

## **Astrobiology News October 2018: Astro-Biology and -Ethics and -Theology, Oh My!**

This month's news calls attention to some upcoming events that bear on Astrobiology and related topics. You may recall that the CLP announced the launch of the book *Interactive World, Interactive God* about this time last year.<sup>1</sup> This book has attracted some attention and has set the theme for the upcoming meeting of the American Theological Society at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago on October 26<sup>th</sup>. Several of the book's contributors, myself included, will highlight how interaction lies at the heart of current scientific and theological thinking about the nature of reality. Perhaps nowhere is the importance of interaction more prominent than in Astrobiology, considering the delicate web of interactions that sustain life on our own planet!

On October 29<sup>th</sup>, I head to the Berkeley Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences (CTNS)<sup>2</sup> for the launch of an exciting new book, *Astrotheology Science and Theology Meet Extraterrestrial Life*, edited by CLP signatories Ted Peters and Robert John Russell.<sup>3</sup> This book inspired an article I wrote for the CTNS journal, *Theology and Science*, which was published online on October 1<sup>st</sup>.<sup>4</sup> *Astrotheology* is a tour de force of theological and ethical reflections on recent discoveries in Astrobiology and their implications for the search and possible discovery of life beyond Earth. The topics addressed in this book are particularly timely in light of the many current discussions on whether and how we should proceed to establish a human presence in space, particularly on Mars. Lucianne Walkowicz's TED talk "Let's not use Mars as a backup planet" is a few years old, but it remains a well-spent six minutes.<sup>5</sup>

After Berkeley, I'm headed to the Parliament of the World's Religions, which is being held in Toronto from 1-7 November.<sup>6</sup> In preparation, I completed an online course in interfaith leadership through Dominican University this summer, which utilized tools prepared by Interfaith Youth Core founder and president, Eboo Patel.<sup>7</sup> I'll be one of a number of speakers drawn from the *Institute on Religion in an Age of Science* (IRAS).<sup>8</sup> The IRAS sessions are part of the Science and Religion track,<sup>9</sup> and were organized by CLP signatory Maynard Moore. They will be spread over the course of the week, but unfortunately, I can only attend the day of my session on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. I'll speak on *Understanding*

*Scientific Discovery through Participation*, highlighting the engagement of faith-based and interfaith communities in the online platform *Zooniverse*,<sup>10</sup> a project I'm pursuing with the Adler Planetarium's Vice President for Citizen Science. I hope to share details of this project in coming months!

Until next month,

Grace

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<sup>1</sup> C. R. Albright, J. R. Albright, & M. Turk, eds., *Interactive World, Interactive God: The Basic Reality of Creative Interaction* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ctns.org/>

<sup>3</sup> Ted Peters, ed., with M. Hewlett, J. M. Moritz, and R. J. Russell, *Astrotheology Science and Theology Meet Extraterrestrial Life* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> Grace A. Wolf-Chase, "New Worlds, New Civilizations? From Science Fiction to Science Fact," in *Theology and Science* (October 1, 2018):

<https://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/9M4fgGA5rJMdTt4GSiQP/full>

<sup>5</sup> [www.ted.com/talks/lucianne\\_walkowicz\\_let\\_s\\_not\\_use\\_mars\\_as\\_a\\_backup\\_planet](http://www.ted.com/talks/lucianne_walkowicz_let_s_not_use_mars_as_a_backup_planet)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.parliamentofreligions.org/parliament/2018-toronto>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ifyc.org/eboo>

<sup>8</sup> [www.iras.org](http://www.iras.org)

<sup>9</sup> See <https://event.crowdcompass.com/2018parliament/>, then "Sessions" and "Schedule by Track."

<sup>10</sup> [zooniverse.org](http://zooniverse.org)