

The following stories about ITEST and the Engadiner Kollegium are a continuation of the intent to provide *Zygon* readers with information on other institutions working to relate religion and science. We first published two comprehensive stories on the institutions currently publishing *Zygon*: CASIRAS in the September 1972 issue and IRAS in the March 1973 issue. There are dozens of related institutions.—EDITOR.

THE INSTITUTE FOR THEOLOGICAL ENCOUNTER WITH SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (ITEST)

by Robert Brungs

The Institute for Theological Encounter with Science and Technology (ITEST) is an interfaith and interdisciplinary organization. Formed under the Missouri Nonprofit Corporation Act and tax-exempt pursuant to Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code, ITEST is made up chiefly, but not exclusively, of professional people and scholars who are concerned with an interdisciplinary search for values in a context of cultural upheaval. Although open to all faiths, the institute is frankly Christian in outlook and approach. Diverse in concerns and attitudes as well as academic backgrounds, its members come from the physical and life sciences (chemistry, physics, biochemistry, biology, environmental studies, atmospheric sciences, geology), the behavioral disciplines (psychology, psychopharmacology, psychiatry, sociology), the healing arts (surgery, genetic counseling, obstetrics, internal medicine), as well as the liberal humanities and the traditionally normative studies of theology, philosophy, and law.

GOALS

The basic concerns of ITEST are the opportunities and problems arising from the crisis of man's growing ability to control nature and his own person. Its goal is the involvement of institutions—religious, legal, political, and educational—in these opportunities and problems. More specifically, ITEST hopes to bring to bear the sifted values of the past on the side of human uplift in a culture already under impacted change and about to be still far more beset by work now under way and about to break upon it—behavioral

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controls (psychological or neurobiological), the use and availability of psychoactive drugs, environmental depletion, extinction-pollution, genetic determinability, organ transplantation, and the exploration of outer space and inner earth.

The mode of ITEST's activities is basically scholarly. It is not oriented to activist methods of influence, preferring to work inside the institutions it seeks to influence. For this reason there has been little effort to seek publicity. The present strategy being employed in carrying out the stated goals is one of a more or less scholarly approach to the understanding of problems (basically through conferences and personal research) and the promulgation of this work through proceedings of meetings and a newsletter, as well as through activities sponsored within the institutions. These will be detailed in the history section of this report.

ITEST, originally founded in Saint Louis, is an organization with an international membership. Approximately 40 percent of the present membership (150 dues-paying members) reside in the Saint Louis area, 50 percent in the United States outside the Saint Louis area, and the final 10 percent in Europe and South America. Membership has been growing steadily at the rate of about forty new members per year, since incorporation in late fall of 1968. Besides the official membership, ITEST has a mailing list of over one thousand interested and concerned people.

HISTORY

The origin of ITEST goes back to the summer of 1966. That summer the present director and Dr. John Matschiner, present professor of biochemistry at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, met to discuss the lack of scientific input into theology and into the decision-making process in the churches. These meetings continued throughout the rest of 1966 and 1967. During that time three other interested scientists were recruited. In 1967 the attention of these five men was turned to the question of what kind of organization could be effective in advising the churches of impending problems and opportunities inherent in scientific discovery and technological progress. The ensuing discussion, together with a realization that resources far greater than those possessed by the original five men were needed, led to the formal incorporation of the organization in the late autumn of 1968.

During this period much of the group's energies were turned inward. Organizational structure was the primary interest. Speakers such as Karl Rahner, Edward Schillebeeckx, and Eugene Carson Blake addressed the group. Evening seminars on topics of scientific-theological issues were presented at Saint Louis University, Concordia Seminary, Eden Seminary, and Kenrick Seminary. At this phase of its history (1968-69) ITEST was essentially a local group, not by design but by fact.

In the autumn of 1969 ITEST sponsored its first weekend conference under the title "Toward a Theology of Environment." "Environment" was used in a quite broad sense, to include such seemingly disparate elements as the deleterious effects of pesticides and advances in surgery. The purpose of the 1969 meeting was a broad presentation of several problem areas (again psychoactive drugs, surgery, bioengineering, pesticide use, and so forth). We were interested in presenting the range of problems rather than treating any of the problems in depth. The expenses of that conference and of publication of the proceedings were supported by a stipend from the Advisory

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Council on Theological Education of the Danforth Foundation, under the direction of Luther H. Harshbarger. The stipend of \$9,200 was instrumental in the continuing existence of ITEST.

Every organization like ITEST, one that arises from a felt need, is involved in what has to be called a vicious circle. Funding can be gotten only when the organization has proved itself productive, and productivity depends upon funding. The stipend from the Advisory Council on Theological Education was helpful to ITEST in this regard. It enabled us to publish the proceedings of the 1969 conference. The dissemination of these proceedings gave an impulse to an increase in ITEST membership. Continued growth has been slow because the ITEST board of directors has deliberately decided against any effort to promote rapid growth, preferring to move slowly.

Since 1969 ITEST has held a weekend conference every spring and fall. Proceedings of several of these conferences are available. The spring conferences are working conferences, usually with no speakers. The weekend is devoted to small group discussions on topics such as the best ways to help the churches and universities become aware of the implications of modern scientific trends, the environmental crisis with attention to the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, and so on.

To summarize these weekend meetings:

April 1970: Exploration of the possibility of coordinated effort on the part of the many small science-theology groups scattered across the United States and in Europe. At this meeting the international Secretariat for Science-Theology Dialogue was set up to act as a liaison body and clearing-house. Its primary effort has been in private correspondence, in the attempt to identify interested groups, and in the publication of a newsletter. At present the International Secretariat's board of directors has been expanded to seven members who meet three times per year. The Secretariat has not been as successful as was hoped.

April 1971: Conference on the Future of the Material World. This conference, although basically a workshop on the operative issue in a theology of matter, featured talks by Carl Braaten, Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago, and by Dr. Robert Boguslaw, Department of Sociology, Washington University, Saint Louis.

October 1971: Conference on Death and Dying.

April 1972: Workshop on the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment: A Preview. This conference, a workshop discussion on the Draft Declaration on Environmental Principles for the Stockholm Conference, also contained talks by Mr. Whitman Bassow, senior public affairs officer, United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, by Dr. Charles Elliott, staff economist at SODEPAX and presently at the University of East Anglia, and by Mr. Taghi Farvar, an environmental scientist from Iran. The conference published a consensus that was widely circulated at the United Nations Conference in Stockholm, June 1972.

September 1972: Workshop on the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment: A Postview. This conference was held September 11-16 in Rome. The conference itself had a double purpose. A major goal was the meeting of American and European science-theology groups. The methodologies and insights of Americans and Europeans are quite different and we wanted to explore this difference and to establish liaisons between the two continents. We also established contact with staff members of interna-

tional church organizations such as the Lutheran World Federation, the World Council of Churches and the various commissions of the Vatican. Finally, we evaluated the U.N. Environmental Conference that was established at Stockholm.

The above conferences are the visible manifestations of ITEST's continuing efforts. There has been and is work that is not yet apparent or cannot be publicly identified as ITEST effort. An example of the latter would be the Institute of Environmental Studies at Saint Louis University, begun by several ITEST members who are on the faculty there. The initial founding group was composed entirely of ITEST members, and quite a few of the present faculty are members of ITEST. The spirit of the Environmental Institute clearly reflects the concerns of ITEST. The basic outline of the Institute of Environmental Studies was established by early 1970. The Institute has been formally incorporated into the Saint Louis University structure and is operating now totally within the university.

Concomitantly with the above, research in dogmatic theology has been initiated. This particular research reflects the deep conviction within the group that scientific discovery will have its major impact on the dogmatic and systematic bases of theology. Many groups are organized, or are being organized, to work on the ethical implications of modern discovery. These are usually concerned with a secular ethic or with an ad hoc patching of Christian morality. It is the view of many of us in ITEST that any well-developed Christian morality must be based on a systematic and dogmatic theology that is consciously aware of scientific progress. Consequently, research is being done on sacramental theology since this is considered to be a key in treating these questions.

Eventually, ITEST hopes to found a journal dedicated to these questions of science-theology significance. When this will occur depends on funding. We have several articles that could and should be published.

Some areas of ITEST activities are extremely difficult to evaluate. There is no way of knowing, for instance, how much influence is had by word of mouth, by personal contact, by changes in teaching method and content. It is clear that ITEST has had influence at Saint Louis University. It is more difficult to say just what influence has been exerted elsewhere.

I hesitate to predict the future of ITEST. We have built slowly and we think there is an organizational soundness. We expect membership to continue to grow at a marked pace.