Editorial

Zygon's aim to publish sound formulations of thought about religious and moral questions in the light of contemporary science and scholarship involves the hope that a sounder conviction or more credible faith about human goals and aspirations can be provided for men in the midst of the modern world. It is expected that the primary elements of even the already widely discounted Judeo-Christian faith of the West may find constructive illumination and support from the contemporary sciences rather than further destruction. The paper by physicist Harold Schilling in this issue suggests the possibility of an increasing confluence of the scientific and Christian faiths.

The paper by church historian John Godbey suggests there is a need for a scientific theology and implies the possibility of one.

As far back as two centuries ago, new scientific knowledge had so far upset the thinking man's faith in the biblical and Graeco-Roman world view (in which the Christian churches have clothed their message) that attempts at a more contemporary, scientifically grounded faith had already begun to appear. We need to be aware of both the wisdom and the weaknesses of these attempts as we face our own task of making good sense of man's religious and moral meaning and values in an age of science.

The eighteenth-century-enlightenment attempts to tie the religious convictions about God's ordering of the world and man to a view of nature under Newton's laws as deistically ordained was a noble attempt that then proceeded to fade away. The somewhat similar and slightly later (but less patently Christian) positivistic faith of Auguste Comte also failed to carry many for long. The faith initiated a bit later in the nineteenth century by Karl Marx, a new gospel of a classless society and a golden age of "heaven" on earth, grounded in scientific and scholarly concepts of the times (but vigorously rejecting traditional Christian notions), has been much more successful. Its missionary movement (also largely grounded in a faith in human reason and science like the eighteenth-century religion of reason that preceded it) has converted a large portion of the world's population (nearly half) in the span of a century—perhaps the most dynamic and extensive

ideological mission to convert men and to transform societies in the history of mankind.

Not only the professional defenders of the church but also various scholarly and scientific leaders have been dubious both about the validity of these attempts to develop a rational faith and about the sufficiency of reason or science at all for the tasks of religion and moral behavior. The paper by philosopher Joseph Agassi in this issue provides a review and criticism of some of the scientific and scholarly attempts to retain and revitalize parts or aspects of traditional religion; but he himself in the end rejects these and advocates science itself "as a new universalistic religion," in a move to revive the eighteenth-century enlightenment and rationalization of religion in the twentieth century.

The paper by another philosopher, Donald Borchert, is a critical analysis of the Marxist mission to save or redeem mankind. Borchert says Marx "chained his latent humanism to an absolutized theoretical perspective, and thereby rendered his humanism religious rather than secular." Borchert's conclusion suggests that the followers of Marx have fallen into a pit of absolutist orthodoxy at least as rigid, inhumane, and incapable of reformation from within as certain forms of the Christian institutions against which it was rebelling. He wonders if a relativistic or evolving or growing norm for human behavior can be found.

By way of contrast, the paper by biologist Donald Huisingh deals not with how to save or redeem man by changing the cultural input to his brain that helps shape or reshape the patterns by which man conceives himself and his world, but with changing the more primitive patterns of genetics that shape the very ways in which man is formed as well as in which his brain allows him to behave and to conceive himself and the world about him. We cannot forget, however, that these new powers to change our genetic patterns are a product of our powers to know and to understand that have come out of the sciences. They are not new powers, in reality, since man's genetic patterns—his genotypes—have been revised, edited, and improved by processes operating now for millions of years in the past to the present. What is new here is the fact that man is for the first time empowered by his scientific knowledge to enter consciously into at least the initial steps of revising his genetic structure—thus entering more fully into the work of the creator of man.

The new responsibility for the human genotype, which we cannot now escape since what we do not do is in fact doing something to it,

is a most sacred, awesome, and even terrible responsibility. Nevertheless, Huisingh concludes in company with some of the world's best geneticists that the evolution of cultural patterns has been far more significant for human improvement in recent millennia than the evolution of genetic patterns. He would turn our main efforts to focus on the problems of cultural evolution with which the earlier papers of this issue of *Zygon* are wrestling. Actually, the management of cultural evolution is a facet of what Huisingh calls "euphenic engineering." This brings us back to the awesome sacrality and morality of all human activity and the important potentialities of the sciences in informing our theology.

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