

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

PROSPECTIVE INVESTIGATORS SHOULD FOLLOW THE SCHEDULE BELOW:

JUNE 1, 2002 Letters of Intent due no later than June 1, 2002	JULY 1, 2002 40 Principal Investigators selected to attend Research Conference	OCTOBER 5-7, 2002 3-day Research Conference to be held at The Inn at Penn of the University of Pennsylvania	JANUARY 6, 2003 Full proposals due	MARCH 2003 Announcement of 10 funded research projects	MAY 2003 10 grants, approximately \$150,000 each, awarded and payable over two years	MAY 2005 Research projects conclude	OCTOBER 2005 (planned) Public Colloquium on Spiritual Transformation
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Throughout history and in our own time, humans have had profound experiences with a spiritual dimension of reality. In all traditions, individuals testify that their lives are no longer the same in the aftermath of these experiences, that they have been transformed. Independent observers often attest to these changes as well. Can the study of the nature of such changes offer another possibility for developing new insights into, improved understanding of, and greater appreciation for spiritually transforming experiences?

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?

While the human and social sciences have made great progress in the last century, religious and spiritual phenomena have infrequently been the focus of scientific and systematic analyses. We have many new tools and methods to describe, detect, measure, and understand complex human phenomena, but we have not made much progress in research into religious phenomena since William James' famous Gifford lectures. This lack of scientific study is due, in part, to the long-term historical divide between scientific investigation and matters of religion. We seek to create a new field of inquiry, freed from the prejudices of the past, able to examine diverse religious and spiritual phenomena with scientific rigor. One such phenomenon is that of "spiritual transformation".

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.

A number of studies and theoretical perspectives are suggestive of the kind of research areas involved in the phenomena of spiritual transformation. Insights can be derived from the cognitive sciences (McCallister, 1995), coping theory (Pargament, 1997), flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991), neuropsychology (Lex, 1978), attachment theory (Kirkpatrick 1997), and relationship dynamics (Rambo, 1993; Ullman, 1989). Practices that may be important include pilgrimage, meditation, prayer, confession, conversion, healing, readings of sacred texts, "telling one's story", and acts of service to others. These perspectives and practices raise many questions concerning the various pathways, contexts, outcomes, and techniques involved in spiritual transformation. Hence, a goal of this research program is to develop new, better integrated studies that address these emerging questions.

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. 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 spiritual transformations of individuals and groups. The research conference and the ten funded projects will help to advance an interdisciplinary field in the human sciences for researching spiritual and religious phenomena using cutting edge methodologies and experimental designs.

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

You can learn more about the Spiritual Transformation Scientific Research Program by visiting www.spiritualtransformationresearch.org. In order to apply for a grant, you must submit a Letter of Intent no later than June 1, 2002. Forty prospective principal investigators will then be selected to attend a private research conference October 5-7, 2002 in Philadelphia. Full grant applications will then be invited for a total of \$1.6 million in research funds. For guidelines and more information, visit www.spiritualtransformationresearch.org or contact Christopher Stawski, Program Associate at stawski@metanexus.net.

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.