

Editorial

This issue of *Zygon* presents five papers evaluating my “The Human Prospect and the ‘Lord of History,’” which was the concluding response in the symposium on Robert L. Heilbroner’s *An Inquiry into the Human Prospect* published in the September 1975 *Zygon*. Five friendly colleagues—four in theology, with most of whom I have shared for several years an interest and some work on the relation of theology to the natural and the psychosocial sciences, and one in biology, who shares an interest in the problems of human values in relation to biology and medicine—have presented their views of some of the virtues and some of the weaknesses of my attempts to interpret religion (to theologize) by using the conceptual system (“body of truth”) accumulated by the sciences. They have availed themselves of several of my papers as well as considerable personal discussion for their understanding of my “scientific theology.” But they have focused primarily upon the seventy-seven page “Lord of History,” in which I tried to summarize in condensed form a wide range of the translations (equivalent conceptual terms) that allow me to make sense simultaneously of traditional religious wisdom and modern scientific understanding.

What struck me most forcefully about these five papers, first when they were presented during the spring of 1976 in the advanced seminar of the Center for Advanced Study in Religion and Science in cooperation with the Chicago Cluster of Theological Schools and again in reading them in preparation of this issue of *Zygon*, is the great difficulty of finding a truly broad and common understanding of a theology integrated with the modern sciences, even among friendly colleagues earnestly working together in the effort.

Readers of these papers no doubt will be similarly struck. But I hope none will be discouraged. All the papers seem to agree on the supreme importance of the attempt to revitalize the institutions that generate human values, man’s proper sense of duty and hope. Moreover, it is just because these papers represent several existing and important perspectives with which contemporary culture or language focuses our views of this matter that a careful reading of all of them will advance our understanding of what will be necessary to establish a common and coherent consensus among a sufficiently

large and intelligent community necessary if the revitalization is to be accomplished.

I had hoped to present in this same issue of *Zygon* my own attempt to analyze and resolve a number of the major conceptual inadequacies that in my view underlie the thinking in these five papers and mine, inadequacies which befog all our attempts at a solution of the problem of human values in the rapidly emerging but unstable new worldwide culture of science and technology. Unfortunately, the limitations imposed by other commitments and by health, as well as financial limitations constraining *Zygon*, have forced me to postpone until a later issue my planned response, which I trust may come in the December 1977 issue under the title "What Determines Human Destiny?" There I shall seek to clarify many of those elements of my "scientific theology" that have caused these five good colleagues—and many others also—to come to several contradictory and unwarranted conclusions which are confusing and sometimes lethal to the necessary integration of scientific and religious world views.

Meanwhile, I hope readers will enjoy, as have I, these five perceptive, sometimes brilliant, diverse perspectives and be stimulated themselves to resolve the confusions and to advance the synthesis. These five represent very highly informed and serious wrestlings with the problems posed by the confusions inherent in the as yet unordered, unintegrated plurality of views engendered in the recent explosions and preliminary mixings of elements of the fragments of knowledge in today's emerging, worldwide scientific-technological culture. If we cannot integrate a powerfully effective religious and moral system of convictions that stand up in our beliefs and motivations because of their coherence with and credibility in the context of our convictions about "reality" acquired by the free explorations of science in a free society, I believe we shall be doomed to the decline and fall of our civilization in some such fashion as that of which Heilbroner and others have been warning.

But I believe that some further clarifications of our conceptual scheme will make a genuine synthesis of religion and science possible in the near future, and I am aware that many creative and competent minds have begun to work on the problem, some of them along paths similar to those I have been exploring. Certain of these efforts, in some respects or details, appear to me to be more effective than my own. I would encourage all such efforts and trust that in the future *Zygon* will be staffed and funded to enlarge its coverage as a communications medium for this primary task.

R. W. B.