
CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR
TEN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH GRANTS
OF UP TO \$150,000

Advancing a New Field of Scientific Research



**SPIRITUAL
TRANSFORMATION**
SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH PROGRAM

ADVANCING NEW INTERDISCIPLINARY
STUDIES IN THE HUMAN SCIENCES

SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH PROGRAM
The Metanexus Institute on Religion and Science
3624 Market Street, Suite 301
Philadelphia, PA 19104
www.spiritualtransformationresearch.org

**PROSPECTIVE INVESTIGATORS SHOULD FOLLOW
THE SCHEDULE BELOW:**

JUNE 1, 2002	Submission deadline for Letters of Intent
JULY 1, 2002	Selection of 40 Principal Investigators to attend research conference
OCTOBER 5-7, 2002	Research Conference to be held at The Inn at Penn of the University of Pennsylvania
JANUARY 6, 2003	Submission deadline for full proposals
MARCH 2003	Announcement of 10 funded research projects
MAY 2003	Funding of 10 grants, approximately \$150,000 each, awarded and payable over two years
MAY 2005	Conclusion of research projects
OCTOBER 2005	Public Colloquium on Spiritual Transformation (planned)

| OVERVIEW

The 100th anniversary of William James' classic work, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, provides an historic waypoint for us to reconsider the scientific study of religious and spiritual phenomena. Anthropology, sociology, psychology, psychiatry, pharmacology, neurology, biology, neuroscience, religious studies, and cognate fields overlap in an interdisciplinary study of diverse and sometimes ambivalent religious phenomena. William James reminds us that "the varieties of religious experiences" should be "judged by their fruits, not by their roots." What are the "fruits of the spirit" as witnessed in numerous and remarkable accounts of spiritual transformation? How might we better understand these perennial and peculiar transformations in human thought and behavior?

The Metanexus Institute on Religion and Science is pleased to announce a \$2.5 million research program on the nature of spiritual transformation. The Spiritual Transformation Scientific Research Program will include: (i) Submission of letters of intent from prospective principal investigators by June 1, 2002; (ii) An invitation-only research conference October 5-7, 2002 designed for forty prospective principal investigators to address issues pertaining to literature review, methodology, research design, peer review processes, and the establishment of a network of active investigators; (iii) Submission of completed proposals by January 6, 2003 and selection of ten projects to be funded by March 1, 2003, with each project to receive approximately \$150,000 over a two-year period to conduct research on the nature of spiritual transformation; (iv) A public conference in October 2005 to feature some of the research results; (v) Ongoing networking and collaboration to develop and sustain on-going scientific studies of diverse spiritual and religious phenomena.

| PURPOSE

Although there is wide acknowledgement that spiritual transformations occur and that they can have profound effects on the life of a person, group or society, there have been few integrated scientific studies conducted that account for the nature of the various biological, psychosocial, and cultural conditions and factors that underlie spiritual transformations. This lack of scientific study is due, in part, to the long-term historical divide between scientific investigation and matters of religion. The Spiritual Transformation Scientific Research Program seeks to fill this important gap in our knowledge by rigorously investigating various aspects of the sociocultural, psychological and neurological factors that underlie the processes of spiritual transformations of individuals and groups. The research conference and the ten funded projects will help to create an interdisciplinary field in the human sciences for researching spiritual transformation using cutting edge methodologies and experimental designs that may potentially provide new insights in this area of investigation. We have an opportunity to create a new field of inquiry, freed from the prejudices of the past, to examine diverse religious and spiritual phenomena with scientific rigor.

| TOPICS

In order to provide a working definition of spiritual transformation for purposes of launching this inquiry, we initially define it as dramatic changes in world and self views, purposes, religious beliefs, attitudes, and behavior. These changes are often linked to discrete experiences that can occur gradually or over relatively short periods of time. This change usually occurs within three contexts: (i) As an intensified devotion within the same religious structure; (ii) A shift from no spiritual commitment to a devout spiritual life; or (iii) A change from one faith tradition to another. These changes are sometimes precipitated by stress and anguish, induced through rigorous practices, and can also occur spontaneously without apparent corollaries.

The following are a series of questions designed to provide a guide to further investigation into spiritual transformation. We welcome other kinds of innovative questions and insights that may stem from these and/or related questions that various applicants may propose for further investigation.

- | What constitutes spiritual transformation? Is there more than one kind of spiritual transformation? How do we need to revise our working definition of spiritual transformation to develop a more comprehensive model of the phenomenon?
- | What are the pathways (processes, antecedents, and outcomes) of various forms of spiritual transformation (both incremental and rapid)? What are the psychosocial correlates of each? What individual characteristics are associated with different pathways, such as genetic, developmental or neuropsychological (for example, cognitive complexity, emotional lability, and so forth)? What group characteristics are associated with different pathways (e.g., suffering, social support, cultural factors)? What individual and group characteristics are facilitators/inhibitors to spiritual transformations?
- | What are the outcomes for individuals who undergo a spiritual transformation experience and for the groups with whom these individuals interact? What are the benefits and/or costs of these spiritual transformation experiences for the individuals and groups? What factors influence the stability of various spiritual transformation outcomes, for example, how do various kinds of outcomes relate to prior individual characteristics, the set and setting of the experience, subsequent training and support, and other important factors?
- | What contexts are associated with different pathways of spiritual transformation experience? To what extent are special states (psychic, social, pharmacological, and neuropsychological) associated with having a spiritual transformation experience? Are there contexts and states that particularly facilitate or inhibit a/the spiritual transformation experience? To what extent does pain/painlessness enter into the spiritual transformation process?
- | What aspects of the spiritual transformation processes are associated with specific techniques, such as fasting, use of pharmacological substances, solitude, singing/music, confession, celebration that become incorporated in religious and non-religious secular practices?

- | What roles such as social context and setting of various religious and non-religious practices play in enhancing various factors that underlie spiritual transformation processes? For example, what roles do prayer/ meditation, worship, pilgrimage, readings of scriptures and/or other sacred texts and stories, "telling ones story", artistic endeavor, relationship toward nature, acts of service to others and various other kinds of religious and non religious rituals play in the process?
- | What is the role of significant personal experiences and life events in the processes of spiritual transformation? Are there spiritually transforming events and processes that are distinctly and uniquely spiritual? Or are the processes of spiritual transformation the same as those involved in, for example, political transformation, but simply involving different content? How do spontaneous experiences of spiritual transformation occur? How do spontaneous experiences of spiritual transformation vary in terms of antecedents and outcomes from institutionalized forms of spiritual transformation that occur within religious and secular experiences?
- | How can contemporary psychosocial and biosocial models, theories and methods of study be improved to account for the various aspects of spiritual transformation? Are there universal elements to the spiritual transformation processes? How do the underlying processes vary among the range of possible factors (individual and group social stresses and strains) that create/stimulate a spiritually transformative experience?

We not only acknowledge the existence of different kinds of spiritual transformation, but also seek proposals that reflect diverse methodologies in studying these experiences. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches are necessary to gain a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of spiritual transformation. Case studies and ethnographic research, for example, provide very rich qualitative data and key theoretical insights to processes that are often not amenable to study through more standard survey and quantitative research. At the same time, experimental and quasi-experimental designs as well as a full range of other innovative methodologies (e.g. multilevel modeling, accelerated longitudinal, etc.) to studying spiritual transformation are strongly encouraged.

For further information and references, please see
<www.spiritualtransformationresearch.org> and click on **Research**.

| ELIGIBILITY

We are looking for the enthusiastic involvement of scientists and scholars from around the world who want to advance the cause of interdisciplinary research on the nature of spiritual transformation. Applicants from anthropology, sociology, psychology, psychiatry, pharmacology, neurology, biology, neuroscience, and religious studies are encouraged to apply. We also recommend, where possible, that researchers and religionists seek to collaborate on research under this announcement. We want to attract distinguished and emerging researchers who are experimenting with creative new methodologies and techniques for examining human expression and experience. Studies of diverse religious traditions and practices under the rubric of spiritual transformation are welcome.

The Principal Investigator of the Spiritual Transformation Scientific Research Program is **Solomon H. Katz**, President of the Metanexus Institute on Religion and Science and Director of the Krogman Center for Research in Child Growth and Development at the University of Pennsylvania.

Collaborators in the study include **David Hufford**, Director of the Doctors Kienle Center for Humanistic Medicine at Penn State College of Medicine, and **Byron Johnson**, Director and Distinguished Senior Fellow at the Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society at the University of Pennsylvania.

Advisory Board Members and Consultants include:

Edward F. Foulks, Tulane University
Philip Hefner, Zygon Center for Religion and Science
Joan D. Koss-Chioino, Arizona State University
Kenneth Pargament, Bowling Green State University
Lawrence E. Sullivan, Harvard University
Robert Wuthnow, Princeton University

CRITERIA FOR COMPETITIVE EVALUATION

The goals of the Spiritual Transformation Scientific Research Program are to advance our understanding of the nature of spiritual transformation. In the written comments reviewers will be asked to discuss the following aspects of the application in order to judge the likelihood that the proposed research will have a substantial impact on the pursuit of these goals. Each of these criteria (which have been adopted from NIH peer review criteria) will be addressed and considered in assigning the overall score, weighting them as appropriate for each application. Note that the application does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have major scientific impact and thus deserve a high quality priority score. For example, an investigator may propose to carry out important work that by its nature is not innovative but is essential to move the field forward.

Significance: Does this study address an important problem or aspect within the understanding of spiritual transformation? If the aims of the application are achieved, how will scientific knowledge about spiritual transformation be advanced? What will be the effect of this study on the concepts or methods that currently define the research on spiritual transformation?

Approach: Are the conceptual framework, design, methods, and analyses adequately developed, well integrated, and appropriate to the aims of the project? Does the applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and consider alternate tactics?

Innovation: Does the project employ novel concepts, approaches or methods? Are the aims original and innovative? Does the project challenge existing paradigms or develop new methodologies or technologies? Is there evidence that the project is capable of generating vibrant multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary discourse within research communities?

Investigator: Is the investigator appropriately trained and well suited to carry out this work? Is the work proposed appropriate to the experience level of the principal investigator and other researchers (if any)?

Environment: Does the scientific and scholarly environment in which the work will be done contribute to the probability of success? Does the proposed project take advantage of unique features of the scientific environment or employ useful collaborative arrangements? Is there evidence of institutional support? Do you have resources available to leverage for other sources of support for short- and long-term development?

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Letter of Intent: Interested and qualified scholars from a variety of academic disciplines are invited to submit a Letter of Intent no later than June 1, 2002. The letter should describe the research project you propose to conduct and it should be not more than three pages in length, single-spaced, with no smaller than a 10-point font. Attention should be paid to the significance and the methodological design of the project. A curriculum vitae summary of not more than three pages for the principal investigator should also be attached. This should include references to previous articles and books written by the investigator.

To submit a Letter of Intent online, you must have the above information included in one or two Word document(s) or PDF files. Attach your letter document(s) to an email message and send to Christopher Stawski — stawski@metanexus.net. Once your document(s) has been received, you will receive confirmation via email.

In addition to your attachment(s), please include the following information in your e-mail:

- *First Name
- *Last Name
- *Title
- *Institution
- *Address, City, State, Zip Code, Country
- *Phone Number
- *Fax Number
- *Preferred Email Address
- *Website

Research Conference: Forty prospective principal investigators will be chosen by July 1, 2002 from the field of applicants to attend a research conference October 5-7, 2002. Only one investigator per invitation will be supported to attend the research conference. The research conference is designed to help prospective investigators address issues pertaining to literature review, methodology, research design, peer review processes, and the establishment of a network of active investigators. We encourage prospective investigators to have preliminary proposals developed before the research conference.

Full Proposals: The 40 prospective principal investigators who are selected to the research conference are expected to submit full proposals by January 6, 2003. Full proposals should include:

- i. Cover letter signed by the principal investigator
- ii. Executive summary of the proposed project
- iii. Detailed proposed research project, including an analysis of the project's risks and limitations (no more than 10 pages, single-spaced, 12-point font)
- iv. Proposed budget, with appropriate notes
- v. Evidence of IRB approval for research involving human subjects
- vi. Evidence of tax-exempt status

Proposals should have full and detailed curriculum vitae attached for the principal investigator and any co-investigators involved in the research project. Ten copies of all materials must be submitted by mail. In addition, single copies of supplemental materials are welcome with the application, such as copies of relevant publications, institutional brochures, or press clippings.

The 10 proposals will be selected in March 2003 for funding of approximately \$150,000 per project, payable over a two-year period. The funding will begin in May 2003, with projects concluding in May 2005. Each investigator will then take part in a public colloquium to report their findings in October 2005.

PLEASE DIRECT ALL INQUIRIES TO:

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The **Metanexus Institute on Religion and Science** <www.metanexus.net> is dedicated to research, education, and outreach on the constructive engagement of science and religion. The Spiritual Transformation Scientific Research Program is made possible by special funding from the **John Templeton Foundation** <www.templeton.org> and the support of individual and institutional donors.