

arms length in modern academia? The heart of Gilbertson's methodological argument is set out in the second chapter of the book, where he first clearly and concisely analyses a variety of attempts to account for the purpose of and relationship between the two disciplines, and then proposes a dynamic relationship where both the contemporary concerns of modern theology and the historical particularity of the text are given their due weight. Gilbertson justifies his method with an appeal to Alister McGrath's defence of a modified propositional approach to theology in which dogmatics is seen as an elaboration of what is found in Scripture, where "Christian doctrine is...concerned with the unfolding and uncovering of the history of Jesus of Nazareth, in the belief that this gives insight into the nature of reality." (McGrath, as quoted, 44) Apart from a not uncommon but unfortunate neglect of the church's tradition of reading and interpreting Scripture, Gilbertson's approach is sensible; he neither diminishes the concerns for the historical contingencies which has been the emphasis of biblical studies nor downplays the role of theological construction within the social, cultural and philosophical circumstances in which we find ourselves. In Christian theology, biblical studies and systematic theology need one another because the former always draws us back to the particularity of the biblical texts that the latter is based upon while the latter seeks to articulate a Scriptural view of reality within which we ought to read the text. One may add, which Gilbertson does not state explicitly, that it is perhaps time for Christian scholars to stop viewing the two as distinct disciplines but see them as the exegetical and conceptual aspect of the one theological task—to speak the truth as informed by Scripture within and for the world in which we find ourselves.

Gilbertson's concern to give biblical studies and systematics their due concern shapes the structure of the book's positive theological argument. In the first chapter Gilbertson sets out the modern philosophical and theological concerns which both Pannenberg and Moltmann respond to in their respective views of history, how they try to account for the God-world relation within their intellectual heritage (which basically amounts to accounting for God in history after Troeltsch). In this way the contemporary theological question Gilbertson desires to tackle has been set out in the open. In chapters 3-5, after he has methodologically defended the move in chapter 2, he then proceeds to show how Revelation accounts for the God-world relationship through the way it uses spatial and temporal categories. In the last chapter he then returns to Pannenberg and Moltmann, considering how his interpretation of Revelation may inform their respective views of history. This last chapter, although competent, is somewhat of an anti-climax of an otherwise brilliant study, diffused in comparison to the tight argument of the rest of the book.

Gilbertson has convincingly shown that despite vast conceptual differences, the fundamental concerns of the book of Revelation and those of Pannenberg and Molt-

mann are not simply consonant with each other but can be greatly enriched by one another. The central chapters (3-5) are undoubtedly the high point of the book. Here Gilbertson, through an analysis of the formal characteristics of Revelation and its use of spatial and temporal categories shows how the book "sets the present earthly experience of the reader in the context of God's ultimate purposes, by disclosing hidden dimensions of reality, both spatial – embracing heaven and earth – and temporal – extending into the ultimate future." (i) Even apart from Gilbertson's insightful methodological observations and his competent analysis of Pannenberg and Moltmann, the book is worth every penny of its heavy price tag just for this clear, concise and convincing analysis of how John places the difficult socio-political context of his audience within the larger purposes of God for heaven and earth.

*Poul F. Guttesen, St. Andrews, Scotland
and Schloss Mittersill, Österreich*

After Christianity

Daphne Hampson

Revised Edition (London: SCM, 2002)

ISBN: 0334 02640 7 £16-95

SUMMARY

Daphne Hampson abandoned Christianity for two main reasons. First, because Christianity claims to be an historical religion, based on revelation, which requires affirmation of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, which she believes is impossible, post-Enlightenment. Second, because Christianity is not moral, as evidenced by its treatment of women. Hampson has not become an atheist, however. Her 'theism' centres on that 'dimension of reality which is God' and is heavily dependent upon the concept that human beings must exist 'centred in relation'. This is a challenging book and provides much material for reflection. Her critique of feminist and Liberal theologians who remain within the church while themselves ceasing to believe in the historicity of Christianity and the uniqueness of Christ is pertinent. However, her judgement that Christianity is not 'moral' must be challenged. She provides no rational basis for a morality which is anything other than a purely personal and individualised human construct.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Daphne Hampson gab das Christentum aus zwei Hauptgründen auf. Erstens, weil das Christentum behauptet, eine auf Offenbarung gegründete historische Religion zu sein, was die Zustimmung zur Einzigartigkeit Jesu Christi verlangt, was sie als unmöglich, nachaufklärerisch ansieht. Zweitens, weil das Christentum nicht moralisch sei, wie sein Umgang mit Frauen belege. Hampson wurde jedoch kein Atheist. Ihr „Theismus“ setzt den Schwerpunkt auf „die Dimension der Realität, die Gott ist“ und ist stark abhängig von

dem Konzept, dass Menschen „beziehungsorientiert“ leben müssen. Es handelt sich um ein herausforderndes Buch, das viel Material zum Nachdenken liefert. Ihre Kritik an feministischen und liberalen Theologen, die in der Kirche bleiben, während sie selbst nicht mehr an die Historizität des Christentums und die Einzigartigkeit Christi glauben, ist angemessen. Allerdings muss ihr Urteil, das Christentum sei nicht „moralisch“, angegriffen werden. Sie stellt keine rationale Basis für eine Moralität bereit, die nichts anderes als ein rein persönliches und individualisiertes menschliches Konstrukt ist.

RÉSUMÉ

Daphne Hampson s'est détournée du Christianisme principalement pour deux raisons. Tout d'abord parce que le Christianisme se présente comme une religion ayant un fondement historique et basé sur une révélation, ce qui conduit à l'affirmation du rôle unique de Jésus-Christ. Or elle croit qu'il n'est plus possible d'admettre une telle conception depuis le siècle des lumières. La seconde raison est qu'elle juge le Christianisme contraire à la morale, comme le montre à ses yeux la manière dont il traite les femmes. Hampson n'est toutefois pas devenue athée. Elle professe un « théisme » centré sur « cette dimension de la réalité qu'est Dieu ». Au cœur de sa conception est l'idée que les êtres humains doivent exister « centrés sur les relations ». À bien des égards, son livre donne matière à réfléchir. Sa critique des féministes et des théologiens libéraux qui restent dans l'Église alors qu'ils ont cessé de croire à l'historicité du Christianisme et au caractère unique de Christ sonne juste. Cependant, sa pensée selon laquelle le Christianisme n'est pas moral appelle une réponse. Pour sa part, elle ne fournit aucun fondement rationnel à une morale autre qu'une construction purement humaine, personnelle et relative aux individus.

* * * *

This book presents a considerable challenge to orthodox theology, coming as it does from a theologian who has departed from her former affirmation of Christianity. Professor Daphne Hampson, formerly of St Andrews University in Scotland, now teaches in Oxford University. She is a feminist theologian who came to the conclusion that feminism and the 'Christian myth' are incompatible and so she abandoned Christianity.

Professor Hampson rejected Christianity for two main reasons, expressed in the first two chapters of this book. First, because authentic Christianity claims to be an historical religion, based on revelation, which requires us to affirm the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. It is, she says, impossible to affirm these concepts in a post-Enlightenment situation. Her second reason for rejecting Christianity is that it is not moral, particularly as evidenced by its treatment of women. She writes, 'Why anyone who calls herself (or himself) a feminist, who believes in human equality, should wish to hold to a patriarchal myth such as Christianity must remain a matter for battlement' (50). Hampson goes even further and insists

that the very concept of worship, whether it be of the Christian God, or of any other god, is quite impossible on her feminist understanding of reality. She says, 'Thus it may be of the essence of feminism that a feminist cannot call anyone else "Lord".' (77)

In chapter three, Hampson spells out her understanding of the nature and scope of feminist thinking, not only in theology but also in other significant areas. She demonstrates a significant familiarity with, and grasp of, this feminist literature. In the course of her argument, she rejects one traditional interpretation of post-Enlightenment thinking, which is that human beings became 'self-centred' (or autonomous) in their thinking, rather than 'God-centred'. Instead, she wants to argue for 'self in relation', arguing that women have understood the concept of relationality much better than men and that feminist theology is more capable of developing this theme. (115)

In chapters four and five, Hampson looks at the 'paradigms of male religion'. She deals first with the way in which Christians have viewed God and is quite scathing in her denunciation of male religion and its symbol systems: 'Man's religion would suggest that he swings between two scenarios, each of which is equally impossible. On the one hand he sees himself as a lone, isolated, independent and self-sufficient monad. He constructs the transcendent knowing that this is untenable and yearning to find another possibility, he projects the ideal of "the feminine" (which may be in the form of God, the church, or woman) in which he seeks to lose himself and so find a completion which he lacks. What is markedly absent in the symbol system of the religion is the understanding of a self as centred in relation: able to stand on its own, yet existing in reciprocity with others (including persons of the neighbouring sex). In other words, what is lacking is exactly what I have characterized as the feminist ideal.' (207)

She is similarly harsh in her judgement of the way in which Christianity has treated women: 'What I believe we need to confront is that the harm which has been done to women within Christian culture is not simply an aberration. It is not as though that symbol system which is Christianity could simply be purified, after which it would serve as well. The shocking treatment of women, throughout Western history, has at least in part flowed from that mythological universe which is Christianity. Nor is it possible through a renewed reading of the scriptures to revert to some pristine faith. For the scriptures themselves exemplify the problem.' (209)

It would be wrong to imagine, however, that Hampson has become an atheist in rejecting Christianity. Thus, in chapter six she spells out what her 'theism' would look like, in contradistinction to Christianity and the other major religious traditions. It centres on that 'dimension of reality which is God' and is heavily dependent upon the concept which has been at the heart of her argument, namely, the need for human beings to exist 'centred in relation'. The question must be asked, however, as to

why Hampson wishes to remain a theist, in spite of her critique of Christianity and, by implication, the other major religious traditions. She expresses it like this, 'I am theistic on account of certain observations as to the presence of power and love in the world. Thus I speak of the existence of "another dimension to reality"; of there being more than meets the eye of there being that on which we can draw. I call this dimension of reality God.' (213) She begins by engaging in dialogue with Schleiermacher but wrestles with any concept of god as a being who acts in this world. As she says, 'The supremely difficult question to answer is whether what we name God has agency, or whether all agency lies with ourselves.' (231) She is open to the idea that the word 'god' may simply refer to a dimension of our own reality rather than a 'being' and that the evidence which draws us to that conclusion includes the existence of love as a reality and the felt need for a reality from which we can draw healing. Finally, in chapter seven, she spells out her understanding of spirituality in this new, experientially-based, theistic worldview.

As an evangelical I was challenged by this book and found much to make me reflect. I was taken, for example, by the unexpected criticism that Hampson makes of Liberal theologians and feminists who have chosen to remain within the church while ceasing themselves to believe in the historicity of key elements in Christian faith and denying the uniqueness of Christ. She criticises them for retaining the 'Christian myth' while no longer believing that it is true, using the words of traditional theology while meaning something quite different. Her comments about Christianity being founded upon an historic revelation and the 'particularity' or uniqueness of Jesus Christ found me standing alongside her in the analysis, while rejecting her conclusions.

If I were to engage in a critique of the book I imagine that I would begin by asking for the basis upon which she judges Christianity. In other words, she rejects it is immoral but that implies a basis from which to judge. If the basis for moral judgements is not an objective given in Scripture (as in orthodox theology) then how do we create this moral construct, which then becomes the basis for the analysis and ultimate rejection of Christianity?

The book is well worth reading, if only to be aware of how someone can create an entire theistic worldview after taking leave of Christianity.

Professor A.T.B. McGowan, Highland Theological College

Islam in Conflict: Past, Present and Future

Peter G. Riddell and Peter Cotterell

Leicester: IVP, 2003, 231pp., £9.99, pb,
ISBN 0-05111-998-0

SUMMARY

This clearly-written work ambitiously aims to discuss the origins and beliefs of Islam, the history of Muslim inter-

action with non-Muslims, and, its main concern, how to find a way forward from the current rise in violent Islamism. The authors argue that while contemporary political events contribute to Islamic violence, the root causes lie in certain Qur'anic texts and particular episodes in the life of Muhammad. Muslims therefore need to develop hermeneutical solutions enabling them with integrity to lay aside the literal understanding of verses advocating violence. While this emphasis on the importance of foundational texts is helpful, more reflection on why violence flourishes at certain times, and how issues of political context interact with scriptural factors would be beneficial.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieses in großer Klarheit geschriebene Werk hat den Ehrgeiz, die Ursprünge und Glaubenssätze des Islam, die Geschichte der moslemischen Interaktion mit Nicht-Moslems und, als Hauptanliegen, die Möglichkeiten eines Auswegs aus dem gegenwärtigen Anstieg des gewaltbereiten Islamismus zu diskutieren. Die Autoren argumentieren, dass, obwohl gegenwärtige politische Ereignisse zur islamischen Gewalt beitragen, die grundlegenden Ursachen in bestimmten Korantexten und besonderen Episoden im Leben Mohammeds liegen. Moslems sind daher gefordert, hermeneutische Lösungen zu entwickeln, die ihnen erlauben, mit Integrität das wörtliche Verständnis von Versen, die Gewalt verteidigen, beiseite zu legen. Obwohl diese Betonung auf grundlegende Texte hilfreich ist, wäre mehr Reflektion über die Ursachen von sporadisch aufflammender Gewalt und darüber, wie Angelegenheiten des politischen Kontextes mit Faktoren der Schrift interagieren, der Sache förderlich.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet ouvrage d'une grande lisibilité a pour ambition de présenter les origines et les croyances de l'Islam, l'histoire des relations entre Musulmans et non Musulmans. Son objectif principal est de chercher comment enrayer la montée de l'Islamisme violent. Les auteurs montrent que, si les événements politiques contemporains contribuent à la violence islamiste, la cause fondamentale de cette violence se trouve dans certains textes coraniques et des épisodes particuliers de la vie de Mahomet. Il faut donc que les Musulmans élaborent des solutions herméneutiques qui leur permettent, en toute intégrité, de laisser de côté la lecture littérale de versets appelant à la violence. Cet accent sur le rôle important des textes est éclairant, mais il faudrait aussi s'interroger sur les raisons pour lesquelles la violence éclate à certaines époques, et sur les incidences réciproques du contexte politique et du facteur scripturaire.

* * * *

This work, published in the U.S. under the title *Islam in Context*, is co-written by two authors based at London School of Theology, (formerly London Bible College). The authors (hereafter R&C), who share responsibility for the entire text rather than dividing chapters between them, have three basic aims (p. 7). These are: first, to help the reader to understand Islam; secondly,