

## COMMENTARY: Astro-theology in the Journal of Cosmology

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The forthcoming September 2012 issue of the *Journal of Cosmology* will feature essays and commentaries concerning relations among astronomy, astro-physics, astro-biology, cosmology, philosophy, theology, and ethics. For the purpose of editorial shorthand, editor-in-chief astro-physicist Rudy Schild, guest special editor theologian Joseph A. Bracken, and guest special editor theological ethicist Theodore Walker Jr. refer to this forthcoming issue as an issue in “astro-theology.”

**Astro-theology** is an attempt to describe, as in astro-physics or astro-biology, the impact of cosmological understanding of a quantum dominated universe of universes. It is becoming increasingly difficult to imagine that ours is the only planet, star system, galaxy, or universe in which life has emerged. As we come increasingly to understand the quantum nature and purpose of our universe. As we come to realize that the purpose is for life to emerge and flourish, we can also seek understanding of the Cosmic Intelligence that underlies such a creation.  
(Rudy Schild, June 2012)

The term *astro-theology* comes from an early 18th century book—*Astro-Theology: or, A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God, from a Survey of the Heavens* (1715)—written by England’s eminent scientist-astronomer and Anglican clergyman William Derham (born 1657, died 1735). In Derham’s work and person, scientific astronomy and churchly theology were united. As indicated in the subtitle, he argued from astronomy to theology. He argued that “modern” (p. 8) telescope-assisted astronomy enables us to see “manifest signals of a divine hand” (p. 100), and to see that “the great CREATOR hath provided for the good of our Planet” (p. 160). And of course the Introduction to his “Survey of the Heavens” started with Psalm 19:01—“the Heavens declare the Glory of God” (p. 1).

In subsequent years, among modern North Atlantic scientists, the 17th and early 18th century idea that astronomy and other scientific inquiries (natural philosophy) could witness in favor of theology became anathema. Hypothesizing about affirmative theological implications came to be forbidden, and the explicitly theological G-word excluded from modern peer-reviewed scientific literature.

Then, starting in the final quarter of the 20th century, astronomy, astrobiology, and cosmological inquiries were confronted with ever increasing evidence indicating that the universe is precisely very finely tuned to provide for life. Evidence of cosmic fine-tuning (and corresponding evidence of fatally inadequate features of exclusively-Earth-centered-random-happenstance theories of life) is now forcing a scientific reconsideration of long-forbidden theological hypotheses.

The contemporary scientific reconsideration of theological ideas is sometimes called “postmodern” to contrast it with the anti-theological modern science of the 19th and 20th

centuries (especially so-called by process theologians appreciative of A. N. Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World* [1925]). In addition to being called "postmodern," contemporary scientific reconsideration of theological ideas might also be called "revolutionary" in an astronomical sense analogous to Nicolaus Copernicus's *De revolution orbium coelestium* (1543).

The original Copernican revolution came from recognizing that planet Earth revolves, and hence, that Earth is not the geometrical center of the universe. A contemporary scientific revolution is coming from recognizing that Earth is not the biological center of the universe, that our cosmic context is providential (providing for the evolution of life), and that cosmic providence implies cosmic provider. This contemporary revolution brings us around to critically reconsidering and reevaluating the 17th and early 18th century idea that astronomy witnesses in favor of theology.

This time around, we go beyond Derham's astro-theology to consider what philosophical theology implies for astronomy and cosmology, and what astro-theology implies for social ethics. For instance, Bracken's June 2012 contribution to the *JOC*—"Whiteheadian Actualities and String Theory"—is a prime example of the kind of philosophical and theological engagement with scientific cosmology that will be featured in the September 2012 issue. Here Bracken offers a revised understanding of Whiteheadian metaphysics that supports extra-dimensional string theories advanced by Michio Kaku (1994) and others. Also, Walker's June 2012 contribution—"The Liberating Role of Astronomy in an Old Farmer's Almanac"—reminds us that the colonial New England observational astronomers who calculated ephemerides for almanacs were so strongly oriented toward liberty from colonialism and slavery that their rendering of astro-theology can now be labeled *astro-liberation theology*. These astronomers, including Benjamin Banneker (born 1731, died 1806) and David Rittenhouse (born 1732, died 1796), addressed social ethics, thereby advancing from revolutionary planetology to revolutionary politics.

Continuing scientific revolutions now demand critical reconsiderations of theological and social ethical hypotheses. Accordingly, the online open access peer-reviewed journal for astronomers, astrophysicists, astrobiologists, and cosmologists, the *Journal of Cosmology* (*JOC*) hereby invites contributions from long-excluded scholarly colleagues in philosophy, theology, and social ethics. In particular, **we solicit scholarly commentaries** (up to 1000 words) **and articles** (up to 3000 words) **for the September 2012 issue on astro-theology.**

The *JOC* ordinarily publishes refereed scientific and mathematical works. Because the refereed *JOC* is abstracted and indexed with traditional mathematical and highly technical literature, we require constraint in use of terms with explicit religious and theological content, such as "faith" and G\*d; and we particularly request that such words be avoided in titles and abstracts, which will be indexed and reproduced alongside papers on scientific results from NASA programs, and mathematical formulations of black hole theory, etc. In previous issues, terms such as "cosmic intelligence" have been used instead of the unwelcome G-word.

**Instructions for submission**, including listing of 5 potential reviewers, and information about style are available at the *JOC* website: <<http://www.journalofcosmology.com>>. Manuscripts should be submitted to: <[Editor@journalofcosmology.com](mailto:Editor@journalofcosmology.com)>. Commentaries (up to 1000 words) incur no processing or publication fees, and do not require a list of 5 potential peer reviewers.

Articles (1001-3000 words) normally require a processing fee (\$35.00) and, if accepted for publication, a publication fee (\$150.00).

JOC is online, open access, and averages over 800,000 hits a month. Other scientific journals with a fraction of this readership charge, on average, \$2,500.00 to publish an online article. All articles will be peer reviewed and must be written to be understood by a broad range of scientists who are not experts in your field. From 30% to 50% of invited paper have been rejected in the past, so let me stress: all papers must be scientific or scholarly and contain citations to the literature which have been published in scholarly journals.

JOC is abstracted by Google Scholar, Open J-Gate, Polymer Library, ProQuest, ResearchGATE, adsabs, Harvard, arXiv, etc.

This is an excellent opportunity to present work to a large community of scientists. You are welcome to borrow liberally from your previous work.

**We need to receive commentaries and article for this issue by no later than 01 September 2012.**

Finally, please extend this invitation to interested others.

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