INSTITUTE FOR THEOLOGICAL ENCOUNTER

WITH SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

(ITEST)

NEWSLETTER

Volume 15, Number 1

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For Your Calendar:

The March 9-11, 1984 Workshop will have as its topic "Artificial Intelligence". The faculty we have assembled includes: K.G. Kempf, Sr. (McDonnell Douglas Automation Co.), Joseph Koterski (University of St. Thomas), R.L. Martino (President, XRT, Inc.), Joop Schopman (University of Utrecht, Netherlands), Edward Schroeder (Christ Seminary - Seminex). If you are interested in attending and have not yet sent in your registration, please contact Robert Brungs, S.J., Director: ITEST, 221 N. Grand Blvd., St. Louis, Mo. 63103.

The October, 1984 Conference will deal with "The Positive Contributions of Science and Technology to Christian Theology." Although the time is now very short, we would appreciate any suggestions on theologians who could address these issues. We need your input on what issues you think would make these discussions more informative and who can present them well.

For Your Attention:

The October, 1983 Conference was on the role of Christian men and women of science in the mission of the church. During that Conference a significant amount of time was put aside for small-group discussion on ways and means of developing the mission of scientists in the church. Peggy Keilholz has generously accepted the assignment of summarizing these small group discussions. We owe her a debt of gratitude for that work. The summary she developed makes up this Newsletter. We are sharing with the membership-at-large the ideas of the Conference participants about mission and about ITEST's contribution to that mission. We would urge each one of you to read carefully and reflect on any contribution you can make personally to this work. There are three items we would like to call to your attention.

1. It was recommended that members be informed about each other in order to establish more avenues of communication and cooperation. To this end, Dr. John Cross has developed a very brief survey, which is enclosed with this issue of the Newsletter. We would ask you to fill it out and return it to us within 30 days. We shall then distribute the information to each of the members. Please help us with this. This information would be very helpful in carrying out the goals of mutual encouragement and cooperation called for by the Conference participants.

2. Enclosed also with this Newsletter are several copies of the new ITEST brochure. We ask you to distribute these to colleagues whom you think might be interested in ITEST. If you should need more, please contact ITEST at the address given above. We'd be pleased to send you as many as you want.

3. Also enclosed is the list of suggestions developed by the Conference participants. We ask you to reflect on what you might be willing to do to make ITEST a more active more influential, and more productive element in the science-faith encounter.

Above all, please take the time to fill out the enclosed survey and return it to us promptly. The dissemination of this information to the other members is vital to this work.

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The October Conference -- Variation on a Theme

For those participants at last October's Conference who had attended previous ITEST conferences and workshops, the format of the meeting took a different turn on Saturday afternoon and evening. The Conference topic was The Role of Christian Men and Women of Science in the Mission of the Church. The Conference started off in the manner to which participants have become accustomed over the years: opening remarks on Friday evening followed by open discussion by anyone wishing to say something. For those who have not been able to attend an ITEST conference or workshop, but have seen the pictures in the published proceedings, you may be able to visualize a rectangular room with forty or more people seated around tables which form a rectangle. When there is an overflow attendance as at the October meeting, another table or two may be set up behind the tables on the east end of the room.

Discussion is open to anyone who is present. No credentials are required to offer a comment or to make an observation. The only qualification is that a person have something to say. The individual himself or herself makes the judgement about whether to remain silent or to contribute what he or she is thinking. Some people choose to speak in the "committee of the whole" while others choose to reserve their sharing to the informal gatherings which happen during the generous free hours which are built into the agenda.

The October 1983 Conference offered myriad opportunities for reflecting and sharing on the theme of the Conference. The agenda for this meeting relied more heavily on the contributions of each individual rather than on the input of presenters. The Conference served as a time for reflecting on ITEST itself. ITEST is one community of scientists, technologists, theologians, philosophers, and laity who are fulfilling the need they have to come together for dialogue in the area of science, technology, and religion. One of ITEST's most important goals is to become a locus or center around which Christian men and women of science can gather both to inform the church and to evangelize the scientific community. ITEST brings together those scientists and technologists who are on the firing line in order to help them to discover that they are not alone in their faith and in their concerns about the impact of science and technology on belief and the impact of belief on science and technology.

As the October Conference moved along in its discussion of the Conference theme, some of the participants suggested that a change in format might prove fruitful in engaging all the participants in the discussion and in generating specific ideas that could be used in making ITEST more visible and well-known both to the scientific/technological community and to the church. (Church here is used in the broad sense and not in reference to a specific denomination.) Small groups met to brainstorm ideas about how this could be done and to begin to prioritize the ideas. So many ideas were presented that prioritizing was not really accomplished.

One of the principal ideas stressed was the need for individual efforts to help make ITEST more well-known and to increase membership. While that suggestion is something for which each member can take responsibility, some suggestions require action by the ITEST Board of Directors. The ability to carry out other suggestions requires fund-raising.

With the latter as a caveat, herewith are some of the ideas which came from the ITEST members gathered at the October Conference.

In order to engage church leaders in the dialogue between science/technology and religion, members proposed finding means to establish contacts with future church leaders while they are being trained in the seminaries. The thrust here would be to make seminarians aware of the advances in science and technology and of the theological implications of those advances. A side effect would be that perhaps some of the seminarians so exposed to the issues would decide to pursue the theological questions further or, at least, would maintain an interest in the science/technology-theology dialogue after leaving the seminary and remain literate in the world of science and technology. A spin-off of this idea is to provide sabbaticals to seminary faculty to work with ITEST for a year in order to familiarize themselves with the issues which are part of the science/technology-theology discussion. A person completing such a sabbatical would be an asset in the education of seminarians about the challenges which science and technology pose to theology and religion. Another place for input into theological training is the diaconate. One member noted that the diaconate might also be attracting some scientists and technologists whose expertise should not be ignored by the church. Continuing education of the clergy is also needed to keep them abreast of the changes in science and technology and the meaning of these changes for the people they serve.

The idea of the sabbatical has another dimension to it -- sabbaticals for scientists and technologists to teach in a seminary or to be present as a "scientist or technologist in residence." Scientists and technologists might also consider the possibility of taking a sabbatical which they could spend with ITEST.

Many members suggested ideas involving the dissemination of information about ITEST through publications or other media. For example, some people suggested letters to the editors of scientific and religious publications to let the readership know about the existence of ITEST. Others suggested placing ads in scientific and religious publications. Akin to that suggestion was the idea that the ad might announce a forthcoming ITEST Conference or Workshop. However, some members expressed concern about drawing too many participants to meetings if that were done and thereby losing the somewhat intimate and familial environment which surrounds ITEST Conferences and Workshops. Articles prepared by ITEST members and made available to the religious press would serve as another way of making ITEST known and disseminating information on science and technology to readers of religious publications. Members also suggested the use of other media: video tapes, radio spots, talk shows, and television. (The use of television is a viable possibility if ITEST is able to raise approximately $25,000 more to match a grant from the Catholic Communications Campaign to produce a 55-minute program on the implications of the progress in the biological sciences and technologies.)

More effective use of the ITEST newsletter was also suggested. Father Brungs has asked readers of the newsletter to contribute to it, and would like readers to contribute. This is an open invitation to all members and not a request to a select few. Contributions to the newsletter could include articles, book reviews, and bibliographies.

A number of members suggested the preparation of a brochure describing ITEST which would include an application for membership. Such a brochure was already in preparation at the time of the October Conference and is now available. The brochure is a professionally-produced piece and fits in a standard number 10 envelope. The brochure should encourage the use of the most frequent suggestion for attracting new members to ITEST -- personal invitation. ITEST seems to be a well-kept secret. Several members who were attending their first meeting in October recounted how they learned about ITEST. Usually someone who had known about ITEST for quite some time happened to mention ITEST to them. If, after learning about ITEST, they happened to mention ITEST to someone else they knew they discovered that that person also knew about ITEST's existence but never mentioned it. This is not a criticism of current ITEST members, but reflects the uncertainty that front-line scientists and technologists feel when it comes to seeking out other Christians who, like themselves, are concerned about the relationship between science/technology and religion.

The suggestion about the role of each member in obtaining at least one new member is related to other suggestions which surfaced at the October Conference. Networking among ITEST members in various areas could serve to strengthen the bonds of fellowship among members. Distribution of the roster of ITEST members would help members to find one another. These small groups of ITEST members could help to serve another function of ITEST which is to be a means of mutual support and encouragement to those who are concerned about the moral and ethical consequences of progress in science and technology. Moving ITEST meetings around might also foster the growth of ITEST in other areas of the U.S. (or the world for that matter). Both of these suggestions depend on the members knowing who the other ITEST members are who are close to them and on the willingness of members to help set up conferences and workshops in other cities.

Networking also applies to establishing linkages with others who are not part of the ITEST community. In order to accomplish this members suggested setting up a booth at professional meetings and sharing mailing lists with other organizations whose interest are similar to ITEST's. Other types of liaison were suggested as well; for example, obtaining Non-governmental Organization status in UNESCO at the United Nations and increasing liaison with the church. The latter includes increasing the awareness of church leaders (bishops, for example) tying into church councils, and establishing or increasing communication with church offices.

Input into the total educational arena is another suggestion. This would mean finding ways of disseminating information about science/technology and religion to elementary and secondary schools and to colleges. A textbook for high schools and colleges would be one way of doing this. (The ITEST book which is now completed in its first draft could serve as such a text. Curriculum materials could be developed from the book.) Tying in with campus ministers and campus organizations is another vehicle for getting the word out. In preparing Bible and other study materials, campus ministers could include material from ITEST. This could serve to reach not only those students in scientific and technological fields but also those in other courses of study. Scientist-campus minister teams or scientist-theologian teams could be used in teaching courses on the college level.

Other suggestions coming from the October Conference included: making ITEST materials available in Spanish (other languages too?); presenting legislative testimony on public policy issues; establishing an ITEST auxiliary to help with fund-raising efforts; T-shirts, caps, and bumper stickers to increase awareness of ITEST.

The brainstorming activity raised many possibilities. The members present expressed their concern that in efforts to increase membership in ITEST and to make ITEST better known two elements of ITEST not be lost in the process: 1) the familial atmosphere and 2) the ecumenical thrust. Speaking to the latter issue, John Cross noted that ITEST is a very ecumenical group and that is not found much in contemporary American Christianity. ITEST is a place where some of the artificial walls between the professions and the churches can be broken down. ITEST has consciously made efforts not to draw conclusions from the discussions at meetings, conclusions which could then be presented as the authoritative voice of a group of scientists and theologians speaking to questions of public policy which arise from the work of scientists and technologists. ITEST has tried to not draw conclusions, preferring instead to keep the channels of communication open and the discussion moving, raising questions rather than providing answers. The need for an ITEST does not seem to be diminishing with the passage of time. The question is, "Can we or should we do more?"

Hanna Klaus reminded all those present at the October meeting that the ideas came from the group which showed itself to be creative, but that if the ideas did not go home with the people present they would simply remain good ideas. The key idea and the one which already has the approval of the Board of Directors is that members invite their friends and colleagues to join ITEST. With brochure in hand, this should be easier to do than in the past.

Bob Bertram observed that sometimes we are not aware of the things we do that further the building of the Christian community among scientist, technologists, and theologians. Each ITEST member should ask himself or herself: "What do I, in fact, think I do in my calling by way of penetrating the scientific or technological world in which I live my Christian faith?" This kind of reflection should, perhaps, be shared among members at ITEST meetings so that we might mutually encourage, admonish, and console one another. Rather than waiting for a meeting at which the vast majority of ITEST members are not present, John Cross suggested a survey which he has put together and which is part of this newsletter. The survey grew out of the suggestion of Bob Bertram's that each of us reflect on what it is that we do. The sharing of the results will be for our mutual encouragement and support.

The October Conference may have deviated from the announced topic of the Conference by taking an excursion into what could be done to further the growth of ITEST and to make it more visible. That excursion, however, was not self-serving if we consider that one of the most important functions of ITEST is to be a focal point or locus around which Christians -- scientists, technologists, theologians, philosophers, social scientists, lawyers, laypersons in all of these fields -- can gather to share, to encourage, to inform themselves and the church, and to evangelize the scientific and technological community. The gathering of so many diverse people is a rare and happy experience in a world of specialization. It presents its own special challenges as those with different and distinctive vocabularies and jargon converse together and explore the meaning of what is happening as science and technology continue to grow in ways which force us to ask ever more urgently, "What does it mean to be human?"

What does it mean to be Christian in a world in which human beings literally hold the future of the human race in their hands; not just through the power of nuclear weapons but through the power to alter the human gene pool? If, indeed, power follows the direction of hope, those who continue to meet to discuss and to share the future possibilities and the meaning of these possibilities for the Christian are among the most hopeful and powerful people in the world.

Ideas and Suggestions

1. Seminaries - contacts with, sabbaticals, input with Diaconate

2. Publications - computer articles, video tapes; ads in scientific and religious publications; radio spots; talk shows, TV and cable; letters to editors of scientific and religious

   also bibliographic information

   also syndicated articles for ITEST

3. Brochure - also expansion of newsletter

4. Personal invitation

5. Non-governmental Organization Status for ITEST (UNESCO)

6. Church liaison

7. Educational Input - elementary and secondary schools, high schools, campus ministers, write Bible study curricula, etc.

8. Net-working - overseas groups, booths at professional meetings, sharing mailing lists

9. Moving ITEST meetings around

10. Sabbaticals and early retirement for ITEST, fellowships

11. Mutual encouragement - personal efforts and identity in small groups

12. Translate ITEST into Spanish

13. Legislative testimony

14. Auxiliary - funds to underwrite efforts

15. Ecumenical focus

16. Familial focus

17. T-shirts, caps, bumper stickers

18. Fund-raising

SURVEY OF ITEST MEMBERS

1984

NAME _____
            Last   First   Middle

TITLE(s) _____

Professional/Business Address: _____

_____

Phone: _____

Home Address: _____

Phone: _____

EDUCATION:

Degree	Discipline	Institution	Date

Publications relevant to ITEST concerns since 1978:

From what source did you first learn about ITEST?

What is your religious affiliation?

_____

Topics of particular interest to you in science/theology:

_____

How do you utilize ITEST materials?

_____

Topics on which you might be available as a speaker and/or as author of a Newsletter article:

_____

Have you any interest in helping to form an ITEST Chapter in your locale?

_____

Might you be available for some translating?

Language translating from:	Language translating to:

Any comments and suggestions for the future of ITEST will be appreciated and considered by the ITEST Board members.

The information you provide will be held in confidence by the Board of ITEST unless you permit otherwise. Would you permit sharing of information with ITEST members?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

If yes, you may wish to place an X in the left margin of some data lines above NOT TO BE SHARED.

Would you permit sharing of information, not checked, with organizations with similar interests, should such requests be made?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

Please return your survey form to:

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