

# Christian Spirituality and Science

## Issues in the Contemporary World

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## Editorial

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## Editorial

This edition of *Christian Spirituality and Science* contains volumes 5 and 6 and so there are two major articles presented in this edition. The reviewers of these articles are to be thanked for their insightful comments which have led to improved manuscripts. The two articles are modified versions of papers originally presented at a Science and Faith conference held at Avondale College in July 2003. The paper by Lynden Rogers traces some of the fine historical detail that is important in understanding the relationship between Galileo and the Roman Catholic Church authorities in the early 17th century. This has important implications for how church authorities might view conflict particularly between scientific knowledge and what might appear to be the plain statements of Scripture. There are also important implications for innovators who urgently want to press their case with administrators. The paper attempts to deal sensitively with these issues and offers scholars and church authorities alike timely historical lessons on how to deal with the kinds of attitudes that often surface in science and religion debates.

Questions in relation to the nature of inspiration and the biblical text naturally arise in both the articles presented here. Ray Roennfeldt considers three origins models and

the implications their interpretive tools have for the doctrines of Scripture, the fall of humankind, and the Sabbath, all significant to the first three chapters of Genesis. The origins models considered are young earth creationism, old earth (or progressive) creationism, and theistic evolution. The strengths and weaknesses of each model are examined in relation to their impact on the nature of the biblical text. Important questions arise from this examination. For example, must the doctrine of the Sabbath be linked only to the Genesis account of creation? Does the doctrine of the Sabbath receive its strongest support only from a literal reading of the early chapters of Genesis? Is the meaning of the Sabbath more important than the details of Sabbath observance? And if so, is there not a place for the details of Sabbath observance as symbols of a deeper meaning? In a recent book I read John Haught (1995, p.201) links the Sabbath to the religious practice of silence and to the ecological crisis as follows. "Our conviction is that the ecological crisis has something to do with modernity's loss of a genuine appreciation of the religious meaning of silence. The religiously rooted posture of contemplative silence effectively restrains the tendency to filter our sense of nature through human designs driven by a dubious craving for control. Silence implies that, along with God, God's creation

is something quite other than what we might take it to be. It has its own inviolable inner reality, one that requires our standing back from it, letting it impress its wildness upon us. Perhaps, therefore, we need to recover something like a new appreciation of Sabbath. The Jewish idea of Sabbath is an especially significant instance of the "apophatic" habit of letting things be. Sabbath means many things, of course, but at its center there is the injunction to let creation be- at least for the Sabbath's duration. While the Sabbath lasts, we allow creation to be what it was originally intended to be, and what we hope it will be again. Sabbath shares with both sacramentalism and silence a reluctance to rush in

and transform nature into stuff that we can use solely for our own purposes. Sabbath, sacramentalism, and silence, we are convinced, provide us with the deepest roots of the ecological concern the world so desperately needs to recover today".

We hope that you find the historical and theological reflections in the articles in this edition not only challenging but also helpful in your Christian pilgrimage.

*Dr Kevin de Berg*

**Editor**

#### **Reference**

Haight, J (1995). *Science and Religion- From Conflict to Conversation*. Paulist Press, New York.