

message of indissolubility is patently obvious from our Lord.

As a matter of fact, this takes us to the heart of the dilemma for a biblical ethic of divorce and remarriage. The OT passages do seem to be more tolerant than at least some of Jesus' sayings as they are presented to us in the Gospels. But if Cornes was not convincing in his attempt to solve this problem, he did demonstrate some suggestive parallel themes, such as a concern over marriage to unbelievers and higher standards required for spiritual leaders. It may be here that further work will shed light.

John Stott praises Cornes' book so highly as to say it will become 'indispensable reading for everybody who is anxious to develop a Christian mind on these topics'. Indispensable, yes. Final, no.

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Religion in an Age of Science

Ian G. Barbour

SCM Press, London, 1990, 299 + xv pp.,
£15.00, ISBN 0-334-02298-3

RÉSUMÉ

C'est le premier de deux volumes reprenant des 'conférences Gifford'. Il aborde tout d'abord des questions générales sur la nature de la science face à la religion, puis il traite de la théorie scientifique, et consacre la troisième partie à des sujets théologiques et philosophiques. Barbour est un penseur de la tendance 'process', dans la ligne de A. N. Whitehead. L'ouvrage, par sa clarté, pourra rendre service au lecteur laïc, mais l'auteur ne soumet pas assez sa propre position théologique à un examen critique.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dies ist der erste Teil eines zweibändigen Werkes basierend auf den 'Gifford Lectures', bestehend aus drei Teilen. Zuerst werden allgemeine Fragestellungen zum Themenkomplex Wissenschaft und Religion behandelt. Der zweite Teil dreht sich um Wissenschaftstheorien, und im dritten Teil werden theologische und philosophische Schwerpunkte untersucht. Barbour ist ein Anhänger der Prozeß-Theorie (process thinker) nach dem Vorbild von A. N. Whitehead. Obwohl das Buch klar geschrieben und hilfreich für den Laienmitarbeiter ist, leidet der Autor unter mangelnder kritischer Distanz zu seiner eigenen theologischen Grundüberzeugung.

Professor Barbour put a slightly earlier generation heavily in his debt with his *Issues in Science and Religion* (1966). He has now, in the first volume of his Gifford Lectures for 1989-91, updated his handling there of the areas where science and religion meet. For science has not stood still in the intervening quarter of a century. That interval has seen, for example, to take the three main areas Barbour covers, (i) in quantum physics, Bell's inequality and the Aspect experiment; (ii) in cosmology, the detailed investigation of the period just after the 'big bang' and Hawking's hope of eliminating the initial singularity; (iii) in evolutionary theory, the development of sociobiology and the 'punctuated equilibrium' of Gould and Eldredge. Barbour has kept up to date with these and a great many other developments and he has given a lot of intelligent thought to the impact they have had, or are thought by some to have had, on religion, and more specifically on Christianity.

In the first part of the book, before he comes to the present scene, he considers more general questions about the nature of science and its relation to religion, including similarities and differences of method. In the second, he treats of current scientific theories, including those mentioned above, and of their presuppositions, insisting that there are holistic laws and descriptions which cannot be 'reduced' to lower-level ones. In all this section, his book is particularly helpful; the amount of new information for the layman which it contains is huge, while his discussions are clear and give fair space and treatment to opinions with which he does not himself agree (though the present reviewer thought him a little too brusque with mind/body dualism). He deals carefully with the widespread view that 'anthropic' arguments suggest deliberate design of the universe (though his lectures came too soon to take into account Paul Davies' *The Mind of God*) and with the alternative suggestions of total necessity or a multiplicity of universes. Here he seems on the whole to favour the first, though he writes at times as if he wanted only to show that the latest theories and speculations were compatible with theism, not that they in any way supported it.

In the third section Barbour moves on more definitely philosophical and theological topics (not that these have been overlooked in the earlier sections, but that there they were comments on the main topics, not main topics in their own right). It is here that he sets aside the judicial air of his earlier pages, and writes from the point of view of his own personal commitment, which is to 'process thought' in the tradition of Whitehead. Chapter 8 is a description of this metaphysic,

which has only been alluded to (as a rule favourably, though not uncritically) in earlier chapters; and chapter 9, the last, after briefly looking at some other recent varieties of theism, resumes the exposition of process thought. The courteous criticism of others' positions which has hitherto marked the book is not applied to Barbour's own. The result is a little odd. Professor Barbour writes as a Christian, and criticizes, for example, Maurice Wiles for departing from the biblical witness; yet many readers will probably feel that he himself has done just the same, though to a lesser extent. For example: we are told that Christ differs from other religious figures only in degree. The cross and resurrection are only mentioned (with one doubtful exception) in reporting the views of others. He is unhappy with the picture of God as King, though he agrees it is biblical. And God is seen largely as our fellow-sufferer, a position which surely fits the biblical picture only if a much stronger doctrine of the Incarnation is held than Barbour himself holds. It would be unreasonable to expect Barbour to defend his theological position at length in a book on the relationships between religion and science, but the effect produced is one of imbalance, and slightly diminishes the value of a very worthwhile book.

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What are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography

Richard A. Burridge

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
1992, xiii + 292 pp., £35

RÉSUMÉ

Cet ouvrage comprend surtout une comparaison étendue et schématique entre les Evangiles et diverses biographies faites par des auteurs grecs et latins, depuis Xénophon et Isocrate jusqu'à Plutarque et Philostrate. L'auteur retrace et évalue les discussions classiques et récentes sur la nature du genre qu'est l'Evangile et insiste sur la nécessité d'avoir recours à l'érudition classique et à une théorie de la littérature. Il conclut que les Evangiles appartiennent au genre de la 'biographie', au moins autant que tout autre texte grec ou latin reconnu comme tel. Cette thèse est utilement défendue. Pourtant quelques questions importantes comme celle de l'usage de sources d'information par les biographes classiques et celle

de l'exactitude de ces sources ne sont pas abordées. De telles lacunes nous donnent l'impression que l'étude au sujet des Evangiles eux-mêmes reste inachevée.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der größte Teil des Buches besteht aus einem umfangreichen und strukturierten Vergleich der Evangelien mit verschiedenen griechischen und römischen Biographien von Xenophon und Isokrates bis Plutarch und Philostratus. Der Autor beschreibt und bewertet klassische und moderne Ansichten zur Gattung Evangelium, wobei er sich für einen Ansatz einsetzt, der sowohl Elemente der Klassizistik als auch moderne Literaturtheorie mit einschließt. Er schlußfolgert daß die Evangelien als Form zur Gattung 'Biographie' gehören, zumindest in demselben Maße wie andere griechische oder römische Texte, die als 'biographisch' eingestuft werden. Diese These ist im Grundsatz überzeugend und sorgfältig vorgetragen. Allerdings werden einige wichtige Detailfragen, z.B. über die Genauigkeit im Gebrauch von Quellenmaterial bei den klassischen 'Biographen', nicht beantwortet. Dies hinterläßt uns mit einer Reihe von offenen Fragestellungen im Hinblick auf die Evangelien selbst.

Outside the confines of scholarly New Testament criticism, Burridge's question must seem an odd one. What are the Gospels? To my teenage son the answer is obvious: the Gospels are books about Jesus. Burridge would agree, in fact, with this simple answer: more precisely, he would say, they are biographies of Jesus and would have been recognised as such by any contemporary reader in the Graeco-Roman world. The larger part of this book, therefore, is taken up with a wide-ranging schematic comparison between the Gospels and a number of Greek and Roman biographies, from Xenophon and Plutarch and Philostratus.

Within the world of New Testament scholarship, however, the idea of comparing the Gospels with Graeco-Roman biography has not always met with approval. Bultmann's categorical assertion that the Gospels 'cannot be included in the category of biographies' has dominated the critical tradition for over half a century. Only recently have scholars started to question this assertion and its concomitant insistence that the Gospel is a unique literary genre created by the early Christians. Accordingly, Burridge takes quite a time to describe and evaluate both the classic (ch. 1) and the more recent (ch. 4) discussion on the genre of the Gospels, and highlights the theological assumptions which have largely determined