

## *Editorial*

This issue of *Zygon* on “Human Values, Mind, and God in the Evolving Universe” has developed to become two and will be continued in the June issue with other papers previously advertised and additional ones by outstanding old and new contributors to *Zygon*. In a century of increasing confusion and falling faith and confidence concerning man’s place in the scheme of things—a confusion and falling often blamed on too much science and scholarship—*Zygon* was founded by scientists and scholars who recognized the problem before the second disastrous war in this century enveloped the whole world. The leaders of religious institutions also recognized the problem. Even as far back as the First World War such percipient figures as Karl Barth and Father Pierre Teilhard de Chardin were writing suggested revisions to make religion more meaningful in a world whose mind was becoming secular as it was increasingly dominated by the sciences.

While Barth chose the strategy of restoring religion to its power by going back to its origins and seemingly making modern science irrelevant, Teilhard chose the path of finding an interpretation of the traditional faith in the very light of what the scientists were revealing. The neoorthodox movement stimulated by Barth rose to dominance in the Protestant faiths but then fell as it was felt not to be successful in the context of a scientific and technological world. Teilhard was a quiet innovator who for the most part has been suppressed or shunned and was accused of being unscientific by some scientists and a dangerous interpreter of religion by authorities in that field.

The effort Teilhard made to speak of religion positively in the full light of the sciences has been a stumbling block to many today as such efforts have been to many scholars for some three centuries. Readers of *Zygon* are familiar with the fact that many brilliant modern minds can see no possible harmony of the gospel with modern science. Our September 1975 issue, “On the Human Prospect,” pointed out that Robert L. Heilbroner was emphatic that science made religion impossible, and, since religion was needed for morals, he feared that immorality of human decisions in his otherwise beautiful secular world would force the rise of totalitarian and religious orthodoxies to save humanity from utter self-destruction as a result of its immoral overconsumption, overpopulation, and other failures to restrain its greed. The fundamentalists, who have been increasing in influence with the decline of the neoorthodox, go beyond the neoorthodox position (which simply denied the relevance of the sciences) and positively deny the truth of science—even deny the truth of the scientific evolutionary story of creation because it does not agree literally with the fundamentalist reading of the biblical book of Genesis. They bear witness to Heilbroner’s view that the religious “fanatics” can be expected to attack and attempt to destroy the sciences.

But the community behind the publication of *Zygon* has opted for interpreting religion in the light of the sciences, the path chosen by Teilhard, although our community began, as I pointed out in my previous editorial, before we knew of Teilhard and has not followed his particular interpretations except by coincidence. We have been an independent group of persons who have sought to be fully scientific and at the same time seriously concerned to understand

and if possible to revitalize the religious- and morality-generating institutions of society with the help of scientific interpretation of our need for their function and their truth.

One of the large problems of relating religion and science is raised by the seeming impossibility of understanding the religious God in the context of the scientific world view. Related to this is the problem of how to understand humanity's responsibility for its choices, its values, if the scientific picture says that such choices are determined. If we avoid believing in causality or determinism of the scientific beliefs about the world in our thinking about human choices, then we have a problem of whether our choices have any true contact with the real world except by a kind of magic that demands simultaneously that thoughts and choices can make a difference in the real world and yet the real world makes no difference to thoughts and choices. This issue of *Zygon* brings together some significant interpretations to help us understand both of these problems.

R. W. Sperry's "Bridging Science and Values: A Unifying View of Mind and Brain" is by a pioneer in the exploration of the relationship between the two hemispheres of the brain. He challenges the traditional separation of judgments of fact and judgments of value and asserts the importance of the sciences in clarifying and guiding human values.

Then the Harvard astronomer Eric J. Chaisson in "Cosmic Evolution: A Synthesis of Matter and Life" gives us a beautiful outline of contemporary cosmic evolutionary theory and presents what amounts to new grounds for theodicy in the context of a natural theology. It turns out that the cosmos is not so chancy and not so indifferent to man—and "we are, in the very literal sense of the words, children of the universe."

Sanborn C. Brown in his "A Physicist's View of Religious Belief" follows up this view of man's place in the cosmos with a lecture to leaders of a liberal religious denomination some of whom have supposed that in order to be in tune with modern science they have to denounce the heart of their religion—the transhuman reality traditionally called God—and put man in God's place as the measure of all things. Brown criticizes liberal religion and social-science humanists for seriously underestimating the role of the cosmos in shaping human destiny and suggests the need for a revitalized creed about our relation to a power greater than we. Such a challenge by an eminent scientist to a religious group that has prided itself on creedlessness is a high point in the *Zygon* community entering into churchmanship.

George Edgin Pugh in "Values and the Theory of Motivation" takes us back to the problem of human values developed by Sperry's paper. The author of *The Biological Origin of Human Values*, Pugh uses his theory of the relationships between brain and computer mechanisms to offer an account of humans as "value-driven decision systems." His analysis provides new links for understanding the relation of moral and religious values to the events and realities of the material world. For him as for Sperry our values are not separate from the rest of the nature of reality portrayed by the sciences but are a most significant product of that reality.

Harold L. Miller, Jr., and Steven Faux, like Brown, are scientists concerned with a particular religious institution. But they are psychologists rather than physicists and Mormons rather than in the Unitarian Universalist tradition. Their "On the Commonalities among Religious and Moral Codes: Proximate Analysis from a Sociobiological-Behavioristic Integration" is a cross-cultural

study that finds certain prevailing religious beliefs—such as beliefs in a transcendent deity and in postmortal existence—have persisted because of their efficacy in meeting certain basic, human hedonic drives and in producing “inclusive genetic fitness.” They are using sociobiology’s natural selection theory to analyze and justify certain elements of religious history.

Readers will want to examine all these papers closely to evaluate their scientific credibility and their religious appropriateness. We shall be publishing another group on related problems in the June issue and will welcome letters analyzing the validity of these treatments.

R. W. B.



## **Studies in Religion / Sciences Religieuses**

Revue canadienne / A Canadian Journal

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This distinguished Canadian quarterly publishes articles covering the whole field of religious studies as well as reviews and critical notes on a broad spectrum of recent publications.

The current issue includes several articles on the Jewish and Christian scriptures: Jack Lightstone presents a case for reassessing current thinking on the formation of the biblical canon in Judaism; Robert Forrest does a linguistic study of a passage in Job; Brice Martin argues for a different conception of the unity of the New Testament; and Peter Craigie compares biblical and Tamil poetry. Harold Coward asks whether Jungian psychology can be used to interpret Indian devotional poetry. B. Garceau writes on the hermeneutics of the philosophy of religion and Monique Dumais on the role of women theologians in the church.

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