

Editorial

MENTAL WELL-BEING, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND NEW ARCHIVAL MATERIAL ON TEILHARD DE CHARDIN

This issue of *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* has much to offer. Although one cannot deny the urgency of the topics addressed in the thematic sections on mental well-being and on climate change, as editor I am especially fascinated by the opening article, on the French paleontologist and Jesuit priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. The story of the official response of the Roman Catholic Church to his theological engagement with science has been fascinating, but so far incomplete. The article in this issue provides new information, with original archival evidence.

As far as I know, in the first half century of its existence, *Zygon* has not found reason to publish documents in Latin and French. However, this time we do, with an English translation. The document has recently been discovered by Paul Bentley in Jesuit archives in the Vatican. It is published here for the first time, with an analysis of the events by Bentley and David Grumett. The document has six propositions on human origins and original sin, in Latin; some drawn from authoritative documents, and one in particular made up for the occasion. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin had to confirm his assent to these Six Propositions. On July 1, 1925, he wrote on the document in French that he accepted the six propositions “voluntarily because, despite the appearances that I might have given, I have never had any other idea than to let them dominate all scientific truth” (underlining in the original). With the Six Propositions and Teilhard’s statement, the authors also add as an appendix an unpublished letter in French (with an English translation) by Teilhard de Chardin to the Jesuit superior general of that time, Włodimir Ledóchowski. This letter was written by Teilhard almost six months before he signed the Propositions, and spoke of his commitment to the Church and to science, and hence the need to bring together science and Christianity, a need which “is not an arrogant desire for novelty, but a deep need to live Religion more fully.” As we know from history, the letter was not enough to quiet down ecclesial concerns. Not only was Teilhard required to sign the Six Propositions on human origins and original sin, he also was no longer allowed to teach at the Institut Catholique, the Catholic university in Paris. Furthermore, he had to leave Paris and return to China by Easter in 1926. His subsequent theological writings were not published during his lifetime, but after his death in 1955. This article, supported by a key document, provides insight in the theological and political dynamics of the 1920s.

The Science and Religion Forum was founded by Arthur Peacocke and others somewhat over forty years ago (see Southgate 2016, 362f). It sponsors an annual conference on issues in religion and science. Last year, the topic was “Mental Well-Being, Neuroscience, and Religion.” In this issue, we publish five contributions that have their origin at that conference, preceded by a brief introduction by Gillian Straine and Mark Harris. As they make clear, this is a fascinating and important borderland between the physical and the mental. No need to repeat their introduction; highly recommended.

The Institute on Religion in an Age of Science, one of the two organizations behind this journal, focused its June 2017 conference on Star Island, New Hampshire, on another important topic, climate change. Or, as the title of the conference had it, “The Wicked Problem of Climate Change.” In this issue, some of the articles inform us on scientific issues, whereas other articles address the moral, spiritual, and societal issues. For those who want to know more about the conference and this set of papers, the introductory article by Karl Peters, “Living with the Wicked Problem of Climate Change,” sets the stage. And, to circle back to the first article, one of the contributions, by Matthew Fox, refers to Pope Francis and to Teilhard de Chardin, to speak of “creation spirituality and the noble vocation of the scientist.”

NOTE

After ten years of service, Willem B. Drees will step down as the editor of *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*. After an extensive search and open invitation, the Joint Publication Board has selected Dr. Arthur C. Petersen, Professor of Science, Technology and Public Policy of King's College, London, UK, as the new editor. The remainder of 2018 they will work together on a smooth transition.

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REFERENCE

Southgate, Christopher. 2016. “Science and Religion in the United Kingdom: A Personal View on the Contemporary Scene.” *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 51:361–86.