

Statement from the Editor

WHAT IS ZYGON: JOURNAL OF RELIGION AND SCIENCE?: PURPOSE, HISTORY, AND FINANCIAL GOALS

by *Karl E. Peters*

Abstract. This editorial statement describes the purpose of *Zygon* and the need for such a journal. It then sketches the history of the journal and of its financial affairs. Next it proposes some development projects to expand the impact of the journal around the world, to develop *Zygon* leadership, and to establish more firmly *Zygon's* financial base. The statement opens and closes with the news of *Zygon's* receiving a Gift Subscription Challenge Grant.

Keywords: religion; *Zygon*.

In January 1988 a *Zygon* subscriber telephoned me to discuss a possibility for gaining some financial support for our journal. He was a relatively new subscriber, but enthusiastic about *Zygon*, and he felt that ways should be found to increase the impact of the journal around the world.

That and succeeding conversations led the editorial office to submit a grant proposal to the Fund for the Enchantment of the Human Spirit, sponsored by Laurance S. Rockefeller. Rockefeller has had a long-term interest in the relation between the sciences and spiritual matters, and is pleased to participate with others in furthering the work of *Zygon*. Following a suggestion from assistant editor Diane Goodman, we requested a "Gift Subscription Challenge Grant." We are very grateful to Laurance S. Rockefeller for favorably receiving our proposal. In July we learned that we had been awarded \$26,500 for the purpose of expanding the impact of our journal by making it possible for subscribers to offer gift subscriptions to individuals or institutions in such a manner that the donors themselves could receive some

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benefit. The details of what this means for you as a subscriber are elaborated in the closing section of my comments.

In the process of writing the background for the "Gift Subscription Challenge Grant Proposal," I developed the following statement on the purpose of *Zygon*, on the need for a journal like ours, on its editorial and financial history, and on some future hopes I have for the journal financially. Ralph Wendell Burhoe, *Zygon's* founding editor, has written similar statements in several editorials and in "Note on the Institutional and Financial Support of *Zygon*" (Burhoe 1975). For the historical record and to inform you about my own understanding of what *Zygon* is, I think it appropriate to publish what was written as background for the Rockefeller proposal.¹

THE PURPOSE OF ZYGMON

Zygon represents a unique attempt to explore how knowledge from the contemporary sciences and insights from the world's religious and philosophical heritage can be yoked together ("zygon"), so as to light the way in our human search for life's meaning and moral direction and to provide humans with a positive sense of morale and the motivation to do what is right and good.

THE NEED FOR A JOURNAL IN SCIENCE AND RELIGION

As human beings we not only seek to exist but we also try to understand the *meaning* of our lives, to see how our living as individuals and societies is significant and worthwhile in a larger scheme of things. We also seek *morality*, codes of living by which we can guide our conduct in order to maximize human welfare and the welfare of the social and natural worlds. Moreover, because we are subject to the vicissitudes of chance occurrences that affect our well being for ill as well as good, we seek grounds for *morale*, for ways of maintaining hope in the face of adversity. Finally, recognizing that we often understand what we need to do to be moral and to affirm the significance of our living, and yet do not always do what we ought to do, we seek to understand how humans can find the *motivation* to do that which furthers good rather than evil.

Traditional religions (whether they be the tribal religions of early human societies or the developed philosophies and religions of Western and Eastern civilizations) have understood this basic human quest for meaning, moral direction, morale, and motivation. Over long periods of history they have evolved complex systems of beliefs, practices, and experiences that respond to this search. However, for the most part these religious systems are formulated in terms of the outlooks of past cultures. While they still provide fundamental life orientations for many people around the world, those whose ways of

thinking are influenced by the theories and practices of modern science and technology find that many traditional religious formulations have lost much of their ability to provide significant understanding regarding the purposes of life and how we humans ought to live.

Zygon's basic hypothesis is that there is still much wisdom in traditional religious and philosophical formulations but that such wisdom needs to be examined, evaluated, and expressed in light of new scientific understandings about the nature of human beings and the universe in which we live. As modern science continues to provide increasing knowledge, and as this knowledge spreads into the minds of more and more people around the world, educated people in all societies will be challenged to respond to their basic quest for meaning, morality, morale, and motivation in ways that make their traditions compatible with new knowledge from the sciences.

Zygon encourages and publishes ongoing basic research using information tested and refined in the crucible of hard-headed scientific inquiry and information tested historically through successive generations of human living to address fundamental religious and philosophical questions. Articles in *Zygon*—written by natural and social scientists, philosophers, and theologians—address such topics as thermodynamics and creation, the role of ecosystems in shaping and being shaped by humanity, and the relationship between genetic programs that predispose some behavior and the value systems of various cultures. They consider how the human brain is structured as a mechanism (shaped by culture and religion as well as by genes) by which humans respond to information from their environment, how the human brain may give rise to concepts of a reality that transcends the experienced world, and how experiences of that transcendent reality might be scientifically understood. They analyze ways in which religious traditions and other cultural institutions interact with the biological predispositions of human nature to form an individual self that both competes and cooperates with other such selves in a large society.

Our brochure provides a sample list of current and past topics and articles that have appeared during the twenty-three year publication history of the journal. The “Twentieth Anniversary Issue” with the “Twenty-Year Cumulative Indexes” gives a complete overview (excluding the past two years) of the diversity of ideas and materials the journal is attempting to synthesize.

HISTORY OF *ZYGON*

Zygon was founded in 1966; however, its intellectual roots can be traced back into the 1940s. Then-leaders of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, astronomer Harlow Shapley, neurobiologist Hudson

Hoagland, and biologist George Wald, along with the executive secretary of the Academy, Ralph Wendell Burhoe, organized the Committee on Science and Human Values to discuss topics relating contemporary scientific knowledge to fundamental human concerns about life's morals and meanings. In 1954 this group combined with a group of religious leaders involved in an interfaith movement to promote peace and understanding among the religions of the world to form The Institute on Religion in an Age of Science, a multidisciplinary, professional society that is one of the co-publishers of the journal. IRAS, since 1954, has held an annual conference on science, values, and religion on Star Island, off the coast of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. It also has conducted numerous other conferences and symposia, some in conjunction with groups such as the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the American Academy of Religion.

In 1966 a Center for Advanced Study in Theology and Sciences (CASTS) was founded at Meadville/Lombard Theological School in Chicago. This Center was directed by Burhoe and was supported by a group of scientific advisors headed by Sanborn C. Brown, a physicist from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and by the president of the Seminary, Malcolm R. Sutherland, Jr., and other faculty. It was at this Center that *Zygon* was born, co-published by CASTS and IRAS. The first issue appeared in March 1966. In 1973 the Center evolved into the independent Center for Advanced Study in Religion and Science (CASIRAS) affiliated with the Chicago Cluster of Theological Schools and with access to the academic and scholarly resources of the University of Chicago. During this period *Zygon* also received special support from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.

In 1979 Burhoe retired as editor of the journal. At this time Rollins, a private, nonsectarian liberal arts college with an interest in interdisciplinary scholarship and teaching, became the third co-publisher, along with CASIRAS and IRAS; and I became editor.

Current leadership behind *Zygon* includes scientists such as anthropologist Solomon H. Katz, bacterial physiologist Bernard D. Davis, sociologist Robert C. Sorensen, sociobiologist Edward O. Wilson, and physicist and decision-science theorist George E. Pugh, as well as distinguished philosophers, theologians, and religion scholars such as Michael Ruse, Philip Hefner, and John W. Bowker. Burhoe, who received the 1980 Templeton Foundation Prize for Progress in Religion, in part for his work with *Zygon*, retains an active commitment to the journal. Other active supporters are listed as members of the editorial team and publication boards in the journal itself. Thus throughout its history, *Zygon* has represented, not only in its statement of objectives but also in terms of the people involved, a truly remark-

able interdisciplinary effort of distinguished members of the intellectual community. They have attempted to use the best recent developments of modern science to shed light on ancient religious and philosophical questions, and at the same time to provide a broad religious-philosophical understanding that can direct science and scientific technology in the service of human welfare.

BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS OF *ZYGMON*

Between 1966 and 1979 the journal was supported by subscriptions as well as subvention from Meadville/Lombard Theological School, individual IRAS member contributions, some private foundations funding conferences, and the IRAS treasury. Beginning in the early 1970s, the journal went through a period of crisis. The evaporation of Meadville/Lombard support and the editor's health problems resulted in the journal's twice falling behind on its publication schedule and its being published on occasion in slimmer volumes. This in turn created difficulties in maintaining the subscription base and for being a reliable outlet for publication in the field.

In Fall 1978, upon invitation from Burhoe, I submitted a proposal that the journal be moved to Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida. With support from the college and a grant of \$55,000 from the Jesse Ball duPont Religious, Charitable, and Educational Fund of Jacksonville, Florida secured by the college, *Zygon* began a new era.

With this renewed institutional support the journal—which had been almost a full year behind in publication—was brought up to date. An energetic promotion effort increased the number of subscriptions from 1700 to over 2000. Rollins College itself contributed to the support of the journal by subventing an average of \$10,000 per year of my salary, as well as by providing support for office space. After November 1981, when the duPont grant was completed, the college became virtually the journal's only patron, temporarily underwriting the cost of *Zygon* beyond what was covered by proceeds from subscriptions and a few small gifts.

In order to establish a firmer financial base for the journal, Rollins College obtained a second grant of \$25,000 from the Jessie Ball duPont Religious, Charitable, and Educational Fund. Then it assisted the editor in designing a Patrons' Program and in applying for a challenge grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, in order to transform the fledgling Patrons' Program into an ongoing annual giving program. The proposal for this grant was written by Robert Marcus, then Provost at Rollins, and was submitted on behalf of the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science. Beginning in January 1983 the NEH awarded a \$24,000 challenge grant to the Institute on Reli-

gion in an Age of Science for this purpose. Each dollar was to be matched by three "new" dollars from *Zygon* Patrons for a total of \$72,000. "New dollars" meant monies beyond what Patrons had contributed in the base year for the grant, 1982, which totalled \$41,250 in gifts and pledges.

Zygon Patrons more than met the NEH challenge. From January 1983 to July 1987, Patrons contributed \$117,635 in new monies and \$32,370 in continuing gifts. When this was added to the amount donated in the base year, the end result was the establishment of an annual giving program capable of providing \$25,000 annually to help defray the operating expenses of the journal. Moreover, with the surplus from the Patrons' Program *Zygon* has been able to seed an endowment, which is being managed as part of the endowment funds of Rollins College. The *Zygon* endowment, from which only interest is drawn, now stands at \$45,000.

SOME POSSIBILITIES FOR ZYGON DEVELOPMENT

As editor of *Zygon* I have come to recognize that working with authors to develop articles and other features of the journal is only one facet of the job. Of equal import for the continued production of a high quality journal are a number of development efforts. These are briefly described below and an estimate of their cost is given. I expect these will be funded through additional grants. If you as a member of the *Zygon* community have any suggestions regarding possible sources of funding, please let me know.

First, about 80 percent of *Zygon's* subscribers are located in the United States. However, there is increasing interest around the world in exploring how modern science and its technology can interface with long-standing cultural traditions. It is important and timely, therefore, to mount an intensive, world-wide promotional campaign. The focus should be libraries outside the United States. Using a directory of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), our editorial office compiled a list of libraries around the world not yet receiving *Zygon*. We would like to mount an intensive, three-part promotion to these libraries. This would involve, first, direct mailing with a sample issue, two follow-up mailings, plus an exhibit at an international meeting of librarians. The estimated cost would be \$15,000.

Second, we need to fund a conference for the development of new editorial board leadership. Two years ago, the Joint Publication Board of *Zygon* set up rotating three-year terms for editorial advisory board members. Such terms, which are renewable, give individuals serving the journal an opportunity to rethink their commitment to *Zygon* in

relation to their other professional interests. The terms also allow the Publication Board an opportunity to rotate membership, in order to bring in new scientists and scholars. As a result of this, *Zygon* has a number of new members serving on its Editorial Advisory Board. However, because they come from diverse academic backgrounds, many have never met one another. Therefore, I deem it wise to hold a special conference of editorial board members, in which they could address substantive issues in religion and science. Through this, the leadership of the journal would increase its own understanding of our enterprise. The cost of such a conference would be about \$23,000.

Third, having been editor of *Zygon* for more than ten years, I have begun to think how one might begin to institutionalize the transition from one editor to the next. Rollins College has been very generous in releasing me from three-sevenths of my teaching load and covering numerous other in-kind costs. In the future, another institution might not be so willing or able as Rollins has been. One way to do this would be to establish a position now for a half-time managing editor. Even now, this could be of considerable benefit to the journal. The first step in doing this would be to fund a term for a managing editor for five years. This would cost \$100,000 (\$20,000 a year).

Finally, even though I am most pleased with the response we have received from so many of you to our Patrons' Program and even though I hope it will continue with the vigor it has enjoyed in the past six years, I also would like to begin the development of a capital fund drive to build the current endowment of \$45,000 to \$500,000. This would provide the financial foundation for *Zygon* to endure into the next century. Equally important, it would help us expand further the services and projects of the journal. The drive to build the endowment would consist of current direct gifts plus gifts through a variety of estate planning programs and through wills. Some of you are already beginning to make plans to help us in this regard. However, to really initiate an active endowment drive, I think we need the stimulation of a major challenge grant of \$150,000. Following the NEH procedures for building our Patrons' Program, we would match every two dollars contributed or pledged with one dollar from the grant. This would raise \$450,000 and bring our total endowment to about one-half million dollars.

Zygon is approaching its twenty-fifth anniversary. However, in view of the developing world-wide interest in the issues that our journal addresses, it could well be that our successors will celebrate a fiftieth and even a hundredth anniversary of *Zygon*. As we work on our next manuscripts or on our next issues of the journal, we should never lose sight of the long-term possibilities for what we are seeking to fulfill. An

endowment of one-half million dollars would be a major step in leaving *Zygon* as an important legacy to posterity.

THE GIFT SUBSCRIPTION CHALLENGE GRANT

To help address our immediate concern, however, we now have the generous gift of \$26,500 from the Fund for the Enhancement of the Human Spirit. With \$1,500 of this as seed money, the editorial office is in the process of informing subscribers, as they renew, about the opportunity they have to help expand the impact of *Zygon*. Individual subscribers are being asked to provide gift subscriptions for another individual or institution that they think would be likely to renew. In return, subscribers will have their own subscriptions renewed for one year at no cost to them. If the recipient of their gift renews in the following year, the benefactor's subscription would also be renewed. The cost of renewing current subscriptions will be covered by the challenge grant.

Therefore, as readers of *Zygon*, I would like us all to think about individuals or institutions who would enjoy and who would probably want to continue to enjoy the explorations in our journal that address fundamental life questions by yoking together the wisdom of history with the knowledge of contemporary science. I also want us to think about ways in which we can perpetuate the gift that those who founded *Zygon* in 1966 have bequeathed to us today. By continuing to support our journal with our ideas and with our financial efforts, we can pass on what we have inherited to future generations. That is my personal dream; I hope it also is yours.

NOTE

1. The following sections on the purpose, need, history, and financial affairs of *Zygon* are virtually verbatim from the grant proposal to Mr. Rockefeller. The historical sections are in turn based on an earlier version composed by Robert Marcus, then Provost at Rollins College. On behalf of the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science, Marcus wrote the proposal submitted to the National Endowment for the Humanities. The NEH funded the Marcus proposal as the challenge grant that established the *Zygon* Patrons' Program. The closing sections of this editor's statement on "What is *Zygon*?" have been adapted from the Rockefeller proposal.

REFERENCE

Burhoe, Ralph Wendell. 1975. "Note on the Institutional and Financial Support of *Zygon*." *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 10 (March): 113-23.