

Oxford gets \$4 million to study belief in God: John Templeton Foundation funds project

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Researchers at Oxford University have been given nearly \$4 million to investigate the origins of belief in God. The money comes from the John Templeton Foundation, a U.S. nonprofit long interested in scientific investigations of religion.

The three-year project is designed to determine if belief in a deity is instinctive or learned. Justin Barrett of Oxford University's Center for Anthropology and Mind and Roger Trigg of Oxford's Ian Ramsey Center for Science and Religion will lead the investigation.

Both believers and nonbelievers will make up the research team, said Barrett. He said developmental psychology has determined that faith in God is a universal human impulse, found in all cultures and exhibited from a young age.

"I'm certainly not smug enough to think that in three years' time we'll have all the answers, but we're building on things we know, and fully optimistic we'll make progress," Barrett said. *-Religion News Service*