

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.

To give an account of each of the motifs which Hunsinger identifies here would take up too much space, so we may resort to listing them and pausing to consider just two at more length. The six are designated by Hunsinger as follows: actualism, particularism, objectivism, personalism, realism and rationalism. The last two are singled out as the 'foundational motifs' of Barth's theology. (225) By realism Hunsinger means Barth's understanding of the way in which, by the grace of God's self-revealing activity, theological language is given the capacity to transcend its creaturely limitations and to refer appropriately to the reality of God himself, albeit in a strictly analogical, rather than any supposed univocal, manner. 'Rationalism,' on the other hand, refers to Barth's insistence that theological language has a cognitive or rational element and is thereby capable of careful conceptual elaboration. Such elaboration of the *ratio* of faith is a significant part of the theologian's task. But the *ratio* referred to here is, of course, the *ratio* or inner logic of the object revealed to faith by grace, and has nothing whatever to do with rationalism in the sense of the application of *a priori* and general principles of plausibility. These two motifs in Barth's theology, therefore, 'govern truth as correspondence and truth as coherence' respectively, and together provide the basis for the critical realist theology which he develops.

Part I of the book is spent in elaborating and illustrating the six motifs at length. In Part II they are applied to the theology of the *Church Dogmatics* by way of a critical treatment of the notion of truth to be found therein. The book concludes by drawing us back to the vital distinction between form and content. The real centre of Barth's theology, Hunsinger affirms, and the reality towards which these formal factors all orient us, is the event of Jesus Christ. 'They are of no interest in and of themselves, but only as they point to him.' (229)

I found this book to be an extremely valuable guide to the complexities of Barth's theology, and would suspect that it comes closer to its stated goal of furnishing an overall map of the *Church Dogmatics* than any of its predecessors. Whether it would prove so immediately helpful to the reader approaching Barth for the first time is another matter. It is not an easy book to read, and demands patient attention and perseverance. The author is sympathetic to Barth's project, and this basic attitude makes for a faithful and positive account. Those who for one reason or another find themselves less congenially disposed towards the content of Barth's theology should, nonetheless, take the time and the trouble to benefit from the sheer erudition and the impressive familiarity with the text of the *Church Dogmatics* which lies behind this book, and which makes it one of the most helpful contributions to Barth scholarship for some considerable time. Those

with a serious interest in Barth's theology who have not yet obtained and read it should certainly do so, and its recent release in paperback (1993) will make this all the easier to accomplish.

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Calvin's Concept of the Law

I. John Hesselink

Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1992, pp., xii + 311, £27.90, ISBN 1-55635-007-4

RÉSUMÉ

Cet ouvrage comble une lacune dans les études sur Calvin et corrige l'idée trop répandue selon laquelle Calvin aurait été un légaliste rigoureux. Les notes, la bibliographie et l'index montrent qu'il s'agit d'une étude sérieuse. Elle peut être recommandée tant pour son style que pour son contenu. Signalons parmi les points forts de l'ouvrage la relation de Calvin avec ses prédécesseurs du Moyen-Âge, sa conception de la loi naturelle, sa présentation des rapports entre la loi et l'Esprit. Calvin apparaît ici comme un théologien pratique, et non comme un faiseur de distinctions logiques.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Diese Arbeit schließt eine Lücke in der Calvin-Forschung und korrigiert Fehleindrücke von Calvin als eines strengen Legalisten. Anmerkungen, Bibliographie und Index lassen die Gründlichkeit dieser Studie erkennen. Sie kann einschränungslos wegen ihres Stils und ihren Inhalts empfohlen werden. Zu den Stärken des Buchs gehören die Erörterung von Calvins Verhältnis zu seinen mittelalterlichen Vorläufern, seine Ansichten über das Naturgesetz, die Art seines Verständnisses der Beziehung zwischen Gesetz und Geist und seine Darstellung Calvins als des praktischen Theologen und weniger als des Schöpfers logischer Unterscheidungen.

The most competent doctoral theses may not succeed as books. Here is one which does! Yielding finally to scholarly pressure, Dr. Hesselink has revised and updated his dissertation of 1961 and, by so doing, he has placed Reformed and other theologians greatly in his debt. A born teacher, his exposition is so clear and balanced that a readership much wider than the specialist will benefit greatly from his book. Any