

John Templeton Foundation awards grant in support of new science and religion project

“Science and Religion: A Dialogue of Cultures” will educate students, faculty, and the public through lectures, panel discussions, master classes, and summer seminars.

The Lumen Christi Institute is launching a new project to combat the perception of fundamental and necessary conflict between scientific theories and religious worldviews. “Science and Religion: A Dialogue of Cultures,” which will run from February 2019 to January 2020, is made possible by a generous grant from the [John Templeton Foundation](#). The project will be co-led by Thomas Levergood, the Executive Director of the Lumen Christi Institute, and Michael Le Chevallier, the Assistant Director of the Lumen Christi Institute.

“The Lumen Christi Institute has for many years sponsored popular lectures and panel discussions by scientists, philosophers, and theologians who promote a sounder understanding of the relationship between science and religion,” Levergood said. “Thanks to the generous support of the John Templeton Foundation, we are excited to be formalizing and greatly expanding our science and religion programming, and reaching a much broader and more diverse audience, through ‘A Dialogue of Cultures.’”

Founded in 1987 by [Sir John Templeton](#), an American-born British investor, banker, fund manager, and self-described “enthusiastic Christian,” the Templeton Foundation supports projects aimed at advancing human flourishing and spiritual progress through asking Big Questions, promoting character development, and encouraging people to aspire to a deeper understanding of the universe. In 2017 it granted nearly \$100 million across six funding areas. “Science and Religion: A Dialogue of Cultures” is made possible by a grant awarded through the Foundation’s “Science & the Big Questions” Public Engagement area, which funds endeavors that advance the Templeton Foundation’s mission beyond the academy.

“A Dialogue of Cultures” will engage students, faculty, scientists, and the public in conversations about pressing topics at the intersection of science and religion. Through summer seminars for undergraduate and graduate students, non-credit courses, and public lectures and panel discussions hosted at the University of Chicago, the project will communicate the depth and breadth of the Catholic intellectual tradition’s contribution to the dialogue between scientific inquiry, methods, and conclusions and philosophical and theological perspectives on anthropology, creation, cosmology, and the reasonableness of faith.

Project partners will include [Steve Barr](#), professor of physics at the University of Delaware and president and founder of the [Society of Catholic Scientists](#); [Fr. Nicanor Austriaco](#), a professor of biology at Providence College who will join Barr to lead a weeklong summer seminar on modern science and Catholic faith for graduate students; and [Dr. Chris Baglow](#), Director of the Science & Religion Initiative at the

University of Notre Dame's McGrath Institute for Church Life, who will join Barr in leading a weeklong summer seminar for undergraduate students in New Orleans.

The first "A Dialogue of Cultures" program funded by the Templeton Foundation was a day-long conference hosted at the University of Chicago titled "[Science, Creation, and the Catholic Imagination](#)." On February 23, 2019 it gathered over seventy high-school students from two dozen schools in four states for Mass, seminar discussions, fellowship, and presentations by leading scholars on the topics of faith and reason, creation and cosmology, and the Catholic imagination.

The first public event of the program will be a panel discussion held on March 13 at the University of Chicago on the topic of [Science & Wonder](#), featuring evolutionary biologist Michael Coates, Field Museum Poet-in-Residence Eric Elshtain, astrophysicist Robert Scherrer, and religious ethicist Lisa Sideris.

Founded by Catholic scholars at the University of Chicago in 1997, the [Lumen Christi Institute](#) enriches academic communities at the University of Chicago and across the nation with the wisdom of the Catholic intellectual and spiritual traditions. As a leading center for academic programming situated at one of the world's elite research universities, Lumen Christi brings the depth and breadth of the Catholic tradition into conversation with the best of secular thought for the sake of renewing the academy and the culture.

Lumen Christi executes more than 120 annual academic events across four program areas. The *University Program* brings leading scholars and teachers to the University of Chicago for an ongoing conversation about the Catholic intellectual tradition's many dimensions. The *Cultural Forum* fosters deliberate discourse on American institutions and the role and place of Catholic doctrine, thought, and practice in their formation and operation. The *Catholic Scholars Program*, which includes Lumen Christi's renowned [Summer Seminars in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition](#), contributes to the renewal of Catholic academic thought by creating the occasion for exchange and collaboration between, and the formation of, Catholic scholars both established and rising. Finally, the *Program in Catholic Social Thought* catalyzes and supports reflection on Catholic social thought in order to address social, economic, and political problems facing national and global societies.

Inquiries about "Science and Religion: A Dialogue of Cultures" can be directed to project co-director and Lumen Christi Institute Assistant Director Michael Le Chevallier at m.lechevallier@lumenchristi.org.