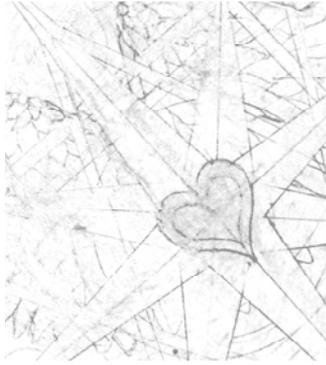


SCIENCE OF LOVE

Science of Love

The Wisdom of Well-Being



Thomas Jay Oord

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To Karl Giberson, Stephen G. Post,
and Sir John Templeton





PRE FACE

A PREVIOUSLY UNEXPLORED FIELD of scholarship is emerging in our day. I call this field of research the love-and-science symbiosis. Scholars engaged in this research investigate science and love as each contributes to how we understand God, ourselves, and the world in which we live.

From antiquity, many have at least implicitly affirmed a relationship between love and science. A major difference between the past and present, however, is that contemporary investigators address various issues arising in this relationship overtly and methodologically. Of course, rapid changes and advances in contemporary science generate questions and possibilities unknown to past civilizations, and new ways of thinking religiously and philosophically contribute to this symbiotic research.

Scholars and nonscholars alike are finding that exploring the connections between love and science inspires creative hypotheses for how we might understand both the sacred and the scientific. The eminent psychologist Abraham Maslow expressed the importance of such an exploration when he declared, “We *must* study love. We must be able to teach it, to understand it, to predict it, or else the world is lost to hostility and to suspicion.”¹

If love resides at the core of humanity’s moral and religious

concerns and if science continues to sculpt humanity's ways of living and worldviews, those probing the contemporary love-and-science symbiosis engage in matters of enormous importance. And importance, as Alfred North Whitehead put it, "nerves all civilized effort."²

This book introduces and explores issues at the heart of the love-and-science symbiosis. In the following chapters, we investigate scientific issues such as cosmology and the Big Bang, socio-biology and evolutionary psychology, neurology, organismic cooperation, sex and romance, and the role of emotions as each relates to love. We also look at religious, ethical, and philosophical issues such as virtue, *creation ex nihilo*, progress, divine action, agape, values, religious practices, pacifism, sexuality, friendship, freedom, and marriage. My hope is that this entire investigation itself is an *important* venture in love.

I dedicate this book to three whose efforts have inspired and encouraged me. Karl Giberson, friend, advocate, and former professorial colleague, suggested that I write these chapters as monthly installments in *Science and Theology News* (a publication then titled *Research News and Opportunities in Science and Theology*). As editor, Karl has been the architect of this influential periodical, which is widely regarded as the leading publication for news on the science-and-religion dialogue.

I also dedicate the book to Stephen G. Post. As leader of the Institute for Research on Unlimited Love and as a friend, Stephen blazes new trails in love-and-science research. His stunning vision and tireless work set a high standard for the field in general and my own work in particular.

Finally, I dedicate the book to Sir John Templeton. His belief in both the importance of love and the power of science makes publishing this work possible. In so many ways, I am grateful to him and the John Templeton Foundation.

Words of appreciation are also due to many who have in one form or another encouraged and aided in the writing of the book. In addition to Giberson, Post, and Templeton, I thank Janet Calhoun, Steve Carroll, Philip Clayton, John Cobb, Tracey Cook, George Ellis, Shemia Fagan, Todd Frye, David Griffin, Bob Herrmann, Kurian Kachappilly, Diane LeClerc, Michael Lodahl, Bob Luhn, Steve McCormick, Peter Miano, Brint Montgomery, Nancey Murphy, Ralph Neil and my colleagues at Northwest Nazarene University, Cheryl Oord, John Oord, Jennifer Pavlisko, Thomas Phillips, John Polkinghorne, Kimberly Roots, Carol Rotz, Jeffrey Schloss, Eric Stark, Paul Steinhardt, Angela Swanson, Howard Van Till, Tiffany Triplett, Lynn Underwood, Don Viney, David Sloan Wilson, Ron Wright, Don Yerxa, Amos Yong, and David Zirschky. Most of all, I thank those near and dear whom I love in so many ways: Cheryl, Sydnee, Lexi, and Andee.



*Giving ourselves in unselfish love is transformative.
Religious traditions have always captured this insight in their narratives.*

STEPHEN G. POST¹