

Editorial

ISLAM AND EVOLUTION


This issue of *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* gives room to an important symposium on “New Frontiers in Islam and Evolution.” In this symposium, guest editor Shoaib Ahmed Malik brings together five papers from a conference hosted by Leiden University in July 2021. The strength of the collection is that it brings together Shī‘ī and Sunnī voices, with some perspectives on Islam and evolution, such as an Ismaili Shī‘ī one, being published in English for the first time. The collection, of course, is not bringing the Islam and evolution discussion to a close. Far from it, the science-and-religion challenges related to the theory of evolution are still far too numerous for closure at this point in time. But still, I would argue, that argumentative progress is made.

Safaruk Zaman Chowdhury addresses the intersection of Islamic theodicy and evolution; he proposes some possible evolutionary theodicies that Muslim theists can utilize based on core doctrines and other precepts of the Qur’ān as well as ideas developed within contemporary evolutionary theism and environmental ethics. Karim Gabor Kocsenda examines the understanding of human evolution of al-Ḥaydarī, a contemporary Twelver Shī‘ī theologian and a creationist, in a comparison with the works of al-Ṭabātabā‘ī, an earlier (twentieth century) Twelver Shī‘ī theologian; he shows how Ḥaydarī gives a novel, theological reading of evolution understood in a nonscientific sense. Khalil Andani tackles both metaphysical and hermeneutic issues pertaining to evolution from an Ismaili Shī‘ī perspective; he argues that Ismaili Shī‘ī metaphysics, a Neoplatonic framework, allows for the metaphysical possibility of evolution and that Ismaili Shī‘ī hermeneutics permits a metaphorical reading of Adam’s creation narrative. David Solomon Jalajel assesses how scholars from all three Sunnī schools—Ash‘arism, Māturīdism, and Salafism—understand God’s wisdom; he finds a disconnect between contemporary wisdom-based arguments for and against evolution and how God’s wisdom has been traditionally understood. Shoaib Ahmed Malik, Hamza Karamali, and Moamer Yahia Ali Khalayleh look at “intelligent design” (ID) and the design discourse in the Qur’ān from a Sunnī kalamīc framework—Ash‘arism and Māturīdism; they expose an important difference between the two and argue that critiquing ID does not undermine the design discourse of the Qur’ān.

OTHER ARTICLES

The “Articles” section contains four articles. In the first article, Jacob (Chengwei) Feng tackles the “Needham Question” (posed by Joseph Needham in the 1930s, asking why modern science had not developed in Chinese civilization but only in Europe); he attributes it to the dominance of Chinese state power that stifled the maturation of Chinese (Christian) theology and of modern science, and he proposes a pneumatological-trinitarian Chinese theology of science. In the second article, Simranjit Khalse, Brenton Kalinowski, Brandon Vaidyanathan, and Elaine Howard Ecklund study science–religion boundaries in Indian scientific workplaces; on the basis of interviews and surveys, they establish that in spite of scientists’ espoused preferences for non-overlapping magisteria and attempts to construct boundaries between religion and science, religion overlaps with science in the workplaces of physicists and biologists. In the third article, biologist Jeremy Blaschke looks back at the interaction between faith and science in the history of parasitology; he argues that even now theological presuppositions can inspire scientific experiments and lead to the asking of unexpected questions. Finally, in the fourth article, chemist David Poiser examines the Christian call to love as an invitation to participate in an ongoing evolutionary transformation of humanity; he argues that we can overcome evolutionary constraints on altruism such as the tendency to favor member of one’s own group.

The issue ends with a book review. Lluís Oviedo reviews Steven Pinker’s *Rationality: What It Is, Why It Seems Scarce, Why It Matters*.

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