



EXPANDING HUMANITY'S
Vision of God



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Vision of God

NEW THOUGHTS ON
SCIENCE AND RELIGION

Edited by

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Most of the chapters in this book were originally published in other formats: as journal articles, sections of books, sermons, and the like. As a result, the chapters of this book contain a variety of spelling, capitalization, and usage styles, particularly for scientific and religious terms.

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P R E F A C E



This book is a collection of essays and sermons that were awarded prizes in a recent award program of the John Templeton Foundation. The program was announced in December 1998 and concluded on April 1, 2000. Over this period, three hundred entries were received and thirty-five were awarded prizes totaling \$233,000.

Guidelines offered examples of the kinds of essays and sermons the program was seeking, emphasizing the importance of the science-religion dialogue. Program leaders pointed out that Sir John Templeton is deeply committed to fostering an expanded vision of God that is informed by recent discoveries of science about the nature of the universe and the place of humans in our world. He believes the stage is set for keen and creative minds to launch out on a new exploration of theology, respectful of our great religious heritage, but focusing on the new visions and new possibilities that have come to us through the momentous scientific discoveries of the twentieth century.

The target audience for this program included theologians, ministers, priests, rabbis, imams, leaders of other faith traditions, scientists, educators, policymakers, artists, writers, and others who are respected for their religious thinking and who represent a diversity of religious traditions. Because of this diversity, the essays and sermons chosen for this book display rich, varied, and often expansive visions, many of which resonate with one of our original contest questions, "Can we have a more comprehensive, more exploratory, more humble theology?" There is also considerable cultural diversity, with authors from Germany, Israel, India, Iran, and Australia.

The book is divided into three parts. In the first, "Contemporary Science Raising Theological Questions," thirteen chapters address the many fascinating questions raised by physicists about quantum theory, by cosmologists about our enormous universe, and by biologists about our evolutionary past and future and the new theological challenge of artificial intelligence. For example, Günter Thomas draws many parallels between the "new creation" of the Bible and complexity theory in contemporary science, while Pirooz Fatoorchi addresses the scientific understanding of the creation of the universe from an Islamic perspective. Richard Rice discusses the tensions many scientists with religious

beliefs face in the course of their work and the ways in which these tensions may be ameliorated. Brian Edgar focuses on the theological implications of developing medical technologies that may extend human life beyond its current life span, while Kuruvilla Pandikattu tackles the implications for religion if humans were to become immortal. Peter Heltzel concludes Part I by making connections between human attempts to create artificial intelligence and God's creation of the universe and everything in it.

In "New Visions of Theology," six chapters stretch our thinking about God into new frameworks by joining theology with quantum indeterminacy, by perceiving nature as sacred, and by a synthesis of science with Jewish and Eastern philosophies. Michael King, for example, discusses the devotional and cerebral aspects of Western and Eastern religions and the ways in which these two qualities have affected, and may continue to affect, scientific inquiry around the world. Rami Shapiro presents a kabbalistic "map" that will allow us to unify our sciences, both material and spiritual, while presenting an idea of God that incorporates and transcends them both.

In "Historical and Philosophical Perspectives on the Science-Religion Dialogue," the tone is more searching. The five authors look somewhat less optimistically at the future of science-theology interaction, taking into account the unfulfilled promises of the past and the limitations of our own humanity. Roger Shinn explores our historical and theological understanding of nature and the ecological ramifications. David Mehl uses the context of Reformation Sunday to encourage a new reformation between science and religion, a reformation marked by humility and common sense. And Theodore Roszak rounds out the book by analyzing humanity's place in the universe in keeping with the evidence suggested by the "new cosmology."

While the contributors to this volume approach the science-religion dialogue from varying perspectives, each writes with the attitude that theologians and scientists can, indeed must, communicate with each other—questioning, researching, informing—in an effort to bring greater understanding to all of us.

Eleven additional winning papers in the contest, which are not included in this book, can be viewed on the Templeton Foundation's Web site, www.templeton.org.

Robert L. Herrmann

PART I

CONTEMPORARY SCIENCE RAISING
Theological Questions