

TEMPLETON REPORT

NEWS FROM THE JOHN TEMPLETON FOUNDATION

October 7, 2009

Science for Ministry

“It is important that ministers of religion should not fear science but be able to welcome its insights,” said the theologian and particle physicist John Polkinghorne of the University of Cambridge, praising the launch earlier this year of the Science for Ministry Initiative. “They need the intellectual confidence to argue for the compatibility of science and religion, whose understandings, rightly understood, complement each other rather than standing in conflict.”

An internally developed program of the John Templeton Foundation, offering \$2 million in grants, Science for Ministry invited a variety of organizations to propose projects that would help clergy and lay people to develop a richer, more informed approach to the tensions between science and faith. Several institutions were selected: Asbury Theological Seminary (Wilmore, Kentucky), Calvin Theological Seminary (Grand Rapids, Michigan), the Collegetown Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research (Collegetown, Minnesota), Fermi Project (Atlanta, Georgia), Regent College (Vancouver, British Columbia), Princeton Theological Seminary (Princeton, New Jersey), and the Trinity Forum (Washington, DC).

The Trinity Forum is focusing its efforts on campus ministries and parachurch group leaders by developing a seminar curriculum, which will be supplemented with audio, print, and Internet materials. Advisers for the project include Francis Collins, the new Director of the National Institutes of Health; historian Don Yerxa of Boston University; and the philosopher Dallas Willard of the University of Southern California. Another of the grantees, Fermi Project, will reach out to pastors and church “planters” in the evangelical community. The program will include expert presentations given at Fermi Project’s Q Gathering, an annual invitation-only event for young, influential church leaders.



J. Wentzel van Huyssteen

Among the Science for Ministry grantees, Princeton Theological Seminary is perhaps the furthest along in its efforts. The school recently announced that 144 participants, from a wide range of Protestant denominations, will come from across the country to attend courses over the next three years. Participants were selected in pairs—one member from a scientific background and the other from a religious context—so that they could help each other understand the concepts introduced in the courses.

J. Wentzel van Huyssteen, the James I. McCord Professor of Theology and Science at the seminary, will serve as codirector of the initiative with Kenneth Reynhout, a Ph.D. candidate in theology and science. The first group of students will begin in November with a five-day introductory core course. Participants will return for short seminars every few months, including “The Human Person in a Technological Age,” “Spirituality in Theology and Psychology,” and “The Question of Origins in Theology and Science.”

The “seed of the idea for Science for Ministry really came from Sir John,” says David Wood, the Foundation’s lead advisor for the program. “He had a strong desire to see the world and wonder of science embraced by people of faith and woven into their understanding and experience of God.”

NOTEBOOK

“The Power of the Poor”

Tomorrow, October 8, at 10 p.m., PBS will air an hour-long documentary titled *The Power of the Poor*, which was produced with the support of a major grant from the John Templeton Foundation. Hosted by the famed Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto, the film presents the difficult realities of daily life for the world’s poor and shows the revolutionary potential of grassroots capitalism to improve conditions in the developing world.



VIDEO: *The Power of the Poor*

Two thirds of the world’s population has been excluded from the global economy, forced to operate outside the rule of law, with no legal identity, no credit, no capital, and thus no way to prosper. De Soto introduces us to landholders and entrepreneurs in Latin America, Africa, and elsewhere, and explains how reforms granting them legal rights of land ownership have resulted in the rapid creation of new wealth, making it possible for their land to translate into sales, loans, and businesses beyond mere subsistence farming.

Boost for the Purpose Prize

On September 10th, the Foundation hosted a Templeton Book Forum conversation between Terry Eagleton, author of the much-discussed new book, *Reason, Faith, and Revolution: Reflections on the God Debate* and Arnold Eisen, Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary. Video clips from the event, held at the Harvard Club in New York City, are now available on the Foundation’s YouTube channel.



VIDEO: Author Terry Eagleton

Recent Articles of Interest

- “Capturing the Dreams of Young Entrepreneurs on Film,” about the JTF-funded documentary film TEN9EIGHT, *New York Times*, 30 September 2009.
- “The Civic Engagement Gap,” *Inside Higher Ed*, 30 September 2009.
- JTF-sponsored Philosophy & Cosmology Conference at Oxford, live blogging by physicist Sean Carroll, *Discover* magazine, 20-22 September 2009.
- “Guyanese firm wins ‘Pioneer of Prosperity,’” *Miami Herald*, 15 September 2009.

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

JOHN TEMPLETON FOUNDATION
SUPPORTING SCIENCE-INVESTING IN THE BIG QUESTIONS