

Wisdom from World Religions

Prof. Kenneth Rose

Week 1 Study Guides

Day 1

Video 1: Sir John Templeton's Wisdom from World Religions

Topic: The Tapestry of World Religions

A Spiritual Law from Sir John Templeton: "The rich variety of world religions creates a tapestry of amazing beauty—a testimony to the spiritual nature of our human visit on earth" (WWR 56).

Video 1 Learning Objectives:

1. To get acquainted with Sir John Templeton's Spiritual Vision
2. To apply spiritual laws in order to become what Sir John Templeton calls "a constructive participant in building 'heaven on earth'" (WWR xix).
3. To employ the resources of the world's religions to a personal quest for wisdom.

Suggested Reading in *Wisdom from World Religions*

- xix-xxv

Discussion questions

- *Seekers*
 - How many significant living religions of the world can you name?
 - What methods would you use to study the religions of the world?
- *Proficients*
 - Can you group different current religions into two or three or more families of religions?
 - What critical and theoretical perspectives do you bring to bear on the study of religion?
- *Adepts*
 - Do you think that spiritual practices and the study of religion belong together?
 - What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the synthesis of religious ideas and practices that John Templeton expresses in *Wisdom from World Religions*?

Video 2 Topic: Sir John Templeton and the Study of Religion

Video 2 Learning objectives

1. To describe SJT's approach to the wisdom of the world's religions

2. To explain how SJT's *Wisdom from World Religions* (WWR) relates to the academic and religious study of religion.
3. To outline some of the skills that we need to bring to the study the world's religions.

- **Discussion questions**

- *Seeker*

- What is the value of “an inquiring and open mind” (xxi), according to the Sir John?
- How can studying the world's religions help us to see the world and its diverse peoples differently?

- *Proficient*

- How do the spiritual teachings of the world's religions help us understand our place and role in the world?
- What consequences for your own views of religion does studying other religions have?

- *Adept*

- What might be the unifying principle or principles of the vastly diverse religions of the world?
- In contrast, say, to philosophy, how do the religions of the world promote wisdom?

Video 3: A spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton: *Lifting your awareness to a higher level of receptivity*

Video 3 Learning Objective: To employ this spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton.

Video 4: “Bettina Gray talks with international businessman and philanthropist, Sir John Templeton (1912-2008) founder of the Templeton Prize, about the intersection of science and spirituality and the need for scientific research into the soul. Established in 1972, the prize is awarded to a living person who, “has made an exceptional contribution to affirming life’s spiritual dimension, whether through insight, discovery, or practical works”. Clip taken from *A Parliament of Souls: 27 half-hour interviews with international religious and spiritual teachers* filmed at the World Parliament of Religions, 1993. Series co-produced by Bettina Gray and Michael Tobias aired on KTEH (PBS), VISION-TV Canada, VISN cable network and AFN in 140 countries. Interviews were also published as a companion book of the same title.” CreativeFilms Media Published on Mar 6, 2017 Standard YouTube License

Day 2

Video 1: Sir John Templeton’s Wisdom from World Religions

Theme: The Divinity of the World: “God-life moving through all”

A Spiritual Law from Sir John Templeton: “Regardless of whatever situation that may be present, the factor of life — god-life moving through all — is cause for thanksgiving and rejoicing” (WWR 16).

Suggested Readings in Wisdom from World Religions:

W20, L5, 176-177

W33, L 2, 279-280

Video 1 Learning Objectives

- To outline the unitive, pluralist spiritual views of Sir John Templeton
- To describe Templeton's background religious and spiritual influences (Unity, journeys in Asia, Presbyterianism, Princeton Theological School, other religions)
- To compare these views with the teachings in the world's religions about the divine character of life and of conscious beings.

Discussion Questions

Seeker

1. The phrase "god-life" seems to have been coined by John Templeton. How does that resonate with you?
2. How would you characterize Templeton's religious views?

Proficient

1. Can you name some of the sources of Templeton's distinctive spiritual views?
2. Does Templeton's use of words in this book like "creativity," "god-life," "divinity," "life energy," and "universal intelligence" affect your views of God or the ultimate reality as you understand it?

Adept

1. If life is an adventure, what is the goal?
2. If there is "a brightness to living" as Templeton suggests, how would you go about tapping into it?

Video 2: Introducing the Religions of the World

Topic: Religion theology, and spirituality—what's the difference?

Video 2 Learning objectives

- To evaluate claims such as "I'm spiritual, not religious."
- To analyze the meaning of these two words and what they mean for us.
- To identify what religious and spiritual movements share and what is unique to each religious and spiritual movement.

Discussion Questions

Seekers

1. Do you find it helpful to distinguish between being spiritual and being religious?
2. Can a person be just religious or just spiritual?

Proficients

1. Can you name activities that are more religious than spiritual and vice versa?
2. How many distinctive spiritual practices can you name?

Adepts

1. Can you categorize spiritual practices into at least two distinctive and nonoverlapping categories?
2. Does the fact that neuroscientists can measure how meditation affects the brain mean that spirituality is just a product of the brain?

Video 3: A spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton: *Become “aware of our place in divine infinity” (WWR 40).*

Video 3 Learning Objective: *To employ this spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton.*

Video 4: Interview with Dr. Graham Schweig

- **Director of Studies in Religion**
- Department of Philosophy & Religion
- Christopher Newport University, Virginia
- **Distinguished Research and Teaching Fellow**
- The Mira & Ajay Shingal Center for Dharma Studies
- The Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley
- **Director of Theology**
- Avanti Schools Trust Schools, United Kingdom
- Senior Editor, *Journal of Vaishnava Studies*

- Dr. Schweig was also a teaching fellow at Harvard University, lecturer at University of North Carolina and Duke University, and while teaching at CNU, he was for two years, Visiting Associate Professor of Sanskrit at the University of Virginia.
- He has been recognized several times for excellence in teaching, including the annual Alumni Faculty Award for Teaching and Mentoring (2013), and has been a regularly invited lecturer at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC for over ten years.
- He has also given lectures widely in the US and in Europe, and has been invited to be a consultant on doctoral dissertation committees or a doctoral dissertation examiner in the US, Europe, India, and Australia.
- He has conducted yoga workshops, offered seminars and given lectures around the US and Europe for over 20 years.
- In addition to his academic endeavors, Dr. Schweig has been a student of many traditional teachers of yoga. He has travelled to India seven times, and has been a practitioner of traditional and heart-centered yoga for over 45 years.

- **Research interests:**

- Hinduism and the Religions of India
 - Yoga Philosophy and Sacred Sanskrit Literature
 - Love Mysticisms
 - Comparative Religion and Theology
 - Interreligious theological connections, especially between Hindu Bhakti and Catholic mystical traditions
 - Interfaith dialogue
 - Hindu and Christian Comparative theology
 - Religious pluralism
- **Author and editor of books and articles, including:**
 - *Bhagavad Gītā: The Beloved Lord's Secret Love Song*, Harper Collins, 2010.
 - *Dance of Divine Love: The Rāsa Līlā of Krishna from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, India's Classic Sacred Love Story*, Princeton University Press, 2005.
 - *A Living Theology of Krishna Bhakti: Essential Teachings of A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada*, Oxford University Press, 2012.

Day 3

Video 1: Sir John Templeton's Wisdom from World Religions

Theme: *The spiritual anchor of the material world*

A Spiritual Law from Sir John Templeton

"Your true anchorage is not in things temporary, but in things eternal" (WWR 1).

Video 1 Learning Objectives

- To recognize the difference between a materialistic and a spiritual view of life.
- To argue that basing the material world on a wider spiritual reality is truer to our experience than reducing the spiritual to the physical and mental dimensions of the universe.
- To argue that a full and satisfying picture of human experience require us to supplement materialism with a spiritual view of life.

Suggested Readings in Wisdom from World Religions:

- W 1, L4, 6-7
- W3, L3, 109-110
- W 20, L1, 170-171
- W26, L1, 220-221

Discussion Questions

Seeker

- Do you think that the real world extends only as far as our senses and the instruments of science reach?
- What do you think of the claim that we have a soul?

Proficient

- In what way might the physical world be seen as an expression of a more basic spiritual order or world?
- Can there be other factors governing our lives than those known to present-day science?

Adept

- Does a neuroscientific description of what happens in the brain of a meditator rule out spiritual accounts of this kind of experience?
- Must science change more or must religion change more to make sense of the experiences and claims of religious traditions and spiritual experience?

Video 2: Introducing the Religions of the World

Topic: *Practicing comparative religion*

Video 2 Learning Objectives

- To distinguish between the historical and the comparative approaches to studying religion
- To give examples of comparative categories in comparative religion
- To appraise the outcomes and uses of the comparative approach in religious studies

Discussion Questions

Seeker

- Is the academic study of religion the same as theology?
- If not, how do they differ and how are they similar?

Proficient

- What are the basic methods useful for studying religion?
- Can you order these methods into two or three major categories?

Adept

- Do you think religion should be studied comparatively?
- What are the benefits and risks of studying religions comparatively?

Video 3: A spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton: *Establishing conscious unity with your spiritual center*

Video 3 Learning Objective: To employ this spiritual practice from Sir John Templeton.