S-91 – Science and Religion: Exploring the Complexity Thesis

The History of Science and Religion

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Abstract:
In the past, following the lead of such nineteenth century figures such as Draper and White, the interface between science and religion was depicted as unbridgeable conflict. But since the 1970’s scholars have shown that this conception is too simplistic and not at all accurate when we consider the totality of the science/religion interface. Dubbed the “complexity thesis” by Ronald Numbers, John Brooke’s approach in his Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives (1991) has provided alternative ways of studying the historical relationship in a more sophisticated fashion. The goal of this symposium is to evaluate the utility of the complexity thesis in past, present, and future scholarship. Have new approaches to the study of science and culture, such as the development of science and print culture, the global history of science, the geographical examination of space and place (which includes an examination of the local), new views on secularization, or novel research on science and media, cast doubt on the complexity model? Or does it remain a serviceable model? The symposium, therefore, will bring together an interdisciplinary group of scholars to explore the complexity thesis from a number of different angles. Sessions will focus on: 1) Secularization; 2) Geographies of Science and Religion; 3) Science and Religion in Global Perspective; 4) Science, Religion, and Print Culture; 5) Mass media and Nonfiction; 6) Mass Media and Fiction. The papers will cover such topics as progressive evolutionary theory of the early Cold War; Christian missionaries, science, and religion; the history of science and religion in Latin America; the intersection of research in science and religion and in historical geography; the treatment of science and religion in Victorian periodicals and by Victorian publishers; BBC’s depictions of evolutionary thought on television; the Turkish religious-conservative press’s coverage of science in newspapers; the Christian Entertainment Industry’s production of science documentaries; the media’s use of religion in discussions of the multiverse; examinations of the censorship of evolutionary themes in cinema; religious reviews of science fiction films of the 1970s; the religious overtones of robots in science fiction, and the growth of religious themes in horror literature.

Keywords: Religion/Secularization – Complexity Thesis – Local/Global – Print Culture – Mass Media.

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