

Editorial

IT'S ALL ABOUT TRANSFORMING MINDS

Transformed ways of thinking. The issues that *Zygon* deals with, the issues it has been addressing for forty years, demand new ways of thinking. If we are to understand these issues and offer useful approaches to the challenges they pose, we must allow our minds and our methods to be caught up in the dynamic of today's intellectual developments. Readers who come to our discussion in the course of their personal search for understanding and meaning know instinctively that new ways of thinking are necessary for relating religion and science. Those who come from the so-called "religion-and-science peer group" may find this demand for mental transformation more difficult than others, because, as in the case of any academic discipline, certain ideas and methods tend to attain the aura of preference and authority. The central mission of this journal fits comfortably in no single niche—academic or otherwise. This becomes clear in the pages of this issue.

We begin with a Thinkpiece in which William Schweiker (theological ethics) reflects on the recent news that Antony Flew, noted philosopher of decidedly atheist persuasion, as a result of his thinking about current genetics, now admits that "God" may be a necessary idea. One of Schweiker's main points is the reminder that religion essentially consists not of abstract ideas (even ideas of God) but of practical living that aims at love, justice, and mercy. He suggests a kind of bottom-up thinking: Rather than "isolating valid reasons" for (or against) belief in impeccable abstract ideas and inferring their practical consequences, let us attend to the concrete experience of moral earnestness and the pursuit of love and justice and ask what this means for understanding natural reality.

In the second section, Bjørn Grinde, a biologist who is concerned with public policy, proposes that religion can be of benefit to society and that scientists, even atheists like himself, ought to find ways to help religion play this beneficial role. He suggests that we ought to recognize "two faces" of God, the one that governs private personal belief and one that relates to the wider society. Roger Gillette (physics, engineering) and John Teske (psychology) respond appreciatively but also with important critical perspectives.

The five contributions in this round of our fortieth anniversary symposium sound a forceful call for a dramatic reordering of the ideas we bring to the encounter of religion and science and for a more complex understanding of the secular and technological cultural situation in which that encounter takes place. This is surely one of the most significant outcomes of the symposium—to upset the fruit basket of concepts and interpretations on the interface between religion and science, on which this journal's mission is carried out. Even as we affirm that the challenge to forge an adequate interaction between religion and science that serves the welfare of the human community is as valid and urgent today as it was forty years ago to the founders of this journal, we recognize that the cultural, intellectual, and theological context is a dynamically changing one. The repertoire of concepts by which the earlier generation interpreted the situation of religion and science must be enlarged and renewed by current methods of interpretation. We hope to advance in our knowledge and understanding of religion and science and their cultural setting, but we also advance in our awareness of the methods and concepts that are useful to our enterprise. Indeed, this latter advance may be the more difficult for us to grasp, because it often requires that our minds and approaches be transformed.

Sociologist Barbara Strassberg opens this session of the symposium in a decidedly postmodern vein. She places the discussion in the context of the evolution of culture, at every stage of which, she insists, the five components of magic, religion, science, technology, and ethics coexist, intertwine, and interconnect. None of these components is displaced, but the interconnections between them constantly change, and this poses the challenge to our understanding. Gordon Kaufman (theology, philosophy) underscores that in the meeting with science we must recognize that religion, as well as science, changes constantly and dynamically. In particular, the idea that religious thinking is forever anchored in “revealed” knowledge that is unavailable to reform and reason must be understood as a relic of a bygone period that is not useful today. The test case of transformed thinking, he proposes, is the idea of God not as Creator but as creativity itself.

Norbert Samuelson (Jewish philosophy) is emphatic in asserting that John Caiazza's categories of religions versus science and the displacement of religion through techno-secularism may apply to the Protestant West but have little applicability to other national histories and little relevance to Judaism in particular. Religion, science, and technology must all be subsumed within the broader sweep of culture. He demonstrates his argument with reference to the Taiping Rebellion in nineteenth-century China and Zionism in twentieth-century Europe. Sociology and cultural analysis are the key to the contribution by Lluís Oviedo (theology). He presents a sophisticated analysis of the phenomenon of secularization. In this view, it is arguable that religion is in crisis not because of displacement by science or technology but because of its failure adequately to address the needs of human existence in the changing cultural situation. Consequently, reli-

gious communities and theology need to learn to work within the scientific and technological ambience rather than against it. In the thinking of John Haught (theology), the fundamental issue is distinguishing between science as “an innocent or humble way of knowing” and scientific materialism (“scientism”) as a metaphysical worldview. If we understand this distinction, it becomes clear that science as such is not the enemy of religion; scientism is the antagonist.

Two articles make up the fourth section of this issue. Biologist Ursula Goodenough follows up on an essay that she co-authored with Terrence Deacon in our December 2003 issue that reflected on human evolution and the moral dimension of religious life. Now she explores the concept of evolution in detail, showing “how much it can offer to the religious life” and also “grappling with the question why the concept is often misunderstood.” James Moore (theology) continues in the mode of suggesting new perspectives on religion and science. He does so by examining the work of a Muslim thinker, Ebrahim Moosa, who demonstrates that jurisprudence may be as rich a resource for our thinking as the intellectual history that is more commonly considered the entrée to thinking about both the religion-science and interreligious dialogues.

The fifth section opens up a topic that we have discussed only infrequently in the past but that will be prominent in future issues: science and spirituality. In this issue, we present five scientific articles on spirituality. In our next issue, in September, we will publish theological and philosophical interpretations of the scientific work. The selection of these articles is not guided by a particular rationale; the aim is to present examples of the work in this burgeoning field of research as well as examples of scientific and religious-philosophical response to that work.

Psychologists Jean Kristeller and Thomas Johnson construct a model from their research experience that interprets how meditation can cultivate loving kindness, empathy, and altruism. Joan Koss (anthropology, psychology) argues that spirit healing is a widespread phenomenon, in both popular and organized religion. Using data from Spiritist healing in Puerto Rico, she proposes a model of how healing takes place in a ritual framework under the guidance of a spirit-medium healer. Harald Walach (medicine) and K. Helmut Reich (psychology, education) emphasize that science should overcome its reluctance to research the area of spirituality, since such research is important for understanding not only the world but also the ways in which individuals attain personal wholeness. Andrew Newberg (medicine) and Bruce Lee (psychiatry) contribute two articles that introduce readers to the scientific study of spirituality. The first is a critical review of studies in religion and health; the second reviews neuroscientific studies of religious and spiritual phenomena. Each of these five articles is accompanied by a substantial bibliography of pertinent sources. These bibliographies in themselves are important witness to the work that is underway in this research field.

Science-and-spirituality represents a significant turn in the interactions between science and religion. For religion, the challenge is that science now enters the inner sanctum, the center of religious life. Can religion accept scientific work at this center and turn its findings to a spiritually constructive end? For science the challenge is to take the measure of religion at the most profound level. Can science genuinely appreciate the spiritual dimension without reducing it to the contours of measurement? Researching science and spirituality is an audacious effort. Properly interpreted, this research can move the religion-science interface to a depth and sophistication that it has not hitherto known. These researches and the response of religious communities can misfire, however, and lead to alienation. *Zygon* will attempt to reflect on this effort and share in its potentially exciting outcomes. The risk is well worth it.

We close this issue with a segment from the early issues of the journal. The first issues featured a series "Theological Resources from the Sciences." In March 1966, the focus was on physics, with articles by Sanborn Brown (plasma physics, associate dean of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology) and Ian Barbour. We reprint their 1966 pieces along with contemporary perspectives that we asked Barbour and John Polkinghorne to offer. Before our very eyes, we see how ideas stay the same and also change in one specific example of the religion-science exchange.

Reader, beware! This issue of *Zygon* contains material that may be detrimental to conventional ways of thinking. —Philip Hefner

Coming in September

Watch for the third round of the Fortieth Anniversary Symposium in September, with contributions by Ursula King (theology), Willem Drees (physics, theology), E. Thomas Lawson (cognitive science of religion), Fatima Al-Hayani (Islamic law and philosophy), and Alan Padgett (philosophy of religion).

Call for Papers

Zygon welcomes papers on the theme "What are the criteria for judging that a worldview is 'scientific'?" What are the essential components of a "scientific worldview"? What would disqualify a position from being considered "scientific"?

Length is negotiable. Deadline is 15 October 2005. Authors planning to submit such a paper should inform the editor as soon as possible. Send notifications to both of these addresses:

pnhefner@sbcglobal.net
zygon@lstc.edu