



THE
INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY
FOR SCIENCE & RELIGION

ISSR 2020 Annual Report

Prepared for the Executive Committee, Fellows, and Associates of the International Society
for Science and Religion Annual General Meeting

05 August 2020

2020 Boyle Lecture

Christopher Cook

“Mental Health and the Gospel”



Photo by Harris Wiseman

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ISSR 2020 Annual Report

Executive Committee

Michael Reiss

Celia Deane-Drummond

Edward Larson

Nancy Howell

Russell Re Manning

Philip Clayton

Noah Efron

Prepared by

Fraser Watts

Anthony Nairn

New Fellows

The following have accepted invitations to be Fellows of the Society:

Thomas Aechtner; Mario Aletti; Arnold Benz; Jeff Bishop; Roger Bretherton; Godehard Bruentrup; Anna Case-Winters; William Clocksin; Ernst Conradie; Doru Costache; Augustin Fuentes; Benedikt Goecke; Daniel De Haan; Jonathan Hill; Jonathan Jong; Pete Jordan; Catherine Keller; Jonathan Lanman; Bernard Lightman; David Jou i Mirabent; Efthymios Nicolaidis; Joshua Reeves; Mary-Jane Rubenstein; Javier Sánchez-Cañizares; Sara Savage; Donovan O. Schaefer; Wm. Andrew Schwartz; Jacob Sherman; James Van Slyke; Meric Srokosz; Lisa Stenmark; William Storrar; James Stump; Mehrunisha Suleman; Cara Wall-Scheffler; Brent Waters; Gereon Wolters; Rene van Woudenberg; John Wyatt; M. Alper Yalçinkaya

This adds forty (40) new Fellows to ISSR from a diverse range of academic disciplines from around the globe.

Many thanks to all those who contributed nominations and those who participated as referees, and, of course, congratulations and a very warm welcome to all the new Fellows.

Grants

In January 2020 the Society completed a major research project on 'Religion and the Social Brain', funded by a grant of £759,320 (April 2017 – January 2020), from the Templeton Religion Trust. There is a blog summarising the outcomes of the project which may be accessed here: <https://www.issr.org.uk/blog/february-2020-blog-post-religion-and-the-social-brain-series/> and <https://www.issr.org.uk/blog/march-2020-blog-post-religion-and-the-social-brain-series/>. A Special Issue of the *Archive for the Psychology of Religion* appeared in March 2020, with articles arising from the project.

Publications continue to appear arising from an earlier project on 'The New Biology', including *Rethinking Biology: Public Understandings*, edited by Michael J. Reiss, Fraser Watts & Harris Wiseman, published by World Scientific. Copies have been sent to Fellows who requested it, as a membership benefit.

In August 2019, ISSR received a donation of 87,450 USD from the Templeton World Charity Foundation for annual book prizes for five years, starting in 2020. Nominations for the first year have been received and are now under review. It is intended to award the first prizes online at AAR 2020.

ISSR was also invited by the Templeton World Charity Foundation to submit a full application for a project on 'Understanding Spiritual Intelligence' as part of its *Diverse Intelligences* initiative. The application was successful and ISSR was awarded a grant of £745,755 for a project that will start in October 2020. We hope to hold an ISSR conference connected to the project in 2022 or 2023. There will be various strands of work, including: using a cognitive architecture to model how attention is deployed in spiritual practices; an examination of religious language, building on the work of Margaret Masterman who approached it from the perspective of computational linguistics; taking steps towards developing an artificial spiritual companion; computational modelling of the socially embedded aspects of religious reasoning; and developing a theology of intelligence.

Conferences and Events

ISSR organised a conference on Evolution, Religion and Social Bonding, linked to its project on 'Religion and the Social Brain', and held in the delightful setting of Eynsham Hall, Oxfordshire, UK, on 21st – 24th July. We received much positive feedback on the conference, with many saying it was one of the best conferences they could remember attending.

ISSR organised three sessions at the Annual Meeting of AAR in San Diego, California, 23rd– 26th November 2019. Eight new and emerging leaders in science and religion described their work and how it fitted traditional methods in science and religion. Another session explored the question: What happens to 'science and religion' when it is no longer clear what we mean by 'science' or 'religion'? A third ISSR session presented recent work on the relationship between technologies of human enhancement and Christian theological perspectives.

ISSR has continued to hold the convenorship of the annual Boyle Lecture on science and religion in London. The 2020 Boyle Lecture was given on 18th February at St Mary-le-Bow by Professor Christopher Cook, on 'Mental Health and the Gospel', with a response from Professor Fraser Watts. The lecture and response will be published in *Zygon*. The 2021 Lecture will be given by Professor Tom McLeish, with Dr Rowan Williams as respondent.

Plans were made to join ESSSAT for their conference in Madrid, April-May 2020, though the conference had to be cancelled because of the COVID-19 Pandemic. It is currently planned to be held in April 2021.

ISSR at Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion 2019

"Deification and Creaturehood"

Organized by Michael Burdett and Victoria Lorrimar



Left to right: Grant Macaskill, Eugenia Torrance, Simeon Zahl, Brandon Gallaher, Ted Peters, Ron Cole-Turner, Celia Deane-Drummond, and Michael Burdett.

Photo by Ben Sanders

Other Activities

ISSR agreed to become an additional sponsoring organisation for *Zygon: Journal of Science and Religion*, and three members of the ISSR Executive Committee have joined the Joint Publication Board for *Zygon*.

ISSR has continued to post regular blogs mid-month on science and religion on its website and is always pleased to hear from any Fellow or Associate who might like to contribute a blog to the series. If you are interested in contributing a blog, please email admin@issr.org.uk.

We now also issue a monthly newsletter. This newsletter is created by contributions from the membership. Each item is sent to Anthony (admin@issr.org.uk), which is then posted on the website as a news item, 'Tweeted', and added to the newsletter. The compiled newsletter is sent to all subscribing members at the beginning of each month. If you have anything to contribute, you may email Anthony at any time.

The Executive Committee is making plans for an online conference for members of the Society, and hopes to make an announcement shortly. This will follow up on some of the issues flagged up in the blog by the Executive Secretary on "What is ISSR for?"

The ISSR maintains a presence on Twitter. This has become an increasingly popular platform for academics, and if you use Twitter you may follow us using the handle [@the_issr](https://twitter.com/the_issr).

Fraser Watts
Executive Secretary

Anthony K Nairn
Administrator