

Editorial

Now that the expedition of *Zygon* enters the third year of its voyage, it may be a time to check our bearings, consult our charts, and evaluate our course. Like the ships of Columbus, *Zygon*, too, is sailing into an uncharted sea on an incredible mission: to reach the East by sailing westward, to reach religion by using the sciences. During our first two years, to judge by the testimonies of subscription growth and commentaries to the editor, we have not yet fallen off the alleged edge of a flat world where religion is East and science is West and never the twain shall meet. Our hypothesis that religion and science pervade the same spherical surface of human believing and knowing, with no edges of discontinuity, has not yet been disconfirmed.

Perhaps the biggest threat to reaching our goal of yoking religion and science will be the tediousness of sailing so long without encountering sufficiently tangible traces of solid land and the consequent tendency to wonder whether we are on a theoretical wild-goose chase. Back in the ports of the Old World from which we set out, people are in deeper troubles than ever. The famous clock on the cover of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* has this winter been advanced several minutes closer to the midnight eschaton of atomic destruction. Poverty, anarchy, and trouble are ready to come to a boil all over. Why should we waste any further time under flapping sails on the doldrums of this visionary quest?

May not the editor of *Zygon* and his companions be obstinate fools with a wild dream in supposing they know a shorter and better route to moral behavior and human salvation along this paradoxical westward course toward a fancied union of the Old World of religion with the New World of the sciences on the selfsame sphere? We may ask again: (1) Is religion really relevant still for present-day problems? (2) If so, can the sciences provide even a coherent picture of man and his predicament, let alone of man's values or their motivation? (3) Granting some positive answers to the first two questions, what sensible course can we pursue, what problems are most significant, and is there any real hope that we can become scientific about the great religious

problems? Our motivation to continue this expedition will be weak if we do not have some positive views in response to these questions.

One of our motivational weaknesses hangs upon our lack of a clear vision of why we must have any religion, a question we asked in our first editorial two years ago, after stating that "the journal *Zygon* is established as a workshop for those seeking ways to unite, in full integrity, the sciences with what men hold to be their sacred values, their religion." Not all of us are clear that religion can be anything but primitive—and hence we tend to suppose it is a dead issue. I wish to mark in bold outline on our chart why I think that religion is as real a land in our westward future as it has been in the Old World. A scientific picture of man seems to me to make more clear than do the apologists of religion that man's morals and morale require cultural as well as genetic structuring. Such cultural superstructures, which in the scientific picture of man have to be built upon our basic genetic mechanisms of motivation, must be credibly organized visions (myths, theologies, or scientific theories) that are socially programmed to orient men realistically toward continued and expanding programs of viability. Such superstructures neither get built nor transmitted by chance, but require organized, institutional implementation. We must rid ourselves of our naïve images of religion as merely some particular model that we have seen only superficially in childhood and now reject because that particular model does not appeal to our present sensibilities. We must become clear that there must be some kinds of cultural institutions to structure and transmit ordered patterns of fundamental values; and these we call religions, whatever be the names of their gods, myths, or theories. Also, we must be clear that there is no truth in those who say that beliefs do not determine behavior. If some studies or observations indicate that certain no-longer-credible or false beliefs do not make better people, we ought to be smart enough to see that this says nothing about true beliefs whose credibility does indeed motivate viable behavior. By "beliefs truly held" I do not mean merely "verbal assertions" but learned "behavior patterns operationally observed." By religious beliefs that are more true in the sense of being more valid, I mean those which in history actually lead to greater viability of man.

A second motivational weakness for our expedition is that the scientific pictures of man and his world are at present scattered pieces of an unfinished jigsaw puzzle, so that few can discern any clear and coherent picture and even less of what the picture may represent for man's hope, purpose, and direction. There are many among us in fact who fail to

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see that pieces from physics or biology interlock in significant new ways to fill gaps and provide continuities in the over-all picture of man provided by sociology or history of religion. Our scientific and scholarly jigsaw map of man and the world is in puzzling pieces that don't yet allow us to see the whole view or to make much sense for locating the sacred or most significant elements for ourselves and our destiny. True, some among our past, present, and future authors in *Zygon* work from a picture where they have assembled a good many of these fragmentary pieces in ways that make sense for them and those who have examined the pieces. But no one has assembled the whole picture, and few of us have applied ourselves sufficiently to understand the best assemblies. I suggest we need more faith and effort in this task: that we can assemble a scientifically valid and religiously relevant picture of man and his role in the world.

Third, I think we are deflected from our prime task to be scientific about religious problems because we do not pay sufficient attention to what the central religious problems are. We should focus on assembling first those jigsaw-puzzle pieces that look most promising for giving us an overarching sketch of the nature and source of man's central values, duties, hopes, and destiny—the modern equivalent of the central values found in the great religious myths or theologies of the past two or three thousand years. While some of the theologians of the West seem to suppose they are modernizing and making themselves relevant by crying, "God is dead," I am more and more impressed with the clear and contrary exposition of the sciences: that man did not make himself, but was created; that he is not the ultimate determiner of his own destiny, but may participate in discovering what paths to life may be permitted to him by an almighty and insuperable reality in which he lives.

While many churchmen are abandoning their efforts to communicate an outmoded concept of a ruling power in human destiny and instead are turning their hands to good works, I (and many others of us) am more impressed with man's dire need for some kind of overarching theory that can viably motivate good behavior. It seems to us that the genetically motivated human sympathy which can lead mothers and others (even clergymen without a theology) to lend a succoring hand to suffering neighbors is not sufficient to inform viable behavior in a complex civilization of science and technology. In fact, the history of religion seems to demonstrate that genetic motivation has not been suffi-

cient for well-ordered societies and psyches in much more primitive cultures for a good many thousands of years.

Such an overarching vision to orient man properly to his destiny must, of course, integrate with the basic facts of the selfsame evolving world to which the genotype has adapted. But, the more advanced cultural formulations or pictures of man and his world considerably transcend the vision provided by perceptions based merely on the genotypic structures. This is clear from the history of science, technology, and religion. An overarching and religiously relevant vision logically depends on formulations of man's ultimate destiny as far as we can envision it and on what is required of him if he is to have hope for his fulfilment or salvation in the context of the reality upon which he believes he is in the end dependent.

To me, the scientific picture suggests that this reality is not man, but the reigning power that in the past has selected the varied patterns of plant and animal life of the world and that continues now to select the varied patterns of human behavior, sitting in judgment on our every thought and deed as it has upon that of every individual and species in the past. Such an equation of god with natural selection does not come easily to contemporary minds. But I think we would do well to examine it more fully. If we could agree more clearly on what the source and determiner of human destiny is, I think we could then begin to make more rapid progress in reaching our goal of a scientifically grounded religion.

To conclude, I wish to quote first from last century's celebrated formulator of the scientific doctrine of natural selection and then from a celebrated Christian mystic of the thirteenth century:

It may be said that natural selection is daily and hourly scrutinizing throughout the world, every variation, even the slightest; rejecting that which is bad, preserving and adding up all that is good; silently and insensibly working, whenever and wherever opportunity offers, at the improvement of each organic being in relation to its organic and inorganic conditions of life.—Darwin.

Know that, by nature, every creature seeks to become like God. Nature's intent is neither food nor drink nor clothing nor comfort, nor anything else in which God is left out. Whether you like it or not, secretly nature seeks, hunts, tries to ferret out the track on which God may be found.—Meister Eckhart.

It would seem that, even before the twentieth century and the clear establishment of evolutionary theory, it sometimes was natural to translate "God" as nature's selection of life. Why not now?

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