

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.

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The Providence of God **Paul Helm**

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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

God's creatures will have such undetermined free-will as would open up a 'risk' that what happens is not of God's ordaining. Paul Helm sides with that body of distinguished philosophers, compatibilists, who hold that determinism is compatible with free-choice; such philosophers have usually thought of the determination in question as physical and psychological, but Helm contends that no further difficulty arises if God's prior ordaining supervenes, in our conceiving of the factors which determine our choices.

Helm recognises that this no-risk view, the compatibilism which accompanies it, and many others of the large range of issues which he is required to discuss, are controversial. While he shows us again and again, and with telling economy, how he thinks the argument should go, and why, he readily acknowledges that others will wish to differ from him at any or all of a range of critical partings of the ways. The book, and possibly life itself, is likely to be too short to allow complete treatment of these issues and to enable unanimity to be achieved. So, often, Paul Helm can only indicate how the argument will have to go, on one track or another from these places of determinative divergence. He would like to convince us; but it is also his aim to help us (no matter our view, and even if we incline to differ from him) to see what will have to be said and reckoned with whatever way we take.

He has good success in introducing us to, and challenging us about, the essential moves in most of the theological and philosophical disputes which should matter to anyone who is attempting to do justice to scriptural data on providence, in a systematic and consistent way.

What it means for a doctrine of providence to presuppose Pantheism, Deism or the Theism which Helm affirms, is argued through. Redemption, and its prior conditions of creation and fall, are held to be best understood as manifesting God's no-risk providence. The individual's destiny and his practice of petitionary prayer relate to divine providence in problematic ways which are well investigated so that we are helped to grasp what may be said about fate, chance, tragedy, and reasons for praying.

Helm's favoured no-risk, compatibilist thinking confronts its most obvious challenge

over the accountability and responsibility of agents, human and divine, for what happens, and especially for the manifold evils of the world: what sort of accountability, if any, can human beings ever have, and if, as it seems plausible to assert, they have none, how, since a free-will defence is ruled out, is evil to be accounted for? Over fifty pages are, properly, devoted to these problems, before the final chapter sets out the 'distinctive operational consequences' of the reality of divine providence, for the believer and the church.

Given the great number of complex and much-debated questions with which the book deals, Helm's aim of convincing the reader about his overall case is unlikely to succeed where he has an informed reader who has had his doubts about theological determinisms. Most readers would wish, sometimes, while accepting that the scale of the book rules it out, to see this issue pursued or that argument elaborated. To me: a bit more on the relation between foreknowledge and freedom is called for; the interpretation of some significant biblical texts is not always so obviously what Helm says it is that the caviller is stiller; and the account of God's not being the cause of evil, even though God is the cause of the creaturely willing which makes evil to be evil, would benefit from further explication. Some student readers may not find perspicuous the distinction between theories and models, as it is employed in order to clarify Helm's method of relating doctrine to scripture.

The writings of Augustine, Anselm, Calvin, and Edwards are referred to. But Helm is not an uncritical follower of any of these, still less of the modern philosophers whose views contribute to his discussion. The purpose is not principally or merely historical or comparative or expository, but argumentative, and that in such a way as to draw the reader into argument for himself, the better to reach his own conclusions. This sort of encouragement and incitement to engage in theological argument will be of very great value to theological students.

I spotted misprints on pages 33, 41, 45, 110, 122, and 225.

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