

In Memoriam

SANBORN C. BROWN

January 19, 1913–November 28, 1981

One of *Zygon's* most important and beloved friends, Sandy Brown was a physicist, science educator, and leader in exploring religious questions with the aid of scientific insights. Educated at Dartmouth College and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Brown taught on the faculty of the latter from 1937 until his retirement in 1975. He was a member of the American Physical Society and the Royal Institution of Great Britain and a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. His twenty-one published books included works on microwave and plasma physics, science education, the history of science, and a manual on wines and beers in colonial New England.

Brown made many significant contributions to the formation and ongoing operation of *Zygon*. From 1962 to 1967 he was the president of the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science (IRAS). During this time he participated in discussions that led to the formation of the Center for Advanced Study in Theology and Science (CASTS) at the Meadville/Lombard Theological School in Chicago, and, when this Center was formed in 1964, he became chairman of its Scientific Advisory Board. When IRAS and CASTS combined efforts to begin the publication of *Zygon* in 1966, he became co-chairman of the *Zygon* Joint Publication Board, a position he has held until his death. In this capacity and as an editorial advisory board member and associate editor, he constantly and obligingly assisted both the founding and current editors in countless ways. In 1980 IRAS recognized his years of service by bestowing on him its most distinguished honor, that of an honorary officer, making him an Honorary Vice President.

Sandy Brown exhibited an enthusiasm for life in whatever he did, but he also urged human beings to look beyond the present moment and their individual, phenotypic selves. In the first essay ever to be published in *Zygon* (March 1966), Brown stressed the methodological importance of finding solutions to religious problems that meet the test of "boundary conditions," that apply to all situations in which humans may find themselves. To illustrate he suggested religious thinkers test their theories about the purpose of human existence against the evolutionary and thermodynamic understandings of the origin and end of human life on earth. He urged this saying "some of the most difficult problems have been solved only by worrying more about the extremes in time than about the present."

This larger perspective, enunciated in the 1960s when social programs were the dominant concern of religion and society, was carried by Brown into the 1970s, when the religious emphasis shifted to a preoccupation with personal wholeness and individual salvation. In an address to religious liberals, published in *Zygon* (March 1979), Brown attacked the excesses of individualistic humanism and argued that rational religion should place the individual in the context of—and dependent upon—the more extensive social and natural

systems of reality. In doing this he gives us his own formulation of a religious creed: "I believe in the forces of Nature, the forces Almighty, creators of Heaven and Earth, and in human beings, not as Nature's only sons but as beings who must fit into the vast and interrelated universe which formed us and controls our destiny." And he continues, leaving us with this challenge: "I would like to see us . . . explore the great problems of our time against the background belief that mankind is searching for ways to cooperate perfectly with the laws of the cosmos."