An Excellent Book

Were closing in on the 150th anniversary of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, but clearly not closing in on any resolution of the debates that the book stirred up between science and religion. In this slim volume, physicist and theologian Ian Barbour summarizes his own decades-long accumulation of knowledge in these two arenas. Writing with clarity and a scientist's eye for organization, Barbour takes on the scientific and theological significance of the big questions: the big bang, quantum physics, Darwin and Genesis, human nature (the question of determinism), and the relationship between a free God and a law-bound universe. In each chapter, Barbour recognizes four possible ways of responding to the dilemmas posed by these topics: conflict, represented by Biblical literalists and atheists, both of whom agree that a person cannot believe in both God and evolution; independence, which asserts that science and religion are strangers who can coexist as long as they keep a safe distance from each other; dialogue, which invites a conversation between the two fields; and integration, which moves beyond dialogue to explore ways in which the two fields can inform each other. Barbour notes that his own sympathies lie with dialogue and integration. Barbour won the 1999 Templeton Prize for his role in advancing the study of science and religion. No contemporary has made a more original, deep, and lasting contribution toward the needed integration of scientific and religious knowledge and values, John Cobb has written of Barbour. This book is perhaps the best entry point into Barbour's work. --Doug Thorpe

When *Science Meets Religion: Enemies, Strangers, or Partners?* involves what Holmes Rolston, III, fittingly describes as a distillation of a lifetime of thinking about how science and religion relate. As dean of and senior statesman for the science and religion discussion, Barbour draws together, in a user-friendly way, a variety of critical issues in that conversation. The
book is intended as an introduction to the field, says the author, and the book is briefer and more accessible than my early writings.

That Barbour is capable of pulling off a project of this magnitude will come as no surprise to those acquainted with his work. Barbour, the Winifred and Atherton Bean Professor Emeritus of Science, Technology and Society at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, launched the current era in the dialogue between science and religion thirty-five years ago with his groundbreaking book, Issues in Science and Religion.

Since the release of that publication, Barbours works have become standard texts for those both inside and outside the interdisciplinary science and religion discussion. In 1999, this physicist and theologian won the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion.

What makes When Science Meets Religion different from Barbours previous books is the innovative method he uses to explore the pertinent material, most of which has been addressed in earlier writing. In the books opening chapter, Barbour explains varying way that science and religion are considered to be related using his now classic four-fold typology (conflict, independence, dialogue, and integration). He then applies this typology in subsequent chapters to discuss (1) astronomy and creation, (2) quantum physics, (3) evolution and continuing creation, (4) genetics, neuroscience, and human nature, and (5) Gods action in nature.

While the majority of the books space is devoted to summaries and explanations, Barbours novel use of his typology results in a book more apologetic in tone than books he has previously authored. In particular, Barbour gives reasons for disagreeing with the conflict thesis type, and, although pointing out valid themes in the independence type, he also does not accept the independence conclusions. The proposals he does appreciate fit appropriately in the dialogue and integrationist types. Barbour believes, then, that the preferred answer to the books subtitle Enemies, Strangers, or Partners? is that science and religion are best understood as capable of a mutually enriching partnership.

Barbour calls his own theory for how science and religion best meet a theology of nature. Proponents of a theology of nature, he explains, draw extensively from a historic tradition and a worshipping community, but they are willing to modify some traditional assertions in response to the findings of science. He cautiously uses notions from process philosophy, among other integrationist theories, to construct this theology of nature hypothesis.

The chapter summaries provide readers with glimpses into Barbours personal conclusions on matters central to the science and religion discussion. With regard to astronomy and creation, Barbour notes that, at the moment, a singular Big Bang seems the most plausible theory, and
the theist can see it as a moment of divine initiation. However, he cautions, we should not tie our religious beliefs irrevocably to one theory.

In summarizing his discussion of genetics, neuroscience, and human nature, Barbour contends that both recent theology and recent science support a view of the person as a multilevel psychosomatic unity who is at the same time a biological organism and a responsible self. That both religious and scientific theories are able to support such a view provides grounding for further work in these general areas.

In the final chapter, in which conceptions pertaining to Gods relation and activity in nature are addressed, Barbour returns, at least implicitly, to issues explored in previous chapters.

John B. Cobb, Jr., in his citation nominating Barbour for the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion that Barbour subsequently won, said that no contemporary has made a more original, deep and lasting contribution toward the needed integration of scientific and religious knowledge and values than Ian G. Barbour. With respect to the breadth of topics and fields brought into this integration, Barbour has no equal. Barbours latest contribution, When Science Meets Religion: Enemies, Strangers, or Partners?, provides further confirmation for Cobbs true statement.

Thomas Jay Oord

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