

Byrne concludes with a foundation for religion that is beyond the positive grasp of reason which, in so far as he has demonstrated the reasonableness of morality, overturns (or at least points to the wrongheadedness of) MIR. My suggestion is that this deeply met a physical moral projectionist account of religion is deeply flawed.

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Faiths in Conflict? Christian Integrity in a Multicultural World
Vinoth Ramachandra

Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1999, 192 pp., £8.99, pb., ISBN 0-85111-650-7

RÉSUMÉ

Ce livre est basé sur les conférences londoniennes sur le christianisme contemporain (London Lectures on Contemporary Christianity) données en 1998. Les deux premiers chapitres cherchent à identifier et à éliminer les mythes entourant l'islam et l'hindouisme qui sont propagés sur la scène politique internationale. Ayant proposé une juste compréhension de ces traditions, Ramachandra présente une analyse théologique de la seigneurie du Christ, de la nature de la conversion, puis des arguments en faveur de la tolérance. Ces conférences n'ont pas été rédigées pour des spécialistes, mais pour des laïcs prêts à réfléchir. L'argumentation est globalement plausible et cohérente, bien que la nécessité de brièveté génère à l'occasion quelques difficultés. Le livre est enrichi par l'expérience de l'auteur, au secrétariat régional de l'IFES en Asie du sud, et par son ministère d'enseignement international. Son désir d'être fidèle au Christ en pensée et en actes fait de ce livre une lecture conseillée.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieses Buch basiert auf den 'Londoner Vorlesungen zu gegenwärtigem Christentum' von 1998. Die ersten beiden Kapitel versuchen, Mythen, die den Islam und Hinduismus auf der internationalen politischen Bühne umgeben, zu identifizieren und abzuweisen. Vor dem Hintergrund eines korrekten Verständnisses dieser Traditionen stellt Ramachandra einen theologischen Entwurf vor, der sich mit der Herrschaft Christi, dem Wesen von

Bekehrung und dem Argument für Toleranz befaßt. Die Vorlesungen sind nicht für Spezialisten, sondern intellektuell interessierte Laien geschrieben. Die Argumente sind im allgemeinen plausibel und kohärent, obwohl die notwendige Komprimierung des Materials zu gelegentlichen Schwierigkeiten führt. Der Autor ist qualifiziert durch Erfahrungen als regionaler Sekretär des IFES (Internationale Vereinigung evangelikaler Studenten) in Südasien und internationale Lehrtätigkeit. Das Buch ist empfehlenswert aufgrund seiner Passion, Christus im Denken und Handeln treu zu sein.

Dr Vinoth Ramachandra has already placed us in his debt with two volumes on *The Recovery of Mission* and *Gods That Fail*. Now he does so again with this work, based on the 1998 London Lectures on Contemporary Christianity. His self-appointed task is to observe faithfully, diagnose accurately and engage remedially with the contemporary global scene which features religio-cultural conflict and demands straight thinking on Christianity, truth and tolerance.

The first two chapters attempt to remove egregious misunderstandings of what is the case with Islam and Hinduism. Myths need to be exploded: myths of Islam as a monolith, dangerous and united, opposed, by any acceptable standards, to democracy and human rights; myths of Hinduism as a religion of toleration and social harmony, corrupted against the grain by Western political interventions. Ramachandra forces us to attend to the actual facts, to substitute a grasp of historical particulars for sweeping judgements on the presumed essence of a socio-religious phenomenon, whether projected on to a religious culture from without or by it from within.

Turning to Christ, conversion and toleration in the three remaining chapters, the author first rehearses and upholds the conviction that Jesus is Lord, grounding the scandal of the particularity of divine action in the necessities of our particular, embodied, relational humanity and emphasising the lifestyle that reached out to the poor and outcast, not just the exalted self-understanding and the centrality of the resurrection. The stage is thus set for pondering conversion and culture. What Ramachandra wants to do here is to think of incarnation in terms of translation, which means that it is not a paradigm of exclusivity but rather a declaration and demonstration of cultural inclusivity, the glo-

bal concern of God for the conversion of culture. This militates against a secularist banishment of moral or spiritual vision from the public square. The proposal is that we endorse a 'plurality of secularisms', which allows particular communities in their spaces and times to negotiate a *modus vivendi*—and this includes the right of religious communities to have a stake in the public life of a nation. Here, the author is bound to be sketchy and, as he says, tentative, but he is certainly constructive within the constraints on his space.

Our first and last word on these lectures must be one of warm commendation and gratitude to the author. The task of grappling with these issues is both painful and demanding, for what is at stake is, in the words of the subtitle, 'Christian integrity in a multi-cultural world'. Vinoth Ramachandra has not shirked his task and has executed it in a way that combines fair-minded objectivity with allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord of thought and life; the latter demands the former. As such, the book takes its place admirably in that tradition of evangelical writing directed to those who may not be academic specialists but who are committed to think about pressing issues. Those competent to do so, as this reviewer is not, must judge the soundness of his account of Islam and Hinduism, but it is presented both plausibly and coherently.

If criticism be offered—and what self-respecting reviewer does not cheerfully shoulder the burden of such occupational hazard?—we broach here less the substance of the author's conclusions than the form in which he sometimes attains them. Compression causes casualties. The remarks on page 25, including the apparent endorsement of Azmy Bishara's words, on Islamic legal codes and traditions and the Islamic system of government come close to conflating the claims that (a) there is no explicit formulation of some item in the Qur'an and (b) that item is totally foreign to it, and to early Muslims. These, however, are different claims and the author's allusions to *qiyas* (analogical reasonings) advertise the many distinctions that might occupy the space between them. Again, in (rightly) denigrating a strong scepticism on the historicity of the Gospel accounts, Ramachandra picks on some of the more extreme rather than moderate examples of scholarship. Further, while he is meticulously honest in identifying his sources, it is risky to build on one person's criticism of the words of another without going back *ad fon-*

tes. Thus, on the important question of the secularisation of public discourse in 'liberal' political philosophy, Jeffrey Stout is taken out of context and misrepresented (p. 149). However, the author would doubtless plead in his defence that this is the occupational hazard attending the efforts of any who try to do what must be done, which is to synthesise material in a relatively short space.

The last three chapters treat the issues not just according to their logical order, but (I think the author would agree) according to their increasing scope for intra-evangelical disagreement: the historical and divine Jesus must be fundamental; the ways in which conversion and culture mesh will be variously understood; proposals on society, toleration and pluralism will positively collide. Vinoth Ramachandra's abilities, his wide experience, in his capacity as Regional Secretary for IFES in South Asia and in his international teaching ministry, all rooted in unswerving commitment to Christ and Scripture, earns him the right to be seriously heeded on all these questions. Those who listen will learn much.

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God and Contemporary Science (Edinburgh Studies in Constructive Theology)

Philip D. Clayton

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ISBN 0-7486-0798-6

RÉSUMÉ

Le livre de Philip Clayton est un ouvrage très utile, qui se concentre sur la question de l'action divine. L'auteur procède de façon à essayer de rendre justice à la fois à la théologie chrétienne et à la science. Un survol de la conception biblique de la relation entre Dieu et le monde est proposé et il intéressant de signaler que l'auteur veut montrer que la panenthéisme est compatible avec la Bible et philosophiquement supérieur au théisme classique. Clayton propose aussi une typologie des différentes conceptions de la relation entre la science et la religion ainsi que quelques exemples de tentatives récentes de description de l'action divine qui n'utilisent pas Dieu pour combler tous les vides. La thèse de Clayton est la suivante : la relation entre l'esprit et le