

Review Articles on Religion and Science Around the World

with Willem B. Drees, “Glocalization: Religion and Science around the World”; Seung Chul Kim, “Śūnyatā and Kokoro: Science–Religion Dialogue in the Japanese Context”; Lluís Oviedo and Alvaro Garre, “The Interaction between Religion and Science in Catholic Southern Europe (Italy, Spain, Portugal)”; and Bartosz Brożek and Michael Heller, “Science and Religion in the Kraków School.”

GLOCALIZATION: RELIGION AND SCIENCE AROUND THE WORLD

by Willem B. Drees

Abstract. This essay explains the rationale behind a series of reviews on interactions between knowledge and values, science and religion, in different countries or regions around the world. The series will run in *Zygon* for the whole of 2015 and beyond. In the literature, it may seem that discussions in the United States and to a lesser extent the United Kingdom are typical of the issues, but they need not be. David Livingstone showed that the reception of evolution differed, even among Calvinists in different countries. Thus, rather than an export model, we should take time to learn from scholars rooted in different contexts how in their situation issues on knowledge and values arise and are dealt with. In this interplay of global processes and local contexts, indicated with the term glocalization, we should be alert to the migration of concepts and the transformations that ideas undergo.

Keywords: 1966; Ian Barbour; Ralph Burhoe; contextualization; globalization; glocalization; David Livingstone; migration of concepts; religion and science

A good example of the extensive literature on “religion and science” is *The Oxford Handbook on Religion and Science* (Clayton and Simpson 2006), one thousand pages with fifty-five good chapters on religion and science. However, even such an extensive survey by many of the best authors has biases. It is almost exclusively Anglo-Saxon with respect to the authors but also with respect to the treatment of topics. The chapter on sociology and religion ends with remarks about the American constitution. The

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evolution–creation controversy is discussed in the American context as if issues are the same elsewhere. The authors focus on content, scientific and theological, at the expense of context. Theology, ethics, and science have universal ambitions; their truth claims and norms seek to be valid for people of all walks of life and all cultures. While the ambitions are lofty, religion and science are human; contexts and assumptions shape the questions asked, the criteria used, the content proposed.

The year 1966 can be considered the year the modern constructive “religion and science” discussion took off in the United States. The first issues of the journal *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*, founded by Ralph Burhoe, appeared. In the same year, the physicist and theologian Ian Barbour published his book *Issues in Religion and Science*. Around the same time, on the other side of the Atlantic, a committee of the Dutch Reformed Church concluded that there wasn’t much to be discussed, except issues of ethics and ethos, as religion and science each had its own role in human life (Dippel and De Jong 1965). Why did the American “religion and science” discussion take off at that time, while these Protestants on the European continent weren’t interested? Discussions in the United States and on the European continent regard the same science, and they both take place in the context of Western Christianity, broadly understood. Nonetheless, those American and Dutch authors did not have the same view of what religious belief is. Ideas, books, journals and persons travel. We learn from each other. But still, also today, people may feel strangers when they encounter familiar issues in new contexts.

Putting Science in Its Place is the title of a book in which the historian and geographer David Livingstone considered the situated character of scientific research. He studied science as situated in laboratories, the outdoors, the museum, and hospitals, but also as shaped by particular local, contextual situations. Livingstone described the reception of Darwinism in Calvinist settings in Scotland, Ireland, and the United States. In Belfast, Protestants and Catholics used opposition to claims about science replacing religion to criticize each other. In Princeton, the leadership sought to read evolutionary natural history as divine design. In Charleston, in the southern United States, racial sensitivities led to opposition to a single human origin, while in New Zealand the settlers could use evolution to justify their struggle for life at the expense of the Maoris (Livingstone 2003, 112–23). Even a single issue such as the reception of Darwinian ideas in Protestant, Calvinist circles was very much context-dependent.

If such diversity is already to be found for countries and religions that are fairly similar to each other, how much more should one expect diversity when other religions and non-Western regions of the world are taken into consideration? Fitting all in the Ian Barbour (1990) scheme of four categories—conflict, independence, dialogue, and integration—will not do. An export model of “religion and science” runs the risk of imposing

a Western frame on situations where issues are different. Not just the answers given may be different. The questions, and the understanding of the concepts involved, need not be the same either. Thus, misunderstandings easily arise.

Different countries and regions are not isolated from each other. We live in a time of globalization. Perhaps there has never been a time without an exchange of goods and ideas across borders. Terms, schemes, and concepts migrate from one place to another. However, even though the same terms and references may be used, they may mean different things in different places. Thus, globalization does not result in uniformity. Local interests and local histories shape the way global impulses are appropriated, put to new uses, and hence transformed. And all those local processes transform the global. In the political sphere intense interactions, including trade and exchange of people and goods, go hand in hand with emphasis on regional particularity. “Glocalization” is a neologism to speak of the complex interplay of global and local. If one looks it up in Wikipedia, it is mostly about marketing, adapting global brands and products to local preferences in order to be more successful commercially. That is still too close to an export model, in my opinion. The process runs deeper than that; the local dimension, the emphasis on particularity, is not merely instrumental but ought to be considered to be a genuine source of insight.

We should give people from various settings an opportunity to speak for themselves, and to present on their own terms, how knowledge and values interact in their cultural and social context. As I envisage the following series of review articles, this will not be a comparative project, though comparisons may arise. It will first and foremost be a descriptive project, collecting insight from various places. And a hermeneutical project, listening to other voices, seeking to reduce misunderstandings so that we may perhaps understand better the richness of attitudes, visions, and ideas in our world.

This series of reviews on religion and science around the world will run the whole year, and perhaps somewhat longer. We envisage contributions on New Zealand and Australia, China, Indonesia, India, the Middle East, South Africa, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Latin America. Others may be added.

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