

time ... Jesus quite explicitly enjoined his disciples to fulfil his law by loving their neighbour as themselves, not instead of themselves. Part of the gospel is definitely the genuine love of oneself, born of one's knowledge of the forgiveness and love of God. We need to fight against the false idea that building a community means denying people the right to do well for themselves. We must find practical ways of creating a society where individuals build up communities and the community builds up individuals.'

This essay is by far the most practical, but needs to go further and suggest ways in which its vision can be fulfilled. Until it does that the idealism of the other essayists (Bob Holman, Tony Blair M.P., Rev Dr John Vincent, Paul Boateng M.P., Chris Smith M.P. and John Smith M.P., will remain fine words which raise hopes only to dash them, and leave the field free in the UK for policies which encourage self-help mostly at the cost of community.

Christopher Sugden
Oxford, England

EuroJTh (1996) 5:1, 76-77

0960-2720

The Metaphor of God Incarnate

John Hick

London: SCM, 1993; pp. x + 180. £9.95 pb.

RÉSUMÉ

Il y a bien des années, John Hick a publié un ouvrage intitulé Le Mythe du Dieu incarné où il critiquait la crédibilité d'une interprétation littérale de la doctrine de Jésus-Christ Dieu incarné, et se faisait l'avocat d'une interprétation mythologique de cette doctrine. Dans le présent volume, il continue ses attaques contre le point de vue littéral, mais défend maintenant une interprétation 'métaphorique'. Les écrits de Hick sont toujours caractérisés par une clarté et une vraisemblance de surface. Les théologiens orthodoxes seront en désaccord avec lui sur presque tous les points importants. L'auteur de la recension pense qu'il est plus important de critiquer sa reconstruction historique des données du Nouveau Testament (selon laquelle Jésus n'aurait pas revendiqué la divinité), plutôt que de réfuter les arguments philosophiques contre la cohérence de la formule de Chalcedoine.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Vor vielen Jahren gab John Hick The Myth of God Incarnate heraus, einen Band, der den wortwörtlichen Glauben an Christus als den inkarnierten Gott attackierte, aber zugleich eine mythologische Interpretation dieses Glaubens verteidigte. Im vorliegenden Werk setzt der Autor den Angriff auf die wortwörtliche Sicht fort und verteidigt nun eine „metaphorische“ Auffassung. Hicks literarische Produktion ist rein äußerlich betrachtet stets von Klarheit und Plausibilität geprägt. Orthodoxe Theologen werden jedoch an fast jedem wesentlichen Punkt anderer Meinung sein. Der Besprecher des Buches hält eine Kritik der historischen Rekonstruktion der neutestamentlichen Daten (die zu der Schlußfolgerung führt, daß Jesus für sich selbst niemals Göttlichkeit beanspruchte) für notwendiger, als sich über die philosophischen Argumente zu ärgern, wonach das Chalcedonense inkohärent sei.

Many years ago, John Hick edited *The Myth of God Incarnate*, a volume which attacked the literal credibility but defended a mythological interpretation of belief in Christ as God incarnate. In this present book, he continues to attack the literal view and now defends a 'metaphorical' view.

The arguments he offers will not surprise those acquainted with Hick's work. An historical-critical approach to the New Testament suggests that Jesus did not claim deity for himself. That being the case, any other foundation for claiming his deity is dubious. Hick further thinks that, over the course of church history, no one has been able to give a satisfactory account of the Chalcedonian formulation, understood as a declaration of literal incarnation. These attempts include some sophisticated contemporary philosophical expositions, which Hick critically analyzes. Nor will kenotic theories of the incarnation work. This makes it the harder to overlook alarming side-effects of the traditional doctrine; people have appealed to it to justify antisemitism, colonial exploitation, patriarchalism and an attitude of superiority towards adherents of other faiths. What we may hold literally is that God was acting through Jesus who opened his life entirely to the will of God and that Jesus' love was of a self-giving quality reflecting in a finite life the infinite love of God. This being so, we can speak of the incarnation positively as a metaphor. When a metaphor forms the basis of a complex cluster of ideas, a myth develops.

Myth can be regarded as an 'extended metaphor' (p. 105).

Hick adds to this argument chapters on atonement, salvation/liberation and observations on other religions. Traditional theories of the atonement do not work. Salvation is, in the words of a chapter title, 'Human Transformation', not an objective satisfaction offered to the Father by the second person of the Trinity. So understood, salvation is possible along different paths followed in different religious traditions. Hick thinks that the challenge to the churches created by such a way of thinking about religious pluralism, is analogous to the challenge that biological evolution presented in the nineteenth century. It is painful and difficult, but if we face it honestly, it will contribute to the humanization of our world.

Hick's literature is always marked on its surface by clarity and plausibility. The challenges he offers seldom appear to be shadow boxing. Here is a thinker who is not playing games. Orthodox theologians will disagree at almost every significant point and agree that the disagreements are serious. It seems to me more important to criticize his historical reconstruction of the New Testament data than to rebut the philosophical arguments. The latter do matter, but in the contemporary analytic debates, the prize goes to the cleverest logician and the debates get to a point where resolution is barely possible on their terms. If, on the other hand, we can sustain the reliability of the Gospel accounts of Jesus, we discover the grounds on which to speak of a literal incarnation. Under that pressure, a workable concept of the incarnation should begin to emerge, its meaningfulness and credibility growing together.

Meanwhile, John Hick believes that literal incarnation is not only actually unintelligible but (to the extent that it has intelligible elements) it contains ideas that Jesus would probably have regarded as blasphemous (p. 27). On this account, Christianity is of all religions the most miserable, for its earlier witnesses drastically misunderstood, even perverted, the truth of Jesus. I wonder just how credible such a religion can be to the adherents of other religious traditions whose noble qualities Hick is so anxious to keep in mind.

Stephen Williams
Belfast, Northern Ireland

EuroJTh (1996) 5:1, 77-78

0960-2720

The Providence of God **Paul Helm**

Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993. 246 pp., £12.99 pb. ISBN 0-85111-892-5

RÉSUMÉ

Dans cet ouvrage raisonné de façon serrée, Paul Helm se fait l'avocat d'une vue de la providence qu'il considère comme étant 'dépourvue de risques'. Il se range du côté des philosophes qui maintiennent que le déterminisme est compatible avec le libre-arbitre. Il reconnaît que cette opinion est contestée. Mais puisque son ouvrage, et peut-être même la vie, sont trop courts pour procéder à un examen complet des problèmes, il est souvent obligé d'indiquer comment le raisonnement devra se développer à partir des divers carrefours critiques. Il désire nous convaincre; mais il cherche aussi, même si nous sommes pas d'accord avec lui, à nous montrer clairement où se situent les problèmes qui doivent être résolus.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

In einem Buch, das vor Argumenten strotzt, verteidigt Paul Helm, was er als „risikolose“ Auffassung von Vorhersehung bezeichnet. Er gesellt sich somit zu der Gruppe von Philosophen („Kompatibilisten“), die der Meinung sind, daß Determinismus und freier Wille miteinander vereinbar sind. Zwar ist er sich dessen bewußt, daß dies umstritten ist, doch da das Buch, und wahrscheinlich das Leben selbst, zu kurz ist, als das eine vollständige Behandlung dieser Problematik möglich wäre, kann Helm bezüglich der vielen strittigen Fragen oft nur andeuten, welche Richtung die weitere Diskussion einzuschlagen hat. Er würde uns natürlich gern von seiner Position überzeugen, doch darüber hinaus verfolgt er das Ziel aufzuzeigen, welche Fragen behandelt werden müssen, auch wenn wir anderer Meinung sind als er.

In this argument-packed book, Paul Helm (Professor of the History and Philosophy of Religion at King's College, London) advocates what he calls a 'no-risk' view of providence. According to it, God knowingly ordains the whole history of the world and everything in it, in such a way that every event will occur exactly as he ordains it. Consequently none of