Editorial

FORTY YEARS: HOPE IN THE MIDST OF CONTRADICTION

Thirty-nine years ago, persons of insight and courage sent the first issue of this journal on its way into the world. They were sensitive to the challenges of the social and cultural situation in which they lived, and they formulated a vision within that situation that pointed the journal toward the future. Even though so much has changed in the forty years since they launched their project that we might say today we live in a different world, the fundamental challenges and the mission remain—urgently demanding our attention.

The founding group described the challenge of their situation as "the widening chasm in twentieth century culture between values and knowledge, or good and truth, or religion and science, is disruptive, if not lethal for human destiny." *Zygon* was their name for the journal and also for their project. *Zygon*, a Greek term for anything that joins two bodies ("especially a team which must effectively pull together"), embodies their understanding of their mission: the yoking or harnessing of that which has become split, religion and science, so that the two might work together for the common welfare. The group was itself a result of a yoking—scientists who were leaders of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences with liberal theologians and clergy from several religious traditions who had established a Conference on the Coming Great Church, which aimed to rise above narrow boundaries of creed or denomination in favor of common understandings.

Looking back to these activities that are rooted in the American experience of the 1950s and 60s, we are struck by the almost unimaginable changes that have taken place in the ensuing years. The changes in the landscape of scientific knowledge are sensational; the contours of religious thinking and practice are significantly different. In the context of this change, it is sobering to recognize that the more science, culture, and religion have changed, the more fundamental challenges and mission have remained the same. The depth and breadth of the change underscore the significance of the sameness. Although science and religion have morphed into different shapes,

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the chasm between value and knowledge, goodness and truth, religion and science, remains as an underlying rhythm of our common life.

I speak of the "chasm" between religion and science, following the initial editorial in 1966; other terms are commonly used to describe the same phenomenon—"warfare," "alienation," "conflict." Whatever the term, it cannot be applied simplistically; a nuanced understanding is necessary if we are to grasp adequately the relationship between religion and science. A certain contradiction is inherent in any discussion of the relationship.

If there is any doubt that the chasm between religion and science can be raw and hostile, we have only to look at two sectors of our culture that are mirror images of each another. The one includes large numbers of the intelligentsia who have simply lost confidence that religion, intellectually in its theology and philosophy or practically in its worship and ethical behavior, can take the measure of the sciences and speak significantly to a scientifically informed world. Many scientists at the highest levels within their communities of research, policy-making, and teaching, along with others who are shaped by scientific modes of thinking, sincerely believe that religion at best is an anachronism and at worst a danger to society. Not only does traditional religious thinking—beliefs and scriptures—seem to this group to be hopelessly archaic, empty of any significance for contemporary people, but religion is also held accountable for fostering violence, prejudice, and obstructing the common good. In another sector of culture many religious conservatives, including fundamentalists of all sorts, think that the intellectuals who have given up on religion are the enemy. They represent an "atheistic," "materialistic," and "reductionist" scientific ideology against which religion must be defended.

Most public discussion of religion and science begins here, on the tense frontier between these two groups; their attacks and counterattacks on each other get most of the media attention. Outright contradiction enters the picture when we go beyond this battleground. Beyond the bitter conflict we find voices that fly directly in the face of both the despisers and fundamentalists.

There is a near consensus among historians that over the millennia the boundaries between religion and science have never been impenetrable. Monographs describe in detail the many and frequent instances in which science and religion have made a reciprocal impact on each other, in every culture that has been studied. These historians consider talk about "warfare" uninformed and unuseful. The historians' judgment has encouraged a cadre of thinkers who constitute the "religion and science movement." This movement encompasses a variety of persons who concern themselves with building bridges between religion and science: (1) scholars from many fields (including religious studies and the sciences), (2) adherents of a broad range of religious beliefs and practices, (3) persons from the various professions. Their efforts have flourished impressively in the last half century,

establishing centers and programs of academic study, while producing an avalanche of periodicals and books. As the articles by Philip Clayton and John Polkinghorne in this issue argue, participants in this community believe that they have made real progress in "understanding commonalities" and forging "productive partnerships" between religion and science (Clayton).

As hostilities have raged, stoked equally by the scientifically informed intellectual despisers of religion and the fundamentalist defenders, alternative religious responses have been emerging. It is important to recognize that these responses are genuinely religious in character. Although they are informed by and even overlap the work of both the historians and the religion and science movement, these responses should not be construed as scholarly academic exercises. Two such responses deserve mention here.

Within certain segments of the various traditional religious communities, both theology and forms of worship have undergone significant transformations in response to scientific knowledge, thanks to the patient labors of philosophers, theologians, clergy, and laity. These religious groups are in process of reforming themselves. Extraordinary developments of religious philosophy in the last two hundred years are, unfortunately, scarcely recognized outside the peer group of academically trained theologians. As a result of this philosophical and theological reformulation, resources are now available to interpret traditional beliefs constructively in the light of contemporary scientific knowledge. The concept of God, for example, has been reworked so thoroughly, both philosophically and theologically, that it no longer opposes mainstream scientific presentations of evolutionary theory. Worship forms are also in a state of reform, exemplified in the comprehensive revision of the United Church of Christ hymnal and the Lutheran handbook for interpreting Sunday Bible readings in the light of scientific perspectives. For many years, the Roman Catholic Conference of Bishops has carried on dialogue with prominent scientists; most Protestant churches incorporate the dialogue into their national programming, and they coordinate their efforts in the Ecumenical Roundtable for Religion, Science, and Technology.

A second alternative response, often identified as "religious naturalism," is composed of a cross-section of people, many of whom are scientists, who are fashioning a religious worldview that is consistent with their personal outlook and/or free of those encumbrances of traditional religion which they consider conceptually anachronistic and morally dangerous. Jerome Stone has characterized religious naturalism:

> Positively it affirms that attention should be focused on this world to provide whatever explanation and meaning are possible to this life. Now religious naturalism is a variety of naturalism which involves a set of beliefs and attitudes that there are religious aspects of this world which can be appreciated within a naturalistic framework. There are occasions within our experience which elicit responses which are

analogous enough to the paradigm cases of religion that they can appropriately be called religious. Negatively it asserts that there seems to be no ontologically distinct and superior realm (such as God, soul, or heaven) to ground, explain, or give meaning to this world. (unpublished paper, "Concept of God among Religious Naturalists," December 2004)

This analysis reveals a double contradiction in our current situation: our culture is deeply divided by the warfare between despisers of religion and fundamentalists, but over against the warfare we find serious and diligent people who consider the idea of warfare itself to be unuseful and uninformed, based on too superficial an understanding of both religion and science. From this double contradiction at the heart of our culture we conclude that, even though it wears a new face and is more complex, the challenge of our situation today is fundamentally the same that the founders of *Zygon* discerned in the mid-twentieth century. Now, as then, the chasm between knowledge and value, science and religion, stands as a threat to the common good, since it obstructs the efforts of scientific and religious communities to work together to fashion more wholesome ways of living. At the conceptual level, it lessens our ability to shape meaningful and coherent worldviews, while practically it stands in the way of our forming consensus on pressing issues like stem cells, transplants, and genetic engineering.

Obviously this journal rejects all proposals for warfare. We stand with those who attempt the constructive yoking of religion and science: the religion and science movement, the traditional religious communities that are in the midst of reforming their beliefs and practices, and the religious naturalists. In numbers, these yoking groups cannot measure up to either the hostile despisers among the intelligentsia or the fundamentalists among the religions. They will never capture the headlines and the sound bites. But we believe, with the founders of forty years ago, that a more wholesome future is emerging in the patient and courageous work of those who undertake reformation and attempt the *zygon*, the yoking. In the face of our culture's contradictions, we stand for hope.

The fortieth anniversary is a fitting occasion for us to explore anew the vision that has animated the journal. The centerpiece of our explorations is the year-long Fortieth Anniversary Symposium on the very theme of the first 1966 editorial: "Science, Religion, and Secularity in a Technological Age." Each of the year's four issues will include contributions to this symposium.

John Caiazza (history, philosophy) lays down the basic problematic in his discussion of techno-secularism. The symposiasts generally concur with Caiazza that there are significant issues raised in his article, but each elaborates those issues differently, often in sharp disagreement with him. Philip Clayton (philosophy) points to five types of approaches to the dialogue of science and religion, and discerns positive accomplishments by each. Hava

Tirosh-Samuelson (history of Jewish thought) powerfully recasts the issues and proposes her own interpretation of the changes which the dialogue of science religion is "uniquely qualified to address." Arguing that significant "influence flows between science and religion," John Polkinghorne (physics, theology) outlines specific topics of engagement for consideration. Harold Morowitz (biophysics) responds to the discussion by exploring "roads less traveled in the debate between science and religion." Caiazza may be correct in describing negative elements in our current situation, but Ervin Laszlo (philosophy of science) closes this round of the symposium by pointing to a "spiritual renaissance" that he sees developing in our midst.

The second section of this issue comprises a symposium on the thought of Michael Polanyi, a figure who has appeared several times in our pages over the years. Polanyi (1891-1976) was a physical chemist and philosopher whose work has intrigued religious thinkers for many decades. Richard Gelwick (religious studies) and John Apczynski (theology) explore Polanyi's reflections on purpose in contrast with the claims of the contemporary Intelligent Design thinkers. Both conclude that Polanyi would not accept the teleological claims of the ID movement. Walter Gulick (theology) offers an interpretative critique of this symposium.

Eight major articles make up the third section of this issue. Wolfhart Pannenberg (theology) provides a major reflection on time, space, and eternity. He offers a fundamental proposal for conceptualizing time and space so as to give expression to God's immanence and transcendence, as well as to a viable understanding of eternity. Working memory is the focus of neuropsychologist Robert Glassman; he explores the significance of working memory's limits for the mind's activity of organizing its experience of the world. Steven Reiss (psychology) brings his well-known theory of the basic desires and core values that influence personality to bear on how individuals react to the dialogue between religion and science. Amos Yong (theology) and Jacqueline Cameron (medicine, theology) work with issues arising from the cognitive sciences. Yong's proposal concerns how non-reductive physicalist theories of human personhood are enriched by the recent advances in the Christian-Buddhist dialogue, specifically the Christian concept of spirit and the Buddhist concept of co-dependent origination. Cameron asks how Christian theology may be enriched by current neuroscientific research on pain. Religious studies scholar Rebecca Sachs Norris proposes that we engage neurobiological studies of emotions with the function of religious traditions to "educate the feelings toward certain qualities." This engagement can lead to a non-reductive examination of spiritual experience. Andrew Ward (public policy) draws upon both postmodern philosophy and neuroscience to develop a concept of ethical naturalism. Holmes Rolston, III (philosophy, theology) concludes this section

with a full discussion of Simon Conway Morris's book, *Life's Solution: Inevitable Humans in a Lonely Universe*, in which paleontologist Morris goes against the stream of evolutionary thinking as he seeks "to refute the notion of the dominance of contingency." Rolston concludes, "The challenge to understand how humans are both on a continuum with other species and also utterly different remains a central puzzle in paleontology."

In the Endmatter, we reprint the initial editorial from the March 1966 issue of the journal. We will offer reprints from the past in each of the 2005 issues.

Welcome to the fortieth year of *Zygon*. We promise you an engagement with contradictions, and we invite you to join our hopeful band.

—Philip Hefner

Coming in June

The Fortieth Anniversary Symposium on Science, Religion, and Secularity in a Technological Society continues with contributions by Barbara Strassberg (sociology). Gordon Kaufman (theology, philosophy), Norbert Samuelson (Jewish philosophy), Lluis Oviedo (theology), and John Haught (theology).

Call for Papers

Zygon welcomes papers on the theme "What are the criteria for judging that a worldview is 'scientific'?" What are the essential components of a "scientific worldview"? What would disqualify a position from being considered "scientific"?

Length is negotiable. Deadline is September 15, 2005. Authors planning to submit such a paper should inform the editor as soon as possible. Send notifications to both of these addresses:

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and
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