



TEILHARD RELIGION AND SCIENCE SOCIETY
A METANEXUS LOCAL SOCIETY AT LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Annual Report 2008

The Teilhard Religion and Science Society at Loyola Marymount University conducted several activities during the 2007-2008 academic year. We enjoyed continued support from a variety of campus constituencies who contributed funds and helped publicize our activities. These included the Jesuit community, the Department of Natural Science, the Center for Ignatian Spirituality, the Seaver College of Science and Engineering, the Department of Theological Studies, the Bioethics Institute, and the Center for Religion and Spirituality (CRS) in LMU Extension. The Society continues to be housed within CRS, which provides logistical support for arranging rooms, paying expenses, and producing publicity.

Professor Cynthia Brown of Dominican University initiated our activities this year. She spoke about her recently published book, *Big History: From the Big Bang to the Present*. This book presents the Epic of Evolution in a thirteen chapter format, designed for use within the context of an academic semester. She explained good strategies for teaching the basics of cosmic origins, planetary differentiation, the emergence of life, and the development of human cultures. Her presentation was well received, with approximately four dozen students and faculty in attendance.

Professor Eban Goodstein of Lewis and Clark College presented our next major activity, demonstrating the critical connection between science, perceptions of science, and the development of public policy. He spoke about his recent book, *Fighting for Love in the Century of Extinction: How Passion and Politics Can Stop Global Warming*. Departing from our pattern of holding our meetings in the facilities of the Seaver College of Science and Engineering, this event attracted over four dozen faculty, staff, students, and community members to the main lecture hall in the building that houses the Bellarmine College of Liberal Arts. This presentation was particularly interesting for students involved with various environmental activist groups on campus.

In the spring semester, Ronald Sandler of Northeastern University spoke on the topic of Nanotechnology and Environmental Ethics to a large audience of 75 students, mostly from the Seaver School of Science and Engineering. He addressed the questions of whether nanotechnology will reduce or exacerbate environmental challenges, and if it will alter the human relationship with the natural world.

Todd Duncan of Pacific University continued our spring lectures by discussing his research in physics and astronomy in light of the ways in which humans might feel more connected with one another and the natural world in light of the wealth of new information presented by contemporary research.

Our last event, "Fast Food or Farmers' Markets: A Buddhist Approach to Sustainable Eating" featured LMU Professor Christopher Chapple (substituting for Stephanie Kaza of the University of Vermont). Drawing from his published work in the area of religion and ecology, as well as new research on the health effects of diet, Dr. Chapple explored the Buddhist tradition of moral restraint in relation to food as well as

contemporary issues of sustainability. More than 100 students, staff, faculty, and community members attended this event.

One member of our Society, Paul Harris (LMU Professor of English), represented the group at the Metanexus conference on Madrid in July. He attended lectures and made contact with key Metanexus members (Ed Divinney, Eric Weisvogel, Kathleen Duffy, V.V. Raman, Billy Grassie). In conversation, he expressed the LMU chapter's interest in seeking Metanexus support in making Big History/Evolutionary Epic a key component

This combination of speakers on topics ranging from history, economics, physics, and food, further advanced the mission of the Society to highlight and explore the juncture of religion and science. Because of the inter-religious and inter-disciplinary nature of these lectures, students and faculty from a broad spectrum of departments and interests attended. As we move forward with planning for the future of the Society, we hope to organize our discoveries and build on our newly-formed community of scholars by designing new courses informed by the activities of the Teilhard Society for Religion and Science for the past three years.