

Editorial

WHO SPEAKS?

Who speaks for Christianity? Who speaks for Muslims? Who represents the scientific consensus? These are important questions, even for all those readers of *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* who are primarily interested in questions of truth and genuine value.

We need not choose one side a priori. But then, how long are various voices equally deserving of our attention? “Teach the Controversy” is a phrase that has been used in the United States to argue for the inclusion of Intelligent Design in the biology curriculum. The expression may confuse liberals who have no sympathy for the antievolution movement but who do believe strongly in academic freedom and freedom of expression. My hypothesis is that this ambivalence of open-minded persons who accept science but also value freedom of expression explains some of the discrepancy between the percentage of those who do not accept evolution and the higher number of those who hold that alternative points of view ought to be taught. However, science is not only about openness to alternative views, it also is about testing ideas and discarding those that lack precision, are not fruitful, or do not pass empirical tests. Academic freedom, freedom of speech, and freedom of religion do not require that every idea has similar standing. Rather, academic freedom is the freedom from interference for the sake of nonacademic interests—and, thus, to let the scientists speak for science.

In this issue of *Zygon*, the question is not so much who speaks for the scientific community, although the scientists are involved. Who speaks for Islam? In our time, the presence of Islam in Western countries and the study of Islam touch raw nerves; thus here, too, there is a need for proper academic and religious freedom (Drees and Van Koningsveld 2008). The issue begins with two articles on Islamic responses to the cloning of the sheep Dolly. Mohammed Ghaly argues that traditional religious leadership is not by itself the prime voice when it comes to modern bioethical issues. Institutions have arisen that bring together Muslim scientists and religious scholars to discuss the issues. He focuses on two conferences in which scientists explained the core issues to religious leaders and engaged

them in debate on the moral issues. While Ghaly points to new collaborations of scientists and religious scholars on bioethics, Farrokh Sekaleshfar focuses on a well-established form of religious leadership based at Al-Azhar University.

To hear other voices, I can point readers to an analysis by Fatima Agha Al-Hayani (2008) on “Muslim Perspectives on Stem-Cell Research and Cloning” and by Nidhal Guessoum (2008) on contemporary Muslim discourse on science and the Qur’an, both published in *Zygon*.

Daniel Helminiak’s well-documented challenge to those who mix theology and psychology may be seen as a struggle for authority, in this case in the area of psychology and religion. He criticizes other voices that have been present in this journal advocating neurotheology or some other integration of neuroscience and spirituality. The article by Kevin S. Reimer and colleagues offers empirical insights into various ways of thinking of God as personal, in analogy with a father, a lover, a friend, and other human images—distinguishing schemas used by Jews, Christians, and Muslims. John Teske reflects on imagination and thus the role of narrative rather than causality in generating a meaningful understanding of who we are.

There is a struggle among those engaged in religion-and-science. How much weight should the voice of the tradition have (for example, in this issue, Klaus Nürnberger on Martin Luther)? How much freedom is there to draw creatively on nonreligious philosophers such as Niklas Luhmann (Young Bin Moon)? Should we rather intertwine theological ideas such as emergence with terms inspired by science such as emergence (Bradford McCall, drawing on writings by Philip Clayton)? Is science a model to be followed or a valid but limited human practice that needs to be complemented with something else? Reflection on the proper approach to the relationship is a recurrent issue in this journal, whether in the context of the intellectual standing of theology in the modern university (Peterson 2008; Jones 2008) or more in itself as intellectual human efforts. The continuing quest for articulating one’s approach comes out clearly in the reflections by Nathan Hallanger and Varadaraja V. Raman on two fairly recent books—by Taede Smedes (2004; see also Smedes 2008 with a response by Ian Barbour [2008]) and by Kevin Sharpe (2006; it would be interesting to compare his later writing with earlier articles in this journal [Sharpe 1990; 1991]).

Let me use this opportunity to remember Kevin Sharpe, who died of cancer on 6 November 2008. He came from New Zealand. For many years he lived in the United States, where he taught for the Graduate College of Union Institute and University in Cincinnati (an institution with a substantial distance-learning program). The last decade he was based in Oxford, United Kingdom, where he was a member of Harris Manchester College. In summer 2008 he returned to New Zealand with the partner of his

later years, Leslie van Gelder. Sharpe was the founder (1991) and editor of the Theology and Science book series with Fortress Press. This series included about twenty-five books, many by well-known authors such as Eugene d'Aquili and Andrew Newberg, Ian Barbour, Celia Deane-Drummond, Philip Hefner, Noreen Herzfeld, Christopher Knight, Alexei Nesteruk, Arthur Peacocke, John Polkinghorne, Robert J. Russell, and Paul Santmire. As far as I know this was the first book series dedicated to the religion-and-science field in its current phase. Sharpe also was the founder and editor of *Science and Religion News*, initiated as a newsletter in 1990 by the Institute for Religion in an Age of Science (IRAS). Under his leadership this morphed in 1997 into *Science and Spirit Magazine*, a glossy magazine and interesting Web site sponsored by the John Templeton Foundation. Under pressure from the main sponsor, he gave up his leading role in this enterprise in 2000. More recently the magazine became *Search: Science, Religion, and Culture*. Sharpe was early in reaching out, bringing religion-and-science to a wider audience beyond the academy and also beyond more traditional religious circles.

Sharpe was himself a scholar who contributed to the field. Early in his career he published *From Science to an Adequate Mythology* (1984). In 1993 he published *David Bohm's World*. More recently he authored *Science of God: Truth in an Age of Science* (2006). As far as I understand him, the word *mythology* captures his own position better than the word *God* in the last one mentioned. But then, as the title *Science of God* may not convey so directly, that book is highly critical of the defensive and conservative nature of religion-and-science and pleads for a more marked empirical, scientific, realist, and immanent turn. Besides all this, Sharpe was active as an archaeologist, studying cave art and especially the less artistic but informative scratches/line markings in caves, which he interpreted as an early mnemonic device, a precursor to writing. May his person be remembered with gratitude and his contributions bear many fruits.

There is much more to be found in this issue. I already indicated clusters of articles on Islam and cloning, on psychology and religion, and on theological visions. Four authors—Nancey Murphy, John F. Haught, Michael Ruse, and myself—offer reflections on Robert J. Russell's *Cosmology from Alpha to Omega* (2008) that are followed by a response from Russell. Philip Hefner, Ann Milliken Pederson, and James Haag reflect on the embodied, socially situated character of science, religion, and their interplay, thus underlining again the immediate relevance of the question of who in the real world speaks for science and who for religion.

Last but not least, let me welcome the new book review editor, James F. Moore. We aspire to provide you with timely reviews, relatively brief but useful in orienting ourselves on the vast field of religion-and-science, so as to see who else is speaking.

Willem B. Drees

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