

# Editorial

This issue of *Zygon* is notable for several reasons:

1. It brings to a conclusion a year in which we have published more material than in any single previous year. Readers in 1996 were presented with one-third more to choose from than they were in 1986. This increase is an indicator of something significant—that the field of religion-and-science is burgeoning. We receive many more manuscripts than we can publish, while the list of issues that we want to explore grows ever longer and more complex. Since our journal is dedicated to keeping abreast of our field, we will continue the effort to bring our audience a wide range of offerings. Even though many of our readers will not have the time to study every article, they will note the topics we present, for future reference. Over its thirty-one years, copies of *Zygon* have demonstrated their lasting value. Every year we receive many requests for back issues and for permission to use our articles for teaching purposes. *Publisher's Weekly* recently referred to us as “the premier journal” in our field. We never relax our efforts to be worthy of that judgment.

2. The editors have considered it desirable to present a commentary to the articles we have published during the year. Carol Rausch Albright has put together an invaluable interpretive reflection on the fifteen articles on the neurosciences that have appeared in this journal during 1996. Her piece is in itself a kind of introductory guide to the entire discussion among scholars of religion, theology, and the neurosciences. Norbert Samuelson complements Albright's commentary with his own contribution from the perspective of Jewish religious thinking.

3. This brings us to the substance of this December 1996 issue, the neurosciences. With this issue, we have made a major step toward reaching our goal of giving significant focus to the rapidly growing field of the neurosciences. In addition to the discussion of data and issues, the articles presented here share a common style of engagement: They ask for *concrete* alternatives to Descartes's influential hypothesis that mind and brain/body are two separate realities. The common provocation that animates our authors, to overcome dualisms, is very much in accord with our journal's ongoing focus on how the sciences interrelate with the basic human concern for values and more adequate strategies for living. Every one of the authors in this issue of *Zygon* asserts in one way or another that if we are to take the measure of the sciences of the brain, we must understand how neurobiological descriptions of causality are interrelated with human values, the human search for meaning, our images of personhood, and our views of human distinctiveness. In their own ways, these authors echo what theologian Paul Tillich called for a generation ago: an understanding of how the causalities described by science are related to the dimension of *depth* without which any description of human sensibility is deficient. Tillich's issue is much more

complex today, largely due to the findings of the neurosciences, with the consequence that the discussion is even more lively for us in the 1990s.

We are grateful to Rodney Holmes for his service as guest editor of this issue; his introductory comments provide more specific introduction to the authors and their articles.

Although they were not written with this issue's topic in mind, the two contributions to the Teachers' File section offer relevant insights in the course of developing their own themes: Ursula Goodenough's installment in our mini-series, "What One Needs to Know: Biology," and Anne Foerst's proposal for engagement between the sciences of artificial intelligence and theological thinking. These two pieces are examples of why *Zygon's* offerings are so frequently of long-term usefulness.

—Philip Hefner