

Cutting Edge

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'STOQ' PRESS

An exciting project which has come to fruition in Rome since the Jubilee Year's May 2000 conference entitled the 'Jubilee of Men and Women from the World of Learning' is the 'STOQ' initiative. This programme, the 'Science, Theology & the Ontological Quest' came into being in 2003 as a joint project undertaken by three of the pontifical universities of Rome under the auspices of the Pontifical Council for Culture, and sponsored by the John Templeton foundation which funds research on the borders of science and religion. The present phase of STOQ is for three academic years, from 2003–2006, and is presently in its second year. Courses may be taken at any or all of the participating universities, the Gregorian University, the Lateran University, and the Athanaeum 'Regina Apostolorum.' Recently three other universities have made links with the STOQ project, namely the Santa Croce University, the 'Angelicum' University of St Thomas, and the Salesian University. Under the guidance of Cardinal Paul Poupard, President of the Pontifical Council for Culture, and a Programme Committee, along with directors of the project in each of the participating universities, the STOQ programme offers a very wide experience of interdisciplinary courses in the connecting fields of science, philosophy and faith. Given that some two-thirds of the Church's bishops and cardinals, a great proportion of the Roman Curia, and indeed many of the world's seminary professors, have studied in the Roman Pontifical universities, the STOQ project is seen to be crucial as a way of educating the Church to understand better the contribution of the Church to science, the need for the Church's dialogue with the world of the scientist, and the insights the Church can gain from the findings of modern science. Whilst this work remains a challenge to the Church, the organisers of the STOQ study programme realise that only by re-educating the Catholic world not to be defensive in the face of modern science, but in fact to engage with it, can progress be made. The aims of STOQ are:

1. The integration of scientific and human values: "The double goal of the STOQ Project is to contribute, through the academic activities (teaching and research) of its partners: (i) to the advancement of science, in order to stress its compatibility with the highest moral values, also in view of encouraging the new generations, particularly sensitive today to the humanistic implications of science, to embrace scientific study, research and work; (ii) to the reinforcement of the connections between science, philosophy and theology, in order to testify that the ultimate finality of science is humanity and its whole welfare, of which essential

components are the intellectual, the ethical and the religious elevation of each human person.”

2. Science–religion relationship: “All the Partners of STOQ share, within the common Christian faith, some basic ideas as to the role of science in its relationship with religion. The main shared convictions are: (i) that science should serve the cause of progress and of humanity, in the whole sense of these two terms; (ii) that the human destiny in the universe is the most important quest, and to clarify this point is the ultimate goal not only of religion, but also of science, in their unending search for truth. Humans are indeed a part of the universe, and the universe receives its sense by the presence of intelligent agents in it, such as humans are, by a precise willing of God the Creator.”

The mission of the STOQ programme and the courses available within it can be seen at www.stoqnet.org.

BOYLE LECTURE 2005

2004 saw the revival of the Boyle Lecture series, which originated in 1691 by a legacy from the celebrated scientist and Christian, Robert Boyle. The 2005 lecturer was Professor Simon Conway-Morris, professor of evolutionary palaeobiology at the University of Cambridge . He has already written on matters pertaining to faith in the whole debate surrounding the biological evolution of life on earth, especially in his latest book, *Life’s Solution: Inevitable Humans in a Lonely Universe*. In his Boyle Lecture 2005, given at the Anglican church in the City of London, St Mary-le-Bow, he again addresses the question of evolution’s pointer to the mind of the Creator: its title was *Darwin’s Compass: How Evolution Discovers the Song of Creation*. He develops his argument against a typically atheistic Darwinism around the fact of evolutionary convergence: “The central point is that because organisms arrive repeatedly at the same biological solution... this provides not only a degree of predictability, but more intriguingly points to a deeper structure to life ...” His viewpoint is quite clear: “Metric-sized animals that are the end-result of many billions of years of prior stellar and biological evolution may be the only way to allow at least one species to begin its encounter with God. ... As has been made clear, the viewpoint within orthodox Darwinism is agreed and uncontroversial: humans are an accident of evolution because everything produced by evolution is strictly incidental to the process. Accordingly, humans are as fortuitous as a tapeworm, and by implication no more — or less — interesting. ... I would argue that the study of evolution itself already hints that to reduce all to the accidental and incidental may turn out to be a serious misreading of the evidence.”

A link to the whole text of this fascinating lecture can be found at
<http://www.stmarylebow.co.uk/news/boyle2005.htm>