

Princeton Small Group Strives for Unification of Science and Religion

Ariana Moon
June 11, 2012



Out of a desire to apply Unificationist ideals to the relationship between religion and science, the Princeton Small Group organized an event called the “Forum on the Interface between Religion and Science/Technology” (FIRST) at the Lovin’ Life Clifton Church from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday June 9, 2012.

The founding members of the Princeton Small Group, dedicated to the idea of applying and realizing Unificationist ideals in all aspects of life, are Unificationists Jeffrey Kingsley, Don and Tomoe Mull, Alexander Beebe (Princeton 2013) and Alexia and Geoffrey Dilg. FIRST is the group’s initial effort to think about how to apply those ideals to the relationship between science and religion.



Alexia Miller Dilg, Princeton class of 2012 and a Ph.D. candidate in molecular biophysics at Johns Hopkins University, said, “Arguably, the goal of science is to create a better relationship with and understanding of the physical world, while the goal of religion is to create a better relationship with and understanding of God and the spiritual world. Our conference is guided by the question: keeping in mind the different goals of science and religion, how do we conceive of an ideal relationship between them? This forum is not meant to propose a solution to the difficulties that exist in the interface between religion and science, but merely to explore and ask different questions about this interface.

“We wanted to foster discussion between first- and second-generation members about uniting the

seemingly distinct entities that are science and religion, as well as identify potential steps to take substantially to progress toward the unity of science and religion.”

According to Dilg, about 30 first- and second-generation Unificationists attended the event, which consisted of four sessions during which a speaker introduced a relevant topic, and an open discussion involving all attendees followed. The following topics were presented: “The Role of Science and Religion in Society” by Alexander Beebe; “Who Are We? Unification Thought, Evolution and Intelligent Design” by Dr. Don Mull; “Physical and Spiritual Realities” by Alison Byer (Princeton alumna) and David Burton; and “Reconciling a Secular Mission with a Life of Faith” by Wayne Miller, Godfrey Miller (Princeton 2007), Alexia Miller and Geoffrey Dilg. Lunch was provided for the attendees and closing remarks were given by Dr. Ann Iparraguirre, district pastor for District 3 [New Jersey, Delaware and Pennsylvania], during which potential future FIRST topics were discussed.

“The event went very well,” said Dilg. “We were really happy with the interest expressed by those who attended. We had a good number of first- and second-gen, but we would like to see more of a second-gen presence in the future. We also hope to partner with existing organizations such as UTS, Barrytown College and CARP and extend to other college campuses and organizations outside our church.

“We definitely hope to have more FIRSTs, possibly even one later this year. For this inaugural FIRST, we targeted only Unification Church members, and, more specifically, those church members with some background in science. We wanted to begin with an in-house effort, and then extend outward with future installments of FIRST. We’re definitely aware that to have efficacy in the outside world, we need to talk with people who are not Unificationist members, and we are working towards that goal.”

Dr. Iparraguirre: “From the first I heard of this conference, I knew that True Father would be inspired to see the second-generation of our movement pick up on the science conferences that he had invested in so much himself. Years ago, we invited world famous scientists to discuss the essential connection between religion and science and what difference understanding that connection made in our lives. Now, the fact that FIRST was conceived of, designed by and facilitated by children of the original pioneers of the early science conferences, is compelling. This is a model that Rev. In Jin Moon has nurtured in every aspect of our lives – where young people are finding their genius and living their genius while connected with God and surrounded by parents and seasoned professionals who support this growth and discovery. I’m looking forward to many more FIRSTs!”



Feedback from Participants

Pierre Tardy: "I do a lot of witnessing on the internet, and I deal with people who don't believe in religion and think that science is the answer. It was interesting to hear the different presentations from both first-

and second-generation. The event was well prepared. It was a good mix of first- and second-generation, especially second generation who had already graduated and who were going out into the workplace and managing both a professional life and a life of faith. The issue of science, religion, and philosophy is very important, and those who came were very interested in these areas."

David Dilg: "I was most pleasantly surprised by the day I spent at the conference on religion and science in Clifton, NJ. It was well organized and the presenters were well prepared. Dr. Don Mull gave a most excellent presentation on the topic of evolutionary theory and its pros and cons. The panel discussions and discussions following the presentations were exciting and perhaps heated at times due to the stimulation of values and concepts close to the hearts of those attending. I believe the organizers gained valuable feedback as to how to continue and advance the quality of future events. One added perk of the day was to see the Clifton Church for the first time. There happened to be a quite substantial gathering of second-generation children there who seemed to be enjoying themselves greatly."



Marion Miller: "Keep up the great work Princeton Small Group! I admire your unity, intelligence, and fun spirit with humility and kindness. The cooperation and flow was wonderful today. I can't wait for more."

Edwin Ang: "I appreciated all the presentations. [It would be good] to have the presentations recorded on the website for further study. One topic that I would suggest for future presentations is the use of social media for our movement."

Anonymous: "I thought the presentations were well-organized and well-presented, and I thought the ideas and thoughts shared were very interesting and insightful. I think the discussions were interesting and I felt like I learned a lot from other's ideas. As I listened to the presentations and discussions, I was able to see more and more how religion and science can be brought together. Overall, it was a very good experience, and it was very nice to hear the viewpoints from both first- and second-generation. Maybe more second generation could be encouraged to come, and perhaps during presentations there could be spaces made for discussion."

Anonymous: "Interesting thoughts in the discussions. Lots of food for thought. Nice to hear ideas from first- and second-generation, especially from such mixed backgrounds. Panel discussions were very interesting, especially, 'Pursuing God's Will in a Secular Mission.' Overall, well organized and educational."

The Inaugural

Forum on the

Interface between

Religion and

Science/

Technology

** Acknowledgements **

We thank Dr. Ann Iparraguirre for her encouragement and support; Manoj Jacobs for his technical support; Janna Iparraguirre for her administrative expertise; Jeffrey Kingsley for his inspiration and event facilitation; and Tomoe Mull for her managerial efforts.

And thank you to all of the presenters and participants for contributing to our inaugural FIRST.



June 9, 2012

*Presented by the Princeton Small Group,
Hosted by Lovin' Life Ministries, Clifton*

Quotes inspiring FIRST:

- “When the sailor, who has completed his voyage in search of external truth under the sail of science, adds another sail, the sail of religion, and embarks on a new voyage in search of internal truth, he finally will be headed toward the destination for which his original mind yearns.”
– Introduction to The Divine Principle by Rev. Sun Myung Moon
- “Mankind's liberation from the harms caused by the misuse of scientific technology can come only when science itself recognizes God, and guides and applies its technology in the same directions as God's love.”
– From the 8th ICUS founder's address by Rev. Sun Myung Moon

Forum Objectives:

- Foster discussions between first and second generation members about how to realize Unificationist ideals at the interface between science and religion.
- Explore the unification of science and religion in our personal missions and in the world at large.
- Identify potential steps to take to substantially progress toward the unity of science and religion.

Program Schedule:

- 10:00 – 10:30 Opening remarks by Dr. Ann Iparraguirre. Introduction to FIRST by Alexander Beebe and Alexia Miller. Additional Comments by Alexia Miller.
- 10:30 – 11:30 “Hawking and Teresa: A World Apart” by Alexander Beebe
Science and religion are often seen as being polar opposites. What is the source of this conflict? Is harmonious coexistence possible for such different disciplines? The presentation will approach these questions from the perspective of the individual purposes of religion and science.
- 11:30 – 12:30 “Who are we? Unification Thought, Evolution, and Intelligent Design” by Dr. Don Mull
A brief summary of current perspectives in modern evolutionary thought contrasted with intelligent design, and why Unification Thought can answer some of the questions posed by both sides.
- 12:30 – 1:30 Lunch
- 1:30 – 2:30 Panel: “Physical and Spiritual Realities” with Alison Wakelin and Dr. David Burton
- 2:30 – 3:30 Panel: “Pursuing God's Will in a Secular Mission” with Rev. Wayne Miller, Godfrey Miller, Geoffrey Dilg, and Alexia Miller Dilg
Though religion and science are often construed as antagonistic toward one another, historically, the judeo-christian tradition has served as the basis for scientific and technological progress. In this panel session, we will explore the roots of this perceived discord, and examine how a secular mission can fulfill God's will.
- 3:30 – 4:30 Closing: Open discussion of potential future FIRST topics and closing remarks by Dr. Ann Iparraguirre.