

Notes

SOME ROOTS OF ZYGMON

Zygon has one root in a concern with the relation between the sciences and human values on the part of an interdisciplinary group of intellectual leaders in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. This concern was especially stimulated about twenty-five years ago under the leadership of astronomer Harlow Shapley and neurophysiologist Hudson Hoagland, then president and secretary of the Academy, respectively. Under these and many other scientists and scholars, the Academy began to devote meetings and conferences to elucidate what science and scholarship might reveal about what is good or evil for man.

In 1950, under the stimulus of a group led by its executive officer, Ralph W. Burhoe, the Academy established a Committee on Science and Values, the charter document of which stated: "We believe that the sudden changing of man's physical and mental climate brought about by science and technology in the last century has rendered inadequate ancient institutional structures and educational forms, and that the survival of human society depends on a re-formation of man's world view and ethics, by grounding them in the revelations of modern science as well as on tradition and intuition. . . . It is our hope that the fragmentary sketches of the cosmos and man, made by the various scholarly and scientific disciplines, when pieced together and looked upon as a whole, may reveal a picture of the situation on the basis of which one can make sounder judgments for the ordering of individual and social life."

Through its Committee on Science and Values and in co-operation with the Institute on the Unity of Science, the Academy increased its studies of these problems during the years 1950-54. In 1953, George Wald, who was then chairman of the Committee on Science and Values, suggested that the information and pictures of man coming out of the sciences were not so denigrating of man and of the highest notions of the great religious traditions as the public and the theologians seemed to think, and therefore it might be well to talk with the theologians.

This was accomplished when Burhoe brought contact between the Academy group and another major root of *Zygon*. In 1950, on Star Island, ten miles off the coast of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, some freethinking theologians and clergymen from several religious traditions began a Conference on the Coming Great Church to lift "discussion above the narrow boundaries of creed, dogma, or denomination into the realm of common understanding," to promote "co-operation among all faiths and fellowships," and to develop the religious "influence which will at long last prepare nations to settle their differences on higher ground than the battlefield," according to the father of this Con-

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ference on the Coming Great Church, the Reverend Lyman V. Rutledge. Another founder of this Star Island movement, Edwin Prince Booth, professor of historical theology at Boston University, in his talks to the first conference, noted that "the truths discovered by science are of such a nature that they invalidate many of the theological presuppositions of the past" and that "the situation in which we find ourselves is of so serious a nature as to require a complete re-formation of the patterns of life and thought under which we have been living."

The leaders of the Star Island conference welcomed Burhoe's suggestion that scientists and religious liberals discuss together some of the potential significance of scientific views for man's religious notions about himself, his world, and his duties and hopes in it. In the summer of 1954 was held the first week-long summer conference of these two groups joined; and they organized themselves as the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science, which has continued to carry on annual conferences and other related activities for the past twelve years. Grants from The Rockefeller Foundation and gifts from individuals helped to provide scholarships and related expenses.

A third root of *Zygon* was the interest of certain theological schools and liberal religious denominational programs in what was coming out of the Star Island conferences and other activities of the Institute.

During the late 1950's, the Institute sought to stimulate various theological schools to consider more systematically the potential role of the sciences in reformulating man's religious conceptions of his nature and destiny. A grant from the Danforth Foundation permitted visits of the Institute's scientists to a number of theological schools. The schools associated with the Unitarian and Universalist denominations responded with exceptional interest.

In 1959, Dana McLean Greeley, president of the Unitarian Universalist Association, who was among those who had fostered the relation between the Academy and the Star Island conferences leading to the inception of the Institute, was inspired by the Institute's program to convoke a national Commission on Theology and the Frontiers of Learning. Professor Robert B. Tapp, then of Scripps College and Claremont Graduate School, was made chairman, and a number of persons affiliated with the Institute also served as members of the commission. Leaders of the Unitarian and Universalist churches began seriously to consider the new possibilities of the sciences for illuminating problems of human values and the religious thinking of a free church in a changing world.

In 1960, Malcolm R. Sutherland, Jr., a vice-president of the American Unitarian Association, was made president of Meadville Theological School, an independent school affiliated with the University of Chicago, whose students had largely gone into the Unitarian ministry. Meadville was founded in Meadville, Pennsylvania, in 1844. The charter was procured in 1846 and revised in 1897. It provided that "no doctrinal test shall ever be made a condition of enjoying any of the opportunities of instruction in the School." Its catalogue of 1903 stated that "it offers absolute freedom of inquiry to both teacher and learner, applies the same canons of criticism and interpretation to sacred scriptures as to secular, and approaches the problems of theology in the same spirit in which it approaches problems in other branches of science, seeking not to establish the validity of a certain set of doctrines, but to know the truth." In 1928 it moved to Chicago to affiliate with the University of Chicago.

President Sutherland had been associated with the activities of the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science, and his feeling of the significance of its activities inspired him to invite scientists associated with it to present their views to the faculty and students of the school between 1961 and 1964. In 1964, with the unanimous support of his Board of Trustees and faculty, he instituted a new faculty Committee on Theology and the Sciences and invited men formerly associated with the Institute to serve in this new department and on its Scientific Advisory Board. The purpose was to introduce information from the sciences pertinent to the problems of religion more systematically into theological inquiry.

A journal of the type of *Zygon*, seeking specifically to develop an integration of religious belief systems with the contemporary scientific views of man and the world, goes back to a correspondence in the early 1950's between Burhoe, who was then executive officer of the American Academy, and theologian Henry Nelson Wieman, who had recently retired from the Federated Theological Faculty of the University of Chicago (which included Meadville) and who later participated in the work of the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science as well as on the faculty of Meadville. But sufficient interest and support were not then found to make a start. The Institute contemplated establishing a journal in the late 1950's, but the present launching grew out of a 1965 proposal for joint sponsorship by IRAS and Meadville so that the developing insights could grow in a much wider community of scientific, religious, and other scholars, as well as within the whole public concerned with the problem. The directing boards of these two institutions signed a contract to establish a journal through a Joint Publication Board, and to help underwrite the costs of getting the journal started.

It is important here to recognize the hundreds of scientists, scholars, theologians, and others who have over the years been contributing to the climate of opinion in which this journal blossoms forth. And their names and their thinking naturally will be expected to appear in the articles and footnotes of the journal as it unfolds.

THE EDITORS

Announcements

July 30–August 6.—Institute on Religion in an Age of Science, annual meeting and summer conference, on Star Island, Isles of Shoals (ten miles off Portsmouth, N.H.). Theme for 1966: "Coping with Death." Accommodations on the island, limited to two hundred, require preregistration. For further information and registration form write Secretary, IRAS, 5711 Woodlawn Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60637.

October 28–29.—Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, annual meeting, Center for Continuing Education at the University of Chicago. For information write Secretary, SSSR, 1200 Seventeenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.