
Hick is Fellow of the Institute for Advanced Research in the Humanities at the University of Birmingham, England, and Danforth Professor of the Philosophy of Religion Emeritus at Claremont Graduate School. The most recent of his many books, An Interpretation of Religion, won the 1991 Grawemeyer Award in Religion. Disputed Questions in Theology and The Philosophy of Religion explores further the reason for a religious pluralism with a personal note about author’s own pilgrimage. It consists of eleven essays in slightly revised form, which were originally published in various books and journals from 1987 to 1992.

Part I discusses epistemological issue in two chapters. “Religious Realism and Non-realism” differentiates between religious realist who holds that there is an ultimate Real or Ground of Being, and non-realist (following Feuerbach, Dewey, Huxley, and persuaded by the twentieth-century positivist critique of religion) who considers that religion is a naturalistic conviction and God exists only as an idea in the human mind. Within realists, there are those (fundamentalists) and critical realists who will not follow the religious doctrines blindly. Religious non-realists are different from atheists in affirming the value and contribution of religion to the human society. Hick is a critical realist. He criticizes the non-realist for being pessimistic and states that the realist always conceives God as infinitely good and kind. He admits that the universe can be interpreted in both realist-religious and materialist terms; however, he insists that there is no intermediate possibilities. “Religious Experience: Its Nature and Validity” explains that religious experience in all variety, theistic or non-theistic, external or internal, is a mode of consciousness when one is freely open and responsive to the immanence of the transcendent Reality and whose specific forms are provided by the experiencer’s religious concepts and symbols. The validity of experience establishes the rationality of religious belief since the general empiricist principle affirms the right to form beliefs on the basis of experience. Although the claim to experience the Real is not intersubjective, nevertheless, it is subject to an ultimate eschatological confirmation or disconfirmation.

In Part II, “Christ and Christianity,” Hick devotes two chapters to criticizing the Church’s belief in the deity of Jesus on either historical or logical grounds. “An Inspiration Christology” advocates that, based on historical study, Jesus himself never claimed to be God, or the Second Person of a divine Trinity, incarnate. Hick, as well as Harrack, Rahner, and Kung, understands Jesus as a divinely inspired human being that has made God real to millions. “The Logic of God Incarnate” turns to the logical problem created by the traditional Christology, especially that proposed by Thomas Morris recently. Hick points out the similarity of Morris’s proposal with the monothelite heresy condemned by the Constantinople Council in A.D. 680. Hick states that the incarnational idea is essentially metaphorical, not rational. In Chapter 5, Hick explains his understanding of “The Non-absoluteness of Christianitv.” He denies the superiority of Christianity in its adoption of the ideals of human equality and freedom, manifest in democratic government.

In Part III, “Hints From Buddhism,” learning from Buddha’s teaching about the “undetermined question,” Hick suggests that most of the conflicting truth-claims of the different religions are about unanswerable questions, and it is reasonable for different human groups to live with different answers to such questions.

In the beginning of Part IV, “Religious Pluralism,” Hick gives a personal account of his conversion to Calvinist orthodoxy in his youth, subsequent disappointment with an anti-intellectual attitude in fundamentalist circles and involvement in the struggle against the Nazi National Front together with Muslims and Jews, Hindus and Sikhs, Marxists and humanists. Gradually, through participating in the worship of various faiths and encountering with people of other faiths in Britain, India, Sri Lanka, Japan, and the U.S., he was drawn into a conviction of religious pluralism. In the following two chapters, Hick explains his view that Jews, Christians, Muslims, and all other major religions are equally valid.

Finally in Part V, “Life and Death,” Hick gives “A Possible Conception of Life after Death.” Here, he adopts the reincarnation view from other religious traditions and proposes that such a series of lives gives the opportunity for the development of the deeper self so that all human beings will unite with the divine life eventually.

Hick provides a readable account of his evolved interpretations on modern disputed questions in theology and the philosophy of religion. Following Schleiermacher, Hick presents a theology of accommodation that seeks to build a unity between secular and religious wisdom which has the characteristic of post-modern relativism.

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The behavioral sciences have existed for about 100 years. Some of the key figures who have shaped psychology and the wider culture include the prominent twentieth century theorists Sigmund Freud, Carl Rogers, and B. F. (Burrhus Frederick) Skinner. Their contributions included descriptions of their ideas about human nature. Each of these men held different beliefs about the make up and the potential of mankind.

Bjork, Professor of History at St. Mary’s University in Texas, has written the first major biography of B. F. Skinner. Bjork, author of two books about the eminent psychologist