

TEMPLETON REPORT

NEWS FROM THE JOHN TEMPLETON FOUNDATION

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The Science-and-Religion Beat

The Templeton-Cambridge Journalism Fellowship is an annual program that enables a select group of writers and editors to delve into the Big Questions at the contentious intersection of science and religion. In early June, this year's class of ten fellows travelled to the UK to take up residence in Cambridge. After a two-week seminar at Queens' College conducted by scientists and scholars from the U.S. and Europe, the fellows will return home for five weeks to develop ideas on topics of particular journalistic interest to them. The program will conclude at the end of July with a one-week session at Cambridge, where they will present the articles they hope to publish.



The 2008 fellows come from a range of publications and journalistic backgrounds. They are:

- Sandi Dolbee, the religion and ethics editor of the *San Diego Union-Tribune*
- Tim Folger, a contributing editor at *Discover* magazine and the series editor for the annual anthology *The Best American Science and Nature Writing*
- Marc Kaufman, NASA and space correspondent for the *Washington Post*
- Michael McGough, a Washington-based senior editorial writer for the *Los Angeles Times*
- Jeffery Paine, the former literary editor of the *Wilson Quarterly* and the author of, among other books, *Adventures with the Buddha* and *Re-enchantment*
- Mark Pinsky, a religion writer for the *Orlando Sentinel*
- Mark Vernon, a regular writer for the *Guardian*, *Financial Times*, *Times Literary Supplement*, and other publications
- Christine Whelan, a freelance writer whose work has appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, *Forbes*, and other publications
- Emily Yoffe, author of the “Dear Prudence” and “Human Guinea Pig” columns for *Slate*
- Jason Zengerle, a senior editor at the *New Republic*

Each journalist is paid a \$15,000 stipend for the eight-week fellowship, plus travel expenses and a book allowance. The book allowance was the particular request of JTF founder Sir John Templeton, who conceived of the program and wanted each fellow to be able to build a personal library. The journalists are asked to prepare for their period of study and discussion by reading some of the many books recommended by the fellowship's staff and by previous fellows.

The program is co-directed by Fraser Watts, reader in theology and science at the University of Cambridge; the distinguished biologist Sir Brian Heap, a Fellow of the Royal Society; and Julia Vitullo-Martin, a senior fellow of the U.S.-based

Manhattan Institute. Watts, Heap, and Vitullo-Martin work intensively with the fellows on their research into specific areas of interest. These range from genetic engineering, evolutionary biology, and the origins of life to the relationship between health and spirituality and comparisons of scientific and religious methods of inquiry. Watts, the program's *de facto* academic adviser, begins consulting with the fellows over their choices of topic long before they arrive at Cambridge.

The program encourages deep engagement of a sort that is hard to achieve under the pressure of deadlines and breaking news. The program's co-directors seek journalists who are open-minded, engaged, and ready to do their homework. "Our seminars try to get everybody thinking about the great issues and working through them," Vitullo-Martin told the *Templeton Report*. The program's many speakers include such well-known academics and intellectuals as the mathematician and cosmologist John

Barrow, the philosopher John Gray, the paleobiologist Simon Conway Morris, the theologian Alister McGrath, and the scholar of Islam, Tariq Ramadan.



The program began in 2005, and former fellows speak highly of the experience. For *Slate's* William Saletan (class of 2006), it was "mind-stretching." "I came with answers and left with questions," he said. "It's the best kind of enlightenment." This year's fellows anticipate a similar intellectual challenge. "It's not often that journalists get an opportunity to step back and consider the 'big' questions," said Christine Whelan. Jason Zengerle is glad to have the opportunity to bring together his long-standing interests. "I've written about

religion, and I've written about science," he said, "but I've yet to write about religion and science." He expects to investigate, among other things, "the research that neuroscientists have done on the biological nature of religious experience." Mark Pinsky plans to look at "the way faith is integrated, incorporated, or ignored by evangelical scientists in their research on global climate change."

If the program's history is any guide, the 2008 fellows will produce noteworthy pieces from their time in Cambridge. Previous fellows have been especially interested in bringing perspective to the inflamed debate over evolutionary theory. Sharon Schmickle (class of 2007) wrote an article called "Science of Hope" for the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* about a Catholic-school biology teacher and a Muslim-school science instructor who reached out to each other over the teaching of evolution. A 2005 fellow, Shankar Vedantam, produced an article called "Eden and Evolution," about the religious critics of evolution, for the *Washington Post Magazine*. Other pieces written by former fellows on the full range of science-and-religion issues have appeared in *Salon*, *Slate*, the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, *U.S. News & World Report*, and many other publications.

NOTEBOOK

The Greatest Threat?



Daniel Dennett

"Religion is the greatest threat to scientific progress and rationality that we face today" – or so read the motion at a public debate in London in late April. The event was held at the British Council and featured (for the motion) Daniel Dennett, director of the Center for Cognitive Studies at Tufts University, and (against the motion) Lord Robert Winston, emeritus professor of fertility studies at Imperial College, London. The motion failed by a narrow margin in a vote held at the end of the debate. Hosted by a new British think tank called Agora, the event was supported by



Lord Robert Winston

a grant from the John Templeton Foundation in partnership with the *Guardian*, which published an account of the discussion.

Dialogue at St. Andrews

The James Gregory Public Lectures on Science and Religion, a series of twelve public lectures by eminent national and international speakers, are being held at the University of St. Andrews over the next several years. Sponsored by the *Scotsman* and supported by a grant from JTF, the lectures will cover a wide range of issues. The aim of the series is to encourage constructive and open dialogue on the many points of contact between science and religion, and to promote a better understanding of the nature of both the scientific enterprise and religious thought.

Three of the twelve lectures have already taken place. The first, delivered to an overflow audience by Dr. Tom Wright, Bishop of Durham, was titled “Can a Scientist Believe in the Resurrection?” The second, “Has Science Made Religion Redundant?,” was given by Denis Alexander, director of the Faraday Institute for Science and Religion at St. Edmund’s College, Cambridge. The third, by Bruno Abd-al-Haqq Guiderdoni, director of the Observatory of Lyon, was called “Islam and Science.” The next lecture is scheduled for October 9th and will feature the mathematical physicist and 2002 Templeton Prize winner Rev. Dr. John C. Polkinghorne. Its title is “Does God Interact with His Suffering World?” In April, Kenneth Miller, professor of biology at Brown University, will speak on “Life—Creation or Evolution?”

Explaining Cooperation

In a harsh and selfish world, why do humans cooperate with one another? Why do we trust? These issues constitute one of the most enduring puzzles for scientists studying human evolution. They are also the topic of the first in what will be a series of six public events, entitled “Biq Ideas, Big Questions,” hosted over the next two years by the Royal Institution in London and supported through a grant from the Templeton Foundation. The discussion of cooperation will take place on June 30th and feature the evolutionary biologist Dominic Johnson, the science writer Marek Kohn, and the risk expert Bill Durodie.



Another discussion now being planned for the series will concern consciousness and feature Christof Koch, a professor of biology and engineering at the California Institute of Technology, and Baroness Susan Greenfield, professor of pharmacology at the University of Oxford and director of the Royal Institution. Future topics under consideration for the series include the nature of freedom, the relationship between science and religion, and the emergence of life.

For more information, write to communications@templeton.org.

JOHN TEMPLETON FOUNDATION

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