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and discussed here very briefly illustrates a process by which simpler units or entities become parts of larger whole systems, and these larger wholes have new characteristics emerging from the synthesis of the new system. New, complex, synthetic systems become part of and integrated into still larger whole units, but they are always composed of units of lower-level organizations.

True, the molecule is a unit, but it is put together into a larger whole—the organism. The individual organism is a unit assembled and ordered with other units into a still larger whole we call “society.” The society exhibits feedback influences from effects to causes in the physical and living universe which it partially controls and guides. Thus we become intellectually aware of and emotionally responsive to an ever increasing magnificence of larger and more complicated organized systems. From such perspectives, the scientist, the religionist, the humanist, and the artist derive their motivation. They become increasingly aware of progressive change in time to which they may make their individual contributions.

COMMENTARY ON THEOLOGICAL RESOURCES FROM THE BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

by Bernard M. Loomer

I looked at the topic of the conference, and I read that it was something to the effect of the theological resources to be derived from the sciences (in this case the biological sciences). I took further assumption that the conference in turn could assume that biology could speak to theology and theology to the biological sciences, although in this particular conference the focus was upon theology from the point of view of these several sciences.

As I listened to Wald, I got the impression that he was answering the conference topic by saying that biology can furnish theology for theology. If that is his answer to the question, I would have to say I regard it as an inadequate answer. That is, I do not regard biology as being able

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to provide theology for theology, and I do not happen to think that this particular theology Wald is advocating is very good theology. It may be very good biology (I am not competent to judge this), but I do not think this is where theology lives and dies and grows and matures, as one contemplates the universe as Wald contemplates it.

I see no reason why a theology or a religion that underlies a theology need reject anything that Wald says goes on in this universe, and I will never deny that we are composed of atoms and molecules of various shapes and sizes and varieties, and it is wonderful to view the world in this fashion. I get thrilled and I get excited, but I do not get moved by it. This is not what causes me to live or to die; maybe it causes you to live or die as a religious being, and maybe this causes Wald to live and to die, but I will take my stand as a Christian theologian. I do it out of humility because I do not think I know enough, nor do I have enough capacity to be really something else. I am trying to learn about these other religions, but during this lifetime I expect, by and large, I will probably identify myself as a Christian. Maybe I am not a very good theologian, but I am working with trying to be Christian, since you have to be something, and where you are born and all the rest of it has a great deal to do with what you are going to be. So there is no "theology in general." There may be biological science in general, but there is not any such thing as religion in general. There are only specific religions, so that biology would have to speak specifically to specific theologies, at least as a first step.

The biological picture which Wald gave I found very exciting and quite sermonic. I do not quite know how one criticizes a sermon, although I am trying to do it. I do not find that this really speaks to what I think the heart of the Christian faith is all about. Now I think a lot of religions, including Christian faith, are a lot of bad things, and they have been such. All the evils of Western society have been associated with these Christians, and Christians have supported them with a vengeance, we still continue to do so, and I suspect we will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. But bad as these Christians have been (and they may get worse), I view the heart of things religious from a Christian standpoint, and I take it most of us at the conference are one way or another within a Christian framework and think in Christian terms, either by rejection or by affirmation. But we cannot reject in general; we reject in specific terms. We reject because somebody has said something specifically positive, so I conclude there is no such thing as atheism in general; there are only specific forms of atheism.

Christianity and Judaism are centrally concerned with the problem

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of man's redemption. They start out, at least some place along the line, by admitting that we will move to be somebody and we will move to do something because something happened in our history; and we will move to do this out of a tremendous mess that we were in and that we are still in. Men, collectively and individually, make a tremendous mess of their lives, and it is not just a matter of lack of knowledge always, as the theologians have recognized. It is that we raise hell with ourselves and with our neighbors, we prevent ourselves from being fulfilled, we do our damndest to keep our neighbors from being fulfilled, and we have attempted to play God in one way or another. I think the Christian position has tried to give an answer to this question. I think this question emerged out of particular people at a particular time, and I think that Jesus Christ is a final answer to this question. Whether he has anything to say to other people depends upon whether, in fact, they ask this question.

The question that arises out of Jewish and Christian experience is something like this: To the Jew: How can a nation that regards itself as chosen look upon its chosenness in the form of being a servant to all other nations and to all other peoples? Or to the Christian: How can the strength of one's egocentricity be transmuted so that one is strong enough and powerful enough to be a suffering servant unto others in such a way that he can completely, or at least to the largest extent, forget himself? And the cross is, in Christian faith, the symbol of all symbols to indicate that this is what the Christian faith is about.

It has been said in Christian theology that to believe as a Christian means you have to sacrifice your intellect, your knowledge. I would like to submit to you that this is not really the scandal of Christian faith because the scandal in Christian faith is much deeper than this. Christian faith does not ask you to believe what is unbelievable; it asks you to do something much more difficult, namely, to give up your pride—intellectual, moral, religious, and so on. It asks you to recognize that you exist because others (perhaps including the other gods there be) enable you to exist, so that your whole life is a life of grace, as it were. You exist because others make it possible for you to exist. It asks you to humble yourself in such a way that you are willing to let others stand upon your shoulders and not to insist that you always smear their faces in the dust. It asks you to acquire the strength of relationship. You need redemption to become a suffering servant to all, to be able to take into yourself, without cracking, the sins, the hate, the indifference, the emptiness, the rejections, the ironies, the paradoxes as such there be of life. Now it is this that causes me to be-

lieve and it is this that causes me to understand the depths that are involved.

In terms of this, I am compelled not to reject anything that Wald has talked about but to accept it for whatever it may be worth. What I do not see fundamentally in Wald's position is that to which I can commit myself and in terms of which commitment I can make basic decisions.

I would like to mention just in passing what I would think biology might say to theology—perhaps not biology directly but biology through the philosophy of biology. I think it might say some of these things to theology, although perhaps for those who know much more than I, it may say some other things, too.

First, I take it that biology says to us that evolution is a universal concept, that everything that can be said to exist is something that has emerged or developed or matured or grown, perhaps from the less complex to the more complex. Consequently, the theological implication is that, if one is to speak of God in a way in which biology might help, God himself must be said to be in some sense evolving; the alternative being to speak of God as something completely apart from the rule and an exception to everything we know about the rule.

Second, biology says to theology that it is possible to conceive meaningfully of a *telos* without a *finis*. Traditional theology, in speaking about the purpose of God, has usually spoken of this purpose as involving a terminus in which the purpose was to be accomplished, thus rejecting unending changes.

Third, biology raises the question as to whether man, theologically understood, needs to be understood as the peak of creation. Thinking purely speculatively, there may be forms of life elsewhere that surpass man. This speculation might be important not because it may be true or false but because it provides a perspective on ourselves.

Fourth, man's being—individual man's being—is in large part constituted by his relationships. To a large extent, he is a function of his relationships. Nothing an individual has or does or is, therefore, is something the individual has or does or is by himself. He must have another in order to be himself. By this I do not mean that the community is simply the arena in which he fulfils himself, but that the other or the community is constitutive of his very being. Theologically, this implies that if one is to speak of God from the point of view of the implications of biology, one would have to say that nothing that God applies to God as though he existed by himself. Without the world He would not be.