews in this field:

- Book review in *Nuncius: Annali di Storia della Scienza* of *The New Physics and a New Theology* by M. Heller Tr. G.V. Coyne, S.J., S. Giovanninni and T.M. Sierotowicz, (Vatican Observatory Publications, 1996); and
- **'Progress in Nature and Culture: How Biology Can Have the Best of Both Worlds'** Invited essay review in *Biology and Philosophy*, forthcoming (2000) of Ruse, Michael. *Monad to Man: The Concept of Progress in Evolutionary Biology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996).

Van der Meer presented the opening lecture for the newly organized University of Guelph Christian Forum on 29 September, 1999. The title was: **'Dobzhansky's Spectacles: Reading the Book of Nature in the Context of Religious Belief.'**

Van der Meer and Ken Howell are initiating an e-mail discussion group on biblical hermeneutics and the natural sciences. This is by invitation only, but anyone with expertise in biblical hermeneutics in relation to questions raised by the natural sciences could be invited. Contact: Ken Howell at [khowell@newmancenter.com](mailto:khowell@newmancenter.com).

On 23 November, 1999 Wayne Norman was the commentator at the Toronto School of Theology for a guest lecture given by Willem B. Drees. Drees is Nicolette Bruining Professor of Philosophy of Nature and of Technology from a Liberal-Protestant Perspective at the University of Twente (the Netherlands) and Bezingingcentrum, Vrije Universities (Amsterdam, the Netherlands). Drees' lecture was **'From Nothing to Now: Faith in the Natural History of the Universe.'**

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Newsletter of The John Templeton Oxford Seminars  
on Science and Christianity

## John Templeton Oxford Seminars on Science and Christianity

Volume No. 2, January 2000

### Oxford News

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John Hedley Brooke, formerly Professor of the History of Science, Lancaster University, has been elected to the newly-created **Andreas Idreos Professorship of Science and Religion** within the Faculty of Theology at Oxford. The position is an interdisciplinary chair devoted to research and teaching in questions raised for theology by the natural, human and social sciences. Idreos studied medicine at the University of Athens and spent the majority of his career working for the World Health Organization. He became increasingly aware that science and religion could both foster understanding between cultures and provide a basis for unity and the alleviation of suffering. In 1990 he founded the Idreos lectures in Science and Religion at Oxford, and, before his recent death, completed the endowment for the new chair. Harris Manchester College is much to be congratulated for its work in establishing this chair and for promoting the study of this field at Oxford.

Brooke has taught many courses ranging from the history of the physical and life sciences to the philosophy of religion at the universities of Cambridge, Sussex, and Lancaster. Until recently, he was President of the British Society for the History of Science and of the Historical Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. His research interests include the use of historical analysis to construct critical perspectives for the discussion of sciences as they bear on religious beliefs and beliefs as they bear on sciences. His most recent book is *Reconstructing Nature: The Engagement of Science and Religion* (T. & T. Clark, 1998). Since the inception of the Templeton Programme for improving the quality of teaching in courses on "science and religion," he has lectured at workshops in Berkeley, Manchester, and Toronto. He joined the Templeton Oxford Seminars Steering Committee in 1998. He gave several lectures at the 1999 seminars and led workshops at Wycliffe Hall. He is a Fellow of Harris Manchester College, Oxford.

Alister McGrath, Principal of Wycliffe Hall and codirector of the Templeton Oxford Seminars, has been appointed **Professor of Historical Theology** at Oxford. This is a recognition of distinction, and in particular of publication of more than twelve scholarly historical studies of Christian theology. Recently, fulfilling a long-term ambition, he has turned his attention to science and religion and has engaged in an ambitious research project which has led to three substantial publications: *Science and Religion: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998); *The Foundations of Dialogue in Science and Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998) and *Thomas F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999). He is currently working on a five-volume work with the running title *A Scientific Theology*, which aims to integrate theological methodology with the working assumptions and approaches of natural sciences.