

Editorial

In this issue of *Zygon* a distinguished sociological analyst of our culture brings us an unusual message from a profession where "almost every sociological thinker [during the first half of this century] expected religion to disappear by the onset of the twenty-first century." In an original essay on the complex problem of religion Daniel Bell brings us new insight into its nature and why, and perhaps how, it will persist as a necessary element of human sociocultural nature in spite of the radical secularization of social structure and the profanation of culture since the eighteenth century.

J. Robert Ross provides a different but parallel analysis of the secularizing impact of eighteenth-century thought, where philosophers and theologians interpreted the spread of the scientific or empiricist world view as bringing about a final divorce of religious truth in the Christian tradition from its insecure marriage with empirical, historical, rational truth. He then assesses the theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg's attempt at a radical program for reconciling religion and science by showing that we can base religious "faith on historical knowledge in a fashion consistent with a coherent philosophy of science"—a philosophy in part derived from Karl R. Popper but applied primarily to the data of human, especially religious, history.

Walter Wink's intriguing New Testament scholar's essay on religion and science not only should be of special interest to scholars of religion and to those who are curious as to how biblical writers and church fathers in their day handled problems similar to those of the conflicts between scientific and religious thought since the eighteenth century, but also it should be of interest to the many scientific and secular readers who often are not yet familiar with how biblical scholarship recently has transformed our understanding of what is significant in the matter of relating modern science to biblical religion. Wink also has been looking at our *Zygon*-related efforts to understand religion constructively within the current scientific world view, judges it to be urgent, and joins us in our task.

Wink joins Bell in seeing recent intellectual leaders at fault for today's flood of superstition and bad religion, at fault because they failed to perceive the necessity for and the truth in traditional religion and theology and because they have fashioned a world view from which the divine was excluded. Historical and sociocultural perspectives in this issue and genetic and neurological perspectives in the following issue of *Zygon* join not only to provide new light on the nature and persistence of religion but also to explain the sources of the tremendous power of religious cults to turn our brains around (convert us) for better or worse.

Moreover, these issues may suggest that *Zygon*'s scientific approach to understanding, reformulating, and revitalizing religion and morals may turn out to be the best prevention against the danger that religion, in its inevitable role to satisfy the spiritual hunger and moral needs built into human nature, might be returned to too primitive and too irrational a stage to allow a rationally scientific and technological sociocultural system to continue.

R. W. B.