



Introduction

Why Ask These Questions?



*How can
I make
Jesus
the Lord
of my research
and
teaching?*

Christians want to respond to the call to let Jesus Christ be Lord of every sphere of life. Scientists, who are believers in him, struggle to understand what this means in their vocation. InterVarsity's Graduate & Faculty Ministry is called by God to serve these fellow Christians and to encourage their growth in vocational discipleship. Young scientists and engineers just entering their professional lives but also more seasoned investigators ask, "How can I make Jesus the Lord of my research and teaching?" One of the seldom asked but deeply felt issues is, "Assuming Christ is Lord, does he really care about my choice of research problems?"

With the support of the Templeton Foundation and of the American Scientific Affiliation, we here present the proceedings of a conference called to respond to this question. The conference, *Asking the Right Questions: Christian Faith and the Choice of Research Topic in the Natural and Applied Sciences*, was held October 13–15, 2000 at the Center for Development in Ministry, University of St. Mary's of the Lake, Mundelein, Illinois. Few of the talks closely followed a prepared manuscript, so audio tapes of the talks and discussions were reduced to the written word. We hope that the following pages give some of the feeling of the conference as well as much of the content.

The conference purposes were twofold. The first was to have a group of practicing scientists explore the issue of research questions/topics/problems thoughtfully and prayerfully in order to develop some general guidelines for the selection of a research project. The second was to take steps to build a fellowship of scientists who

could give guidance to other Christians who are wrestling with this issue. This group might continue to relate about this and other issues and work together toward publishing something more definitive in the future.

Each speaker was asked to build his or her remarks on six assumptions or bases for the conference:

1. The Creation Mandate: We are stewards answerable to God for our use of his creation, our minds, and other resources.
2. The scriptural injunction: "Do all things that we do to the glory of God."
3. The example of Jesus: He "went about doing good."
4. The need to resist the strong temptation to choose research questions only in areas most easily funded or trendy.
5. The rising concern about technical developments in our day and the lack of ethical directions for them.
6. The lack of guidance for Christians in making choices in this area.

Of course, the most significant question that a Christian can ask on this issue is: "Does God really care what I research?" If the answer is yes, then we need to determine why he cares. We need a biblical and theological base to our questioning as well as a sociological and personal base. ☆

Terry Morrison
Conference Organizer
Director of Faculty Ministries
InterVarsity Christian Fellowship