

Announcements

IRAS

The Institute on Religion in an Age of Science

Purpose—IRAS (www.iras.org) is an independent society of scientists, philosophers, religion scholars, theologians, and others who want to understand the role of religion in our dynamic scientific world.

Activities—Each year IRAS organizes a week-long conference. Topics are selected to be relevant to current scientific thinking and to fundamental religious questions. (IRAS members pay a reduced rate for conference registration.)

IRAS organizes events at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), and IRAS members help organize sessions at the American Academy of Religion (AAR). IRAS has sponsored more than two hundred fifty meetings at universities, colleges, and theological schools.

IRAS members may also join the lively online discussion group, and thus learn about new developments and publications, express their views, and become familiar with those of others.

Publications—*Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* and *IRAS Newsletter*. IRAS members receive subscriptions to these publications free of additional charge.

Special Relationship—Affiliated Society, American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

Membership Dues

Membership is very attractive for those interested in *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*. The membership fee for IRAS for individual members, including *Zygon*, online and print, is lower than the U.S. rate for an individual subscription to *Zygon*! An even lower rate is available for those who prefer to have *Zygon* online only! And new members receive an additional discount in their first year of membership! There is also a discount for student members! For full details, see www.iras.org/membership.html.

Invitation to Join—You are most welcome to join IRAS, the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science. For further information and an application write to:

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Bioengineering, Gene Editing, and the Human Future: The CRISPR Apple on the Tree of Knowledge

65th Annual IRAS Summer Conference – Star Island
June 22–29, 2019

Human gene editing is quickly outstripping the decision-making mechanisms we have in place for approving or regulating technology usage. The technology to directly manipulate the genomes of plants, animals and even humans is developing rapidly and is already in use. Can it be rationally managed and applied ethically? What are the medical, economic, environmental, and social consequences of genetic manipulation? At this conference, scientists, theologians, religious scholars and ethicists will offer illuminating and thought-provoking perspectives on the issues surrounding the gene-editing technology known as CRISPR¹. Scientists will explain the technique of gene editing with CRISPR and ethicists will ponder the impacts on society, from pest control to designer babies. What are the implications for agriculture and world hunger? What about medical advances that are too costly for most of the world? Theologians and religious scholars will discuss how we understand human nature and responsibility from within various religious traditions such as Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism. Most fundamentally, we will explore ethical issues such as therapy versus enhancement; species elimination versus global epidemic; germline intervention; and the long-term effects of bioengineering and genome editing that are within the realm of CRISPR possibility.

- First, do no harm: what is the state of research now? How far have we already come?
- Feeding the world's populations: what benefits and perils do we foresee for the future of the food system?
- Manipulating animal genomes, controlling pests: successes and challenges
- Correcting disorders and enhancing capabilities: creating a post-human future?
- Managing technological advances—private and public cost issues: who pays? Who benefits?
- Decision-making challenges: who gets to decide? Ethical, legal, and international implications.

Conference Co-Chairs: Arvin Gouw, Ted Peters, Maynard Moore, Abby Fuller

1. Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats (CRISPR) and the CRISPR associated protein 9 system (CRISPR/Cas9) are a bacterial antiviral mechanism which can be used as a genetic editing tool with the ability to target a specific region of a DNA sequence and insert a given gene.