

Michael Welker

The Science and
Religion Dialogue

Past and Future

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Contents

Introduction	9
I. Celebrating the Past – Shaping the Future	
<i>Thomas Pfeiffer</i> The Science and Religion Dialogue: Past and Future	13
<i>Michael Welker</i> The Science and Religion Dialogue: Past and Future	15
<i>John M. Templeton, Jr</i> Opening Address	19
<i>Stephen Post</i> Commemorating Sir John Templeton (1912–2012)	23
<i>Michael Murray</i> Science and Religion Dialogue	33
II. On the Engagement of Science and Religion	
<i>Hans Joas</i> The Natural History of Religion	41
<i>Martin A. Nowak</i> God and Evolution	47
<i>John Polkinghorne</i> The Search for Truth	53
III. The Science and Theology Dialogue I: Multi-Year Research Projects	
<i>John Polkinghorne</i> A Contribution to the Eschatology Session	63
<i>Michael Welker</i> Eschatology, Anthropology, and Concepts of Law	67

<i>Denis R. Alexander</i> The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion – the First Seven Years	73
<i>Friederike Nüssel, Robin Lovin</i> Theological Inquiry and the Science and Religion Dialogue	87
<i>Ted Peters</i> Science and Redemption: The Future of Creation	93
<i>Robert John Russell</i> Scientific Cosmology and the Theologies of Creation and Redemption	107
IV. The Science and Theology Dialogue II: Multicontextual Dimensions	
<i>Cyril Hovorun</i> The Dialogue between Science and Religion in Russia	123
<i>Niels Henrik Gregersen</i> The Role of Thought Experiments in Science and Religion	129
<i>J. Wentzel van Huyssteen</i> A Postfoundationalist Approach to Theology and Science	141
<i>Willem B. Drees</i> Insiders and Outsiders in ‘Religion and Science’	157
V. Astronomy and Mathematics	
<i>Chris Impey</i> Cosmology and the Human Condition	173
<i>Matthias Baaz</i> Note on Formal Reasoning in Theology	193
VI. Physics and Biology	
<i>G. A. D. Briggs</i> The Search for Evidence-Based Reality	201

<i>Simon Conway Morris</i> If the Evolution of Intelligence is inevitable, then what are the Metaphysical Consequences?	217
<i>Günter P. Wagner</i> The Use of Metaphors when Talking about the Nature of Organisms	233
VII. Religious Ethics and Philosophical Theology	
<i>Kelly James Clark</i> Atheism and Analytical Thinking	245
<i>William Schweiker</i> Freedom within Religion, Religious Ethics and Social Life	257
VIII. Philanthropic Investment and the Future Generations: Three (of Sixty) Winners of the John Templeton Award for Theological Promise (2007–2011)	
<i>Jan Stievermann</i> The Templeton Award and Professional Development for Young Scholars	267
<i>Daniel Munteanu</i> “The Divine Fire in All Things” – Orthodox Cosmology in Dialogue with Science	273
<i>Eva Harasta</i> God’s Spirituality, The Trinitarian Dynamics of Prayer	289
Contributors	295

Introduction

This book documents a four-day conference in commemoration of the **100th anniversary of the birth of Sir John Templeton and of the 25th anniversary of the establishment of his John Templeton Foundation**. It brought together about 60 active participants, most of them leading scholars, from many countries and many academic fields, who have been engaged in the “Science and Religion Dialogue” or, as some preferred to say, the “Science and Theology Dialogue” in the last two or three decades. The book reports on multi-year international and interdisciplinary research projects at leading institutions as well as on the Foundation’s strong support of upcoming generations of researchers.

The conference started on 25 October 2012 with a public event **in the Great Hall of the University of Heidelberg, Germany**. It continued the following days at the **Internationales Wissenschaftsforum der Universität Heidelberg (IWH)** with presentations and discussions among the scholars. The complete conference was streamed and documented on the web. In the first year, it has already been visited over 11,000 times. This book documents the main results of the event, which was planned and orchestrated by the **Forschungszentrum Internationale und Interdisziplinäre Theologie (FIIT) Heidelberg** in a readable form.

On the first day, in honor of Sir John Templeton and the two anniversaries mentioned above, addresses were given by John M. Templeton, Jr., President of the JTF, Stephen Post and Michael Murray, and from the Vice-President of the University of Heidelberg, Thomas Pfeiffer and Michael Welker, director of the FIIT. These addresses were followed by three lectures addressing the general topic:

On the Engagement of Science and Religion,

1. Hans Joas (University of Freiburg and University of Chicago): *The Natural History of Religion*;
2. Martin Nowak (Harvard University): *God and Evolution*;
3. John Polkinghorne (Cambridge University): *The Search for Truth*.

The following days, presentations were given and discussed on the sub-topics:

The Science and Theology Dialogue. Multi-Year Research Projects

John Polkinghorne and Michael Welker spoke about multi-year projects on topics of Eschatology, Anthropology and Concepts of Law, which they had chaired

at the Center of Theological Inquiry in Princeton (CTI), in Cambridge, UK, and in Germany (Heidelberg, Düsseldorf and Berlin).

Denis Alexander reported the success story of the Faraday Institute, Cambridge, UK, which hosted many academic events on the topic, but also many educational projects for the broader public.

Robin Lovin and Friederike Nüssel presented a multi-year project that they had organized at the CTI, Princeton, with support from the Templeton Foundation.

Ted Peters and Robert Russell explained interfaces between theology and science that had stimulated research and discourse at the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences (CTNS), Berkeley.

The Science and Religion Dialogue: Multicontextual Dimensions

Cyril Hovorun reported on the dialogue between science and religion in Russia. From a European and a North American perspective, Niels Gregersen and Wentzel van Huyssteen sketched postfoundational approaches to the dialogue and the impact on it by a “post-modern” climate of thinking. Contributions from **Astronomy and Mathematics** (Chris Impey, Matthias Baaz and Harvey Friedman), from **Physics and Biology** (Andrew Briggs, Simon Conway Morris and Gunter Wagner) and finally from **Religious Ethics and Philosophical Theology** (Kelly James Clark and William Schweiker) gave an impression of the enormous breadth of the fields and concerns that have shaped this dialogue in the past.

The conference was concluded with the unit **Philanthropic Investment and the Future Academic Generation**. We document presentations from three of the sixty winners of the *John Templeton Award for Theological Promise* (2007–2011), by the German scholar for American studies Jan Stievermann, the Orthodox theologian Daniel Munteanu from Romania and the Austrian Protestant theologian Eva Harasta.

Heidelberg, Spring 2014

Michael Welker

I. Celebrating the Past – Shaping the Future