

Editorial

This issue of *Zygon* is based on papers and discussions of the symposium on "The Human Prospect: Heilbroner's Challenge to Religion and Science," held in Washington, D.C., on October 23-24, 1974, by the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science.

Readers may judge from the contents of this issue whether we have a significant response to the prophets of the crumbling of civilization and a new Dark Ages. Robert L. Heilbroner's *An Inquiry into the Human Prospect* is a careful picture (shared by many of mankind's best-informed minds) of present facts and dynamics of human population and technology with respect to environmental limits. But more than with the particularities of the implied economic stresses, the book is concerned with the inability of men and societies under these circumstances to control themselves so as to avoid an agonizing "sustained and convulsive change." For a more viable and stable society, his evidence forces him to conclude what seems to him to be a threat to human freedom and to science: a return to religious controls. The weaknesses of human nature and the potential for resolving what for Heilbroner are irreconcilable conflicts between man's private desires and long-range social necessities are here reexamined in the light of some new, scientifically based understandings wherein science, religion, and freedom properly fit together.

The symposium was first proposed by Philip Hefner in conversation with Ralph Wendell Burhoe as they were attending the 1974 spring-quarter meetings of the Seminar on American Reality, a faculty and graduate-student seminar operated by members of the University of Chicago Divinity School and several of the Chicago Cluster of Theological Schools, where on April 12 Langdon Gilkey gave an earlier version of his opening paper in this symposium. It was one of several responses by theologians of the seminar to Heilbroner's book. In May an ad hoc committee of IRAS was formed with Philip Hefner as chairman and Don Browning, Burhoe, and John A. Miles, Jr. (all of *Zygon's* editorial staff) as the other members. We thank the Johnson Foundation of Racine, Wisconsin, for a grant of \$3,500 which provided a necessary part of the support for the symposium and its publication.

R. W. B.