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A Global Ethic: The Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions
eds. Hans Küng and Karl-Josef Kuschel
London: SCM, 1993. 124 pp., £5.95,
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RÉSUMÉ

Cette déclaration a été votée lors d'un colloque qui a réuni à Chicago les représentants de diverses religions, en 1993. Küng qui, plus qu'un autre, a contribué à sa rédaction, propose une éthique globale se limitant à un consensus fondamental relatif à des valeurs qui nous lient, à des normes irrévocables et à des attitudes personnelles. La déclaration évite la théologie en ne parlant pas de Dieu, et cela est inévitable, si l'on ne veut pas exclure les Bouddhistes. Un certain consensus sur les valeurs humaines essentielles est à la fois possible et important. Nous ignorons si cette déclaration est destinée ou non à acquérir une importance historique. Mais de toute façon elle mérite notre attention.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Diese Erklärung wurde 1993 von einer interreligiösen Konferenz in Chicago angenommen. Küng, der dafür hauptverantwortlich war, trägt eine globale Ethik vor, die nur einen fundamentalen Konsens verbindlicher Werte, unwiderruflicher Maßstäbe und persönlicher Haltungen umfaßt. Sie vermeidet Theologie, indem sie nicht von Gott spricht, doch ist dies unvermeidlich, wenn Buddhisten teilnehmen sollen. Dennoch ist ein gewisser Konsens über grundlegende menschliche Werte sowohl möglich als auch wichtig. Unabhängig davon, ob diese Erklärung historische Bedeutung gewinnt, verdient sie also unsere ernsthafte Beachtung.

The *Declaration Toward a Global Ethic* is a text of some twenty-five pages, adopted by an inter-religious conference in Chicago in September 1993. It was substantially composed by Hans Küng, in consultation and discussion with others. The Parliament of the World's Religions which approved it was made up of many religions, ranging from monotheist to Buddhist and Hindu, from Bahai through neo-pagan to Zoroastrian. It

is no small tribute to Hans Küng that he achieved this, and vindicates his claim to have identified a minimal ethic on which all religious people can agree.

Küng's vision of a global ethic involves only 'a fundamental consensus on binding values, irrevocable standards, and personal attitudes' (p. 21). It includes some of the most fundamental moral principles, including the Golden Rule, and the principle that 'every human being must be treated humanely' (p. 23). This implies four broad guiding imperatives, very widely accepted: (1) Respect life; (2) deal honestly and fairly; (3) speak and act truthfully; (4) respect and love one another (in sexual and family life). The declaration also recognises, and calls for a renewed vision of global human unity. We must all commit ourselves, in our many religious communities, to spiritual renewal, which can bring about a transformation of consciousness.

This ambitious, yet limited, project immediately raises a host of pressing and interesting questions from all sorts of angles. Küng, it must be said, anticipates many such questions, and answers them with his characteristic blend of charm and scholarship. I can only mention a few, and brusquely give my own answers! Is this an adequate moral summary? Bearing in mind that the declaration attempts to capture only a core moral attitude, we can say 'yes' to this. Is this really an inter-religious consensus? One may be suspicious that Chicago included a gathering of optimistic like-minded moderns, but this would be too cynical. The declaration was signed by those of many traditions in many religions, though admittedly not by all, and not by official representatives. Is this really a point of inter-religious agreement? Only in its very limited aims. Küng's comments explain that it was important not to mention God, mainly for the sake of Buddhists. This deliberate avoidance of theology is very interesting, and may be of significance for inter-faith dialogue and action.

Is the Declaration of political and historical significance? Of course it could fade, with thousands of many such conference resolutions. But there is a remarkable achievement represented here, which it would be cynical to dismiss. Will it restrain or dissuade those who exploit religious differences for political and nationalist

ends? Directly, this is most improbable. But re-establishing some consensus about basic human values is a goal neither trivial nor impossible. The declaration should be studied by any concerned with the pressing need to find a new moral consensus in a divided world. Without some such basis as this, the prospects for overcoming division and fractiousness are indeed frail.

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How to Read Karl Barth. The Shape of His Theology

George Hunsinger

Oxford: OUP, 1991, pp. x + 298., £10.95, pb.

RÉSUMÉ

L'auteur veut aider le lecteur à saisir dans son ampleur la pensée de Karl Barth exprimée dans sa Dogmatique et en même temps rendre compte de sa structure et de sa logique mieux que cela n'a été fait jusqu'à présent. Hunsinger ne croit pas qu'on puisse dégager chez Barth un principe formel ou matériel qui suffise à rendre compte de l'ensemble de sa Dogmatique, ni qu'on puisse en dresser un tableau satisfaisant à coup de citations. Mais il trouve chez Barth six thèmes de base: l'actualisme, le particularisme, le subjectivisme, le personnalisme, le réalisme et le rationalisme, ces deux derniers ayant une importance fondamentale. L'ouvrage n'est pas facile à lire, surtout pour ceux qui ne sont pas encore familiarisés avec la pensée de Barth. Mais son objectif, à savoir—être la meilleure introduction à la Dogmatique de Barth, nous semble avoir été atteint.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der Verfasser beabsichtigt zugleich, den Lesern zu helfen, die Gestalt des Denkens Barths, wie es in der 'Kirchlichen Dogmatik' Ausdruck findet, und eine Darstellung ihrer Struktur und Logik anzubieten, die zufriedenstellender ist als bisher erschienene Arbeiten. Hunsinger glaubt nicht, daß Versuche, ein formales oder materielles Prinzip zu finden, das die 'Kirchliche Dogmatik' beherrscht, oder dieses Werk durch einen Zitat-begründeten Zugang zu beschreiben, erfolgreich sind. Stattdessen findet er sechs wesentliche Motive: Aktualismus, Partikularismus, Objektivismus, Personalismus, Realismus und Rationalismus, wobei die letzten beiden grundlegend sind. Hunsingers Buch ist keine leichte Lektüre und wahrscheinlich besonders schwer für den Leser, der neu zu Barth kommt. Es ist jedoch außerordentlich wertvoll

und ist allem Anschein nach erfolgreich in der Absicht, der beste Führer zur 'Kirchlichen Dogmatik' zu sein.

According to the author's preface this book has two distinct aims. The first is to help its readers to acquire a set of skills which will facilitate and enhance their reading of Barth's monumental and highly complex *Church Dogmatics*. To this end Hunsinger identifies and provides a critical account of six recurring patterns or motifs in that work which, once spotted, may usefully serve as a framework for exploring and predicting in an extrapolative way the shape of Barth's thought. Thus reading the *Church Dogmatics* becomes initially an exercise in pattern recognition. But, just as familiarity with sonata form, while it may help us in analyzing the structure and form of a classical symphony, will not in itself be adequate to account for the musical contribution of that symphony, so, Hunsinger warns, to identify and recognize the motifs in Barth's *magnum opus*, while it may furnish helpful 'categories of discernment,' will not in itself suffice by way of an approach to the substance of his theology.

The second aim of the book is indicated in its subtitle. Hunsinger hopes that the account which he gives of the six motifs in their inter-relatedness will give a new lease of life to the quest for some intellectually satisfying account of the overall structure and logic of the *Church Dogmatics*. There have been, he notes, many attempts to achieve this, but most have proved inadequate in one way or another. Thus there have been those which have sought to identify a single formal principle to which Barth's theology is oriented (von Balthasar, Torrance). Others have looked instead for a material principle (Berkouwer, Jenson). But while each of these has alighted on some aspect of Barth's theology which is of great significance, each has also exalted or amplified that single element to the point where other equally significant (and often counterbalancing) features of his thought have been obscured.

Finally there have been those who have resorted to a descriptive, *loci* based approach to Barth, moving from doctrine to doctrine without any attempt to uncover a unifying thread (Hartwell). What all these accounts of the *Church Dogmatics* have in common, Hunsinger suggests, is 'a failure to show how that work combines genuine unity with irreducible complexity.' (22) The starting point for a fresh approach, he argues, is the recognition that no single unifying conception can be identified in the *Church Dogmatics*, that its unity, such as it is, is precisely a unity in diversity, focused around a number of recurring leitmotifs set in a series of hierarchical though shifting patterns. The uncovering and tracing of these same patterns, therefore, provides the focus of the book.