

Science and the Religions—A Symposium

SCIENCE AND THE RELIGIONS: INTRODUCTION TO THE SYMPOSIUM

by Philip Hefner

Seven of the nine papers in this symposium originated at a session of the Parliament of the World's Religions, 5 December 1999, in Cape Town, South Africa. The symposium was a cooperative effort of the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science (IRAS) and the Zygon Center for Religion and Science (ZCRS). Karl Peters (representing IRAS) and Philip Hefner (representing ZCRS) were the organizers of the symposium, which included the papers published here by Solomon Katz, Philip Hefner, Viggo Mortensen, Varadaraja Raman, Pinit Ratanakul, Ingrid Shafer, and Norbert Samuelson. Others who played important roles in the symposium were Haman Hadi (public health, University of Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia), William Leshner (United Religious Initiative, San Francisco, California), and Ursula Goodenough (biology, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri).

The very title of the original symposium, "Science and the Religions: Resource and Challenge for Each Other," makes a proposal. This proposal, articulated years ago by this journal's founding editor, Ralph Wendell Burhoe, holds that science and religion require each other but that they stand in a dual relationship—that of challenge and resource. Several of the papers deal with this relationship; Katz and Hefner give special attention to it. This proposal sets forth, at least in a minimal form, the programmatic standpoint of *Zygon*, and also of IRAS and ZCRS, as they take up the task of bringing together the conversations between religion and science, on the one hand, and the world's religions, on the other.

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James Moore's initial article in this section grows out of his considerable experience in both of the conversations just referred to, which he brings to bear as director of ZCRS projects for the interreligious dialogue. Several of the authors here are members of the steering committee that Moore has put together for these projects. His article, which represents the guiding principles of the ZCRS projects, is also programmatic in that he sets forth certain desiderata for the dialogue, chief of which is the insistence that all the sides in the dialogue are conditioned by pluralisms of tradition and cultural placement. He also introduces the concern for praxis as a necessary element for the conversations.

Viggo Mortensen places both of the conversations within the larger cultural milieu marked by globalization, which he believes conditions the identity of all the religions. Varadaraja Raman and Pinit Ratanakul, speaking from Hinduism and Buddhism, respectively, draw careful boundaries between the domains of religion and science, and at the same time they emphasize how the two domains complement each other. Mackenzie Brown adds a specific case study to the symposium, elaborating the ways in which creationism takes form in both Hinduism and Christianity. Ingrid Shafer fashions a synthesis of religious thought and science in formulating a concept of the human. It is of some interest that she also focuses on globalization, as Mortensen does, as well as Thomas King in his Thinkpiece in this issue. Norbert Samuelson closes this phase of the discussion with a comprehensive survey of how science and Jewish theology intersect.

As a result of their involvement in the Cape Town parliament, both IRAS and ZCRS have decided to join hundreds of other groups around the world in extending the spirit of the parliament through their regular programs in the ensuing years. In publishing these articles, *Zygon* also lends its support to the parliament and extends its spirit.