

## *Editorial*

### HISTORY, HINDUISM, AND CHRISTIAN HUMANISM

As the historian of science John Brooke once wrote, “it is almost always assumed that there are lessons to be learned from history. The object of this book is not to deny that assumption but to show that the lessons are far from simple” (Brooke 1991, 4f). Maybe his thesis does not just apply to lessons from history, but also from the study of the world’s religions—in this issue Hinduism—and the study of human relationships and experiences.

Our own history is involved in the opening article on Kirtley Mather, by historian of science Ted Davis. Mather was a geologist involved in the early years of IRAS, the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science, which is one of the organizations behind *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*. So many of his themes are still relevant today—on the acceptance of evolution, the rise of creative personality, the emphasis on values in the universe. A Baptist modernist, Mather’s position illustrates the argument of the second article in this issue, by Matthew Stanley, that in the nineteenth century belief in the uniformity of nature, operating according to natural laws, could be part of a theistic view of reality as well as of a naturalistic view. Distinctions between theists and naturalists may seem simple, but when one looks at the details, the categories may turn out to be complex.

Humans in their social and personal relations is the key theme of the section on Christian humanism, the apt title used by the ethicist and practical theologian Don Browning for the last book published during his lifetime. With the permission of the publisher, Fortress Press, we have the opportunity to republish the introduction and first chapter of his book *Reviving Christian Humanism* (Browning 2010). His own voice comes also to us via two unpublished articles from work done with John Witte Jr., on children’s rights and marriage. The article by Terry Cooper, coauthor with Browning on religion and psychology, presents Browning as a “horizon analyst,” engaged in critical hermeneutics, seeking to understand presuppositions of one’s understanding of the world. Don Browning offers a critical challenge, appreciating the humanism but wondering whether in the end it is theologically not more defensive than desirable. How to understand ourselves, the others, and our world, remains a critical hermeneutical project, whether one draws explicitly on the wisdom of Christianity or is more pluralist or naturalist in stance.

In the quest for understanding, disagreement is helpful. I am not so sure that the authors of the papers in a section on “The Mythic Reality of the Autonomous Individual” in our March issue (e.g., Teske 2011) would find issue with Robert Segal’s understanding of myth. However,

from Segal's contribution to this issue, it is obvious that he felt that the key term "myth" had been used loosely. Disagreement is also found in the challenges brought against Michael Ruse's view of religion and of science, followed by Ruse's response. May this be an issue with many lessons to be learned, may those lessons be accessible though not too simple, and may the lessons be accompanied by further questions.

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#### REFERENCES

- Brooke, John Hedley. 1991. *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Browning, Donald S. 2010. *Reviving Christian Humanism: The New Conversation on Spirituality, Theology, and Psychology*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress.
- Teske, John A. 2011. "Editorial Overview." *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 46:105–10.