

Editorial

With this issue, *Zygon* marks the end of its thousand-page millennial year volume. We have kept faith with our readers in providing, as we promised, a large world of reading material. We hope readers will agree that we offered a high-quality year, as well. Ralph Burhoe, our founder, spoke of his efforts in maintaining an “invisible college,” embracing people around the world who engage in reflecting on and discussing the issues of religion and science. This final issue of Year 2000 presents a substantial portion of that college’s discussions.

Sociobiology is the subject of the first section in this issue. Certainly no journal has carried on discussion in this field of inquiry longer than *Zygon* has. These pages took on sociobiological themes even before they were named as such, as Michael Cavanaugh’s retrospective article shows. Hubert Meisinger and Patricia Williams give us articles whose importance lies in the fact that they are taking sociobiology into the very heart, the inner sanctum, of Christian belief and doctrine and allowing the conversation to proceed in that ambience. Meisinger takes us into the biblical teachings concerning love, to which he juxtaposes studies of altruism; Williams focuses on issues of sin. Readers may find it helpful to analyze these discussions in light of the ground rules that Cavanaugh proposes for the conversation.

What does the word *religion* signify for this journal’s college participants? Since it is likely that every member of our seminar has an idea of what is meant, or that the term is simply taken for granted, there is every reason to focus more clearly on the phenomenon of religion. We take up this task in the second section, and we will give more attention to it in next year’s volume. Loyal Rue presented a naturalist perspective on this question in September, while Alfred Kracher takes a somewhat different tack in this issue.

The third section constitutes a conversation on several of the major themes of this year’s four issues of *Zygon*. The seven articles published here suggest that our journal really is a kind of ongoing seminar. Naturalism received major attention in both June and September. Willem Drees, himself a key interpreter of naturalism, gives his interpretation of this year’s discussion, while Barbara Forrest carries the discussion forward in her own approach to the question of meaning within the processes of human evolution—in dialogue with Ursula Goodenough’s contributions in September. The two Thinkpieces with which this issue begins could also be related

to this discussion: Goodenough adds another chapter, so to speak, to her September contributions on religious naturalism, and Carol Rausch Albright throws light on how complexity in nature can suggest meaning.

Four articles in September gave concentrated attention to issues of quantum physics and its significance for conceptualizing the action of God. The authors of those articles—two physicists and two philosophers—were very skeptical of relying on quantum physics as a relevant source for knowledge of God. Gregory Peterson responds to these authors as a nonphysicist, while Thomas Tracy and Keith Ward respond to comments addressed to them specifically by the September authors. Interestingly, the December authors agree with much of the skepticism that was expressed in September, even as they suggest that there is nevertheless more gold to be gleaned for the conversation from quantum physics than the September authors allow. From these discussions, there seems to be emerging a consensus that quantum measurement is one of the major issues to be dealt with. However, in these “*Zygon* college” discussions, there is no consensus as to how quantum measurement should itself be understood, and this lack of consensus appears not only to be significant for the conversation but also a major agenda item for further discussion. Coincidentally, as this editorial was being written, the 16 July *New York Times* (Week in Review, p. 16) reported new experimental results that indicate how important the phenomenon of quantum measurement is, not only for the quantum world but also for the macroscopic world of our everyday experience.

In June, Stanley Grenz fashioned an impressive argument for a postmodern understanding of the relationship of religion and science, in which both scientists and theologians would engage in constructing a world for the future of humanity. In this issue, lawyer-theologian Edwin Laursen proposes an equally impressive argument as counterpoint to Grenz, in which he accepts the invitation to engage in world construction but questions whether, in order to do so, one need accept the premises of either God or postmodernism.

In a symposium published last March, Arthur Peacocke and David Pailin set down personal manifestos, in which they analyzed the requirements for any theology that would claim credibility in an age of science. This editor characterized their proposals as a continuation of the Enlightenment challenge to theology. Vitor Westhelle offered an alternative to Peacocke and Pailin. Robert Bertram, a theologian of many years of experience within the circle of the religion-and-science discussion, now adds his own coda to the March symposium, putting yet a different nuance on what the others contributed.

A college seminar discussion requires able and willing participants. I want to express particular appreciation to the seven authors in this conversation section. They had to cope with the customary editorial standards, as well as shorter deadlines; without their willingness to do so, the conversation could not have taken place within the covers of this issue.

Our concluding section profiles physicist-theologian John Polkinghorne, who has been characterized as “the most celebrated scientist of his generation” to have taken up the study of theology. We are especially pleased that two of his most recent pieces are included in this section. The commentators include physicist Carl Helrich, historian and philosopher Edward Davis, and theologians Ann Pederson and Lou Ann Trost.

All those who are reading this editorial have thereby already established themselves as matriculated members of the invisible college that Ralph Burhoe welcomed to the pages of this journal. In the past year, the curriculum has been substantial, not easy reading, but thoroughly consistent with what the college promises all of its participants. The next matriculation ceremony is scheduled for March 2001. Please join us then.

—Philip Hefner

P. S. The annual report of our publishing agent, Blackwell Publishers, summarizes some details of our journal’s entry into the world of electronic distribution. I think you will find it interesting, so I am appending it here. Of course, individual subscribers to the hard copy of *Zygon* can also access it electronically. There are some other statistics in the report, also included here.

Zygon is now marketed to academic institutions with the option of electronic form only. An important example of this: The Korean government (through the Korean Research Information Center) selected the journal to be distributed to 178 universities and other institutions in electronic form. Heretofore, it has been unusual for English language journals to have even ten subscriptions in this market. In North America, the California State Universities Consortium, comprising 22 state-funded universities, purchased access rights to *Zygon*. Six other universities have also entered into this agreement. Blackwell is now negotiating with more than 1,100 United States libraries for such access. Worldwide, in print and electronic form, *Zygon* is now in 1,052 institutional libraries.

Electronic access to *Zygon* is available through major library service providers such as Ingenta, BIDS, OCLC, and others. Last year, we had 1,490 electronic accesses to individual articles. The average number for all Blackwell journals (several dozen, in total) was 1,586 accesses; within the subject area of religion, it was 453!

Overall subscriptions: *Zygon* increased in circulation in print and electronic form by 12 percent in 1999.

Citations in other sources: The Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) ranked *Zygon* for the first time in 1998. This ranking indicates how often the journal is cited in other sources. In 1999, in the Social Issues category, we ranked 22 out of 34 journals indexed by ISI.