

Editorial

SCIENCE AND THE RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD

The German theologian Adolf Harnack (later “Von Harnack,” 1851–1930) was a liberal German theologian and a great scholar of Christian history. He was among the founders of the Kaiser Wilhelm Gesellschaft (the predecessor the Max Planck Gesellschaft, the most prominent organization of German research institutes) and its first president (1911–1930, succeeded by the physicist Max Planck). By the way, that a theologian could have this role corresponds with the broad sense of “science” captured in the German term “Wissenschaft.” Harnack was open-minded and critical in his theological engagement and well connected with scientists and scholars of all fields. In his time, as in our time, the study of other religions was discussed. Harnack was not dogmatic about Christianity; he rather was a great critic of entrenched positions and well aware of the plurality of perspectives. He had published on various disputes in early Christianity, including Gnosticism and also the challenge of Marcion (a form of dualism, distinguishing the creator of the world and the Father of Jesus Christ).

With all his awareness of multiple positions within the history of Christianity, it was Harnack who in 1901 in a speech on the task of theological faculties with respect to history of religions (or religious studies) said that to study religions in general, it would be enough to study Christianity and its history. He waged the saying: “Wer diese Religion nicht kennt, kennt keine, und wer sie sammt ihre Geschichte kennt, kennt alle”—Who does not know this religion, knows none, and whoever knows Christianity and its history, knows all (Von Harnack 1906, 168). Harnack had practical concerns about the quality of scholarship: one cannot be a specialist on multiple religions and their histories and contexts. Even more practical, the faculty was there to train future pastors for the protestant churches. He knew of the many variants within the history of Christianity, which thus could provide a good sense of the diversity of options open to humans. That should be sufficient.

“Religion and science” has been predominantly a Western discourse, focusing on Christianity or a more general theism of a Christian kind and the alternatives and criticisms arising in the history of Western Christianity. The discourse has suffered from the tendency to presume that the options and schemes discussed in this context would be applicable for “religion” in general—following Harnack’s wager. However, aside from similarities across traditions, there may also be genuine differences. Over the years *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* has published on the variety of

traditions. In recent years there has been a section on the reception of Darwin's ideas in different religious traditions (Brooke 2011; Cherry 2011; Elshakry 2011; Gosling 2011; McMullin 2011; Southgate 2011) and another one in the same issue on Judaism and science (e.g., Artson 2011; Efron 2011; Samuelson 2011).

In this issue, we have a substantial analysis of contemporary ideas on Islam and science by Stefano Bigliardi. He used Ian Barbour's scheme with four positions—conflict, separation, dialogue, and integration (e.g., Barbour, 1990). However, as Bigliardi draws on the category of “integration,” nuances are needed that challenge the usefulness of this scheme for Islamic reflections. In the previous issue, *Zygon* published a package of five contributions on Islam and science, with the authors reflecting on Nidhal Guessoum's ambitious *Islam's Quantum Question: Reconciling Muslim Tradition and Modern Science* (2011; see Bagir 2012; Brooke 2012; Dajani 2012; Guessoum 2012; Hameed 2012).

This issue also includes dispute on Hinduism and science, inspired by two recent books; *Zygon* recently published some other contributions on Hinduism and science (Dorman 2011; Duquette 2011). As it will become clear to the reader from the outspoken essays in this issue, the diversity of perspectives and scholarly opinions among Hindus and scholars of Hinduism is at least as great as for Christianity. Western Christianity, by the way, cannot be left totally out of the picture in such an analysis, as part of the framework for any engagement of Hinduism and science is shaped by the European expansion and the colonial introduction of Western education. This global setting turned out to be as significant in Donald Lopez's *Buddhism and Science: A Guide for the Perplexed* (2008), also discussed in *Zygon* (Harrison 2010; Lopez 2010; Thupten Jinpa 2010).

While considering discussions in different religious traditions, *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* continues to be interested in Christianity as well. We are thus very pleased to have in this issue the Boyle lecture presented in early 2012 by Celia Deane-Drummond—one that is not about religion in general but about the understanding of Christ, as an example of theology that takes the evolutionary character of reality serious.

Furthermore, we are also interested in ideas and practices among those who do not draw on the existing traditions, such as naturalists. The tendency is to define “naturalism” by pointing out what is not believed. Jerome Stone's “Spirituality for Naturalists” in this issue is a most welcome constructive proposal for a naturalist spirituality, as well as a survey of some major thinkers, from Spinoza to the present, including previous authors in *Zygon* such as Owen Flanagan (2009) and Ursula Goodenough (2000, 2001).

Last but not least, thinking of religions as an overarching category with its richness and presumed coherence might be associated with a way of writing a schematic history of religions in which there has been an “Axial Age,”

when the religions of the present more or less took their present form. This scheme and two other ones were used in a contribution by Marangudakis (2012) that overall had a positive outlook on human development and technology. As this contribution was to some extent a response to an article previously published in *Zygon*, the author of that article, John Caiazza, returns to present his view of “Religion and Science through the Ages” (Caiazza 2005, 2006; Marangudakis 2012). I hope the reader finds much of interest in this issue and in previous ones to be read and reflected upon.

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