

ZYGON

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SCIENCE AND HUMAN DESTINY

A Special Unit in Theological Education toward an Advanced Degree

- *For continuing education of clergymen*
- *For theological students working toward advanced professional degrees*
- *For doctor of philosophy candidates*

A program to be presented by the Center for Advanced study in Religion and Science (CASIRAS) in cooperation with certain universities and theological schools

There is widespread evidence that in the twentieth century most of the world's traditional religions and philosophies are failing to perform adequately their vital functions in the burgeoning, new, complex, interdependent, world-embracing, scientific-technological society, which now embraces more than three billion persons. There is much evidence that in all societies there is a decay of effective religion, and hence of morale and morals. This threatens social and personal integration. In the more economically and culturally advanced societies, increasing numbers of people, especially among the sensitive youth, are disillusioned about traditional values and are grasping at any straws to replace them. The increasing freedom to abandon beliefs and value patterns that to them no longer seem to make sense has thus far manifested itself too often as a freedom *from* the old ways and too seldom as a freedom *to* or *for* more adequate ways. This freedom has not yet given rise to effective, positive goals or values that are capable of providing the necessary, stable structuring of the complex new webs of intra- and interpersonal feeling and behavior for life in the radically new circumstances of a higher culture. Instead, many are regressing to untutored genotypic levels of motivation, too much of which would make man inviable.

Fortunately, however, new knowledge in the sciences and about religion has provided grounds for believing that traditional religions embody a necessary wisdom for shaping man's morale, morals, and ultimate viability;

that this wisdom has been selected in ways analogous to the "wisdom of the body"; that the significant core of traditional religious heritage can be reinterpreted in the light of the sciences as essentially valid; and, hence, that religion, thus reinterpreted, may be revitalized so as to be salvatory for the new worldwide community of men in the dawning age of science and technology.

For more than two decades, a number of scientists, theologians, and philosophers have been at work in seeking to reinterpret religion in the light of the sciences. The Center for Advanced Study in Religion and Science now brings these men together for their further advanced studies and for other programs, including continuing education of clergymen of all faiths.

For such education, the CASIRAS Program for Continuing Education in Theology is a unit of work leading to an advanced professional degree in ministry. It is open to qualified clergy who already possess the B.D. or M.Div. degree, or an equivalent, and who are enrolled at a school affiliated with CASIRAS.

This unit toward an advanced professional degree in religious ministry is in the field of Science and Human Destiny. It is designed to prepare clergymen to teach, preach, and counsel with the wisdom of their traditional faith illuminated, transformed, and expanded by scientific understandings of the nature of man, of the nature of the reality on which man is dependent, and of the consequent nature of basic human hopes and duties.

Experience at the Center for Advanced Study in Theology and the Sciences in Chicago and elsewhere has shown that a period of several months in personal association with a number of pioneers contributing to this field from a variety of special disciplines is often necessary to develop the new understanding and faith. Since the summertime is more often available both to clergy and to members of the interdisciplinary and interinstitutional faculty, this unit will ordinarily require full-time resident study with the Center's faculty for two successive summer quarters as the basis for six of the total of twelve required credits for the unit. Three more units would be based on reading courses that require about one-third time (about two days a week) during the intervening parish year. Papers and critical commentary would be exchanged primarily in the mails. The final three credits would be in the form of a thesis, which could be written in the parish during the second year on a similar time arrangement. Drafts, criticism, and advice could be largely via the mails. The clergyman must also fulfill any additional requirements of the school granting the degree. The oral examination of the thesis by the Center's faculty (joined by other faculty of the school offering the degree) and the awarding of the degree could thus come some twenty-four months after starting.

It may be noted that CASIRAS offers to certain theological schools a similar unit on Science and Human Destiny for students who have completed their work for the B.D., M.Div., or equivalent first professional degree and who are enrolled for an advanced professional degree. These students likewise would be required to spend two full summer quarters in residence under the Center's faculty. They would spend the remainder of two academic years in residence at their theological school, where the equivalent of one academic quarter each year would be devoted to similar reading courses and thesis writing under the Center's faculty, and where the

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remainder of their time would be devoted in such manner as may be prescribed by the school's requirements for its advanced degree.

CASIRAS will also offer cooperation to doctor of philosophy programs of universities and theological schools where the student may seek in his dissertation to explore some problem in religion in the light of the sciences.

The summertime faculty of the Center is assembled from a pool of a few dozen theologians of various faiths, scientists in various disciplines (including anthropology, sociology, psychology, biology, and physics), and some philosophers, historians, and other needed scholars—many of whom have been exploring this field in association with one another in several groups with overlapping memberships. Among the members of this pool there is a widespread conviction, supported by scientific as well as historical evidence, of the need for some kind of religious belief and practice to provide men with morale and moral motivation. Many of them also have provided support for the underlying functions of existing religious traditions—and even for the essential meaningfulness and validity of central elements of traditional beliefs (when properly analyzed or translated)—on the basis of recent scientific understandings of the nature of man and his world. A number of these people have published papers in *Zygon* and have demonstrated capacity to understand and to advance religion and human values constructively in the light of the sciences. A core group has been seeking a specific and coherent system of belief about human destiny that aims to be fully responsible to the best-established (“hardest,” “physicalistic,” and “behavioristic”) scientific pictures of the nature of man and the world and at the same time fully responsible to the wisdom latent in religious tradition—a position that makes the Center ultraradical for some viewers, and ultraconservative for others, and seemingly impossible or paradoxical for others.

Among the important ingredients of a scientific and religious account of human destiny are the following, on each of which one or several courses will be offered:

1. *Man, his creation, history, and meaning in the context of cosmic history as revealed by the physical, biological, and psychosocial sciences—with translations into certain traditional religious languages or images.*

2. *Man and his values as an individual self: some coherent views derived from various sciences including genetics, neurophysiology, psychobiology, psychiatry—and their relations to various traditional religious views.*

3. *Man and his values as a social animal: some coherent views derived from various sciences including biology, anthropology, and the various social sciences—and their relations to various traditional religious views.*

4. *The ground of man's being, of the requirements laid upon him, and of the opportunities open to him thereby; some coherent models in the light of several sciences including ecology, organic and cultural evolution—and some relations to various traditional religious and philosophical concepts of the objective reality that created man, sustains him, and determines his duty and destiny.*

5. *Man's sources of valid information, especially about human values: the nature of scientific ways of learning compared with those of traditional philosophy, theology, literature, mythology, intuition, direct perception or*

experiencing, and the earlier genetic "learning"; also recent scientific revelations about the nature of information and the functions of the brain in perceiving, knowing, feeling, and directing behavior—together with implications for understanding religious experience, revelation, and truth.

6. *Religion*, its basic nature and function for individual and social man in human culture: a picture derived from various areas of scholarship, including anthropology, comparative religion, the psychosocial sciences, biology, and the thermodynamics and cybernetics of living systems—implications for a religion for the coming world culture under scientific technology, religion being understood as the central social institution involved in the cultural transmission of the primary, long-range, human values.

7. *Religious message and practice* for the coming world culture under scientific technology: an examination of what can be continued or reformed or revitalized in the historical religious traditions and what novel elements or radical transformations must be involved for effective religion (cultural transmission of basic human values, individual and social) in the new age.

A somewhat more detailed description of some of these areas of the proposed curriculum is to be found in Burhoe's "Potentials for Religion from the Sciences," *Zygon* 5 (1970): 110-29.

It is important to recognize that there must be in every viable culture some credible institutions that carry on now, as in the past, these functions of religion, to transmit to each individual man the information that will generate in him the proper attitudes or values toward himself, toward his fellow men, and toward the larger environing world, in ways that fulfill the long-range needs of the life of his society as well as his own needs.

Institutions and students wishing to explore possibilities should write to CASIRAS, 5711 Woodlawn Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60637.