

Bild von der Gedankenwelt des Reformators zu machen und Gewinn von seiner biblisch-theologischen Methode zu ziehen.

SUMMARY

The book *L'Institution de la Religion Chrétienne* [*The Institution of the Christian Religion*] is now available in contemporary French language due to the remarkable work of Marie de Védrines and Paul Wells concerning the modernisation of Calvin's text. This is an exceptional occasion for the French readership to discover or rediscover Calvin in the text in order to evaluate for themselves the ideas of the reformer and to benefit from his biblical theological method.

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« Illustre traité présenté ici dans une nouvelle traduction [...] mérite sa place dans la liste restreinte des ouvrages qui ont eu une incidence remarquable sur le cours de l'Histoire ». C'est ainsi que John T. McNeill présentait en 1961 l'édition en *langue anglaise* de *L'Institution de la Religion Chrétienne* qu'il avait supervisée. Malheureusement, l'accès à ce texte fondateur demeurerait jusqu'à présent difficile pour les lecteurs francophones : des archaïsmes dans le vocabulaire et dans les tournures de phrases, qu'une édition en « français modernisé » de 1955 n'avait pas su gommer, laissaient perplexes les étudiants en théologie eux-mêmes ! Le cinq centième anniversaire, en 2009, de la naissance de Calvin a offert à Marie de Védrines et à Paul Wells une occasion exceptionnelle de transcrire en français (vraiment) moderne le chef d'œuvre de Calvin. Cette adaptation permet au public francophone, qui ignore depuis trop longtemps, de redécouvrir la lumineuse pensée de Calvin.

Celui qui n'a jamais lu Calvin sera surpris : le Réformateur français *n'est pas* un systématiseur rigide qui classe tout dans un cadre préconçu. En effet, la méthode de Calvin est avant tout scripturaire : il se fonde sur l'Écriture et ne lui fait pas dire plus que ce qu'elle dit réellement, si bien que Diestel, l'historien de l'exégèse de l'Ancien Testament, qualifie Calvin de « créateur de l'exégèse authentique ». Par sa sobriété dans l'interprétation des textes bibliques, Calvin se tient à l'écart des spéculations de son temps. Sa volonté est d'obtenir de « tous [...] qu'ils ne cherchent pas les choses que Dieu a voulu garder cachées et qu'ils ne négligent pas celles qu'il a révélées » (III.21.4). La sagesse que l'homme peut posséder se limite « presque » à ce « double aspect : la connaissance de Dieu et de nous-mêmes » (I.1.1). Et pour cela l'Écriture est suffisante !

Parce que la méthode de Calvin était d'abord biblique, le lecteur attentif cherchera en vain un thème structurant, fût-ce celui de la souveraineté de Dieu ou de l'union avec le Christ : Calvin n'a pas agencé sa théologie en suivant une idée principale qui écraserait toutes les autres mais en déroulant les uns après les autres les différents fils de l'enseignement biblique, signalant ce qu'il faut croire et ne pas croire. La Bible, toute la Bible, rien que la Bible :

c'est ainsi qu'on pourrait résumer la perspective théologique de Calvin. La modernisation du texte français permet d'en prendre conscience.

Evidemment, tous ne seront pas satisfaits par cette édition. Certains diront que Calvin ne doit être lu que dans l'original, d'autres répliqueront que le registre de langage demeure trop soutenu, d'autres, enfin, regretteront la disparition des expressions imagées et polémiques du Réformateur de Genève. Ces expressions, qui étaient appropriées à une époque où le « politiquement correct » n'était pas encore de mise, sont néanmoins susceptibles de choquer le lecteur moderne. Ainsi « Il ne me chaut de ce que Pighius et tels chiens que lu[i] ab[oi]ent » devient : « Ce que Pighius et ses comparses objectent m'importe peu » ! (III.2.30) Le travail accompli par Marie de Védrines et Paul Wells est colossal, le résultat remarquable, et la lecture plaisante. Avec cette nouvelle édition en français moderne, le lecteur du XXI^e siècle ne sera plus distrait par la forme et pourra mieux puiser dans les trésors que Calvin retire de l'Écriture : *L'Institution de la Religion Chrétienne* redevient le manuel d'instruction biblique du peuple de Dieu qu'il était lors de ses premières éditions. Marie de Védrines et Paul Wells doivent en être vivement remerciés.

Si le format « dictionnaire » de cette édition convient bien au statut d'ouvrage de référence de *L'Institution de la Religion Chrétienne*, la parution d'un format poche en plusieurs tomes est souhaitable et serait assurément un succès. Le théologien amateur ou confirmé aurait alors tout le loisir d'emporter partout sa copie de l'Institution pour la consulter pendant ses vacances ou dans les transports en commun... chose difficilement réalisable avec les dimensions (17,5x25x6,5 cm) et surtout le poids (2,1 kg) de l'édition actuelle !

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Eccentric Existence: a Theological Anthropology – Volume One

David H. Kelsey

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2009, xiii + 602 pp, £53.99 (incl. volume two), hb,
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SUMMARY

Kelsey adopts a novel approach to theological anthropology. In his view, previous theological accounts of what it is to be human have confused the three different narratives which the Bible uses to speak about God's relating to creation. Consequently, his approach throughout both volumes of his work is to delineate the three ways in which God relates to his creation: in creating, in eschatologically consummating and in reconciling to himself. Thus the work is divided into three parts to mirror this and the whole scheme assumes a Trinitarian architecture. In the first

volume, Kelsey explores the first two of these narratives: creation and consummation. The second volume explores the last of the three narratives, reconciliation.

RÉSUMÉ

Kelsey cherche une nouvelle voie d'approche pour l'anthropologie théologique. À son avis, les formulations théologiques concernant l'essence de l'être humain ont jusqu'ici confondu les trois récits bibliques différents qui parlent de la relation de Dieu avec sa création. Kelsey se donne quant à lui pour objectif de décrire les trois façons dont Dieu entre en relation avec sa création : par l'acte créateur, par l'établissement de l'état final et par l'œuvre de réconciliation. Son ouvrage comporte trois parties correspondant à ces trois volets et l'ensemble présente une architecture trinitaire. Dans le premier volume, il étudie les deux premiers récits, ceux de la création et de l'accomplissement eschatologique. Dans le second, il explore le dernier des trois récits, qui traite de la réconciliation.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Kelsey geht es darum, einen neuen Ansatz für theologische Anthropologie zur Anwendung zu bringen. Seiner Ansicht nach haben bisherige theologische Berichte darüber, was es bedeutet, ein Mensch zu sein, die drei unterschiedlichen Erzählungen durcheinander gebracht, in denen die biblischen Texte von Gottes Beziehung zur Schöpfung berichten. Folglich intendiert sein Ansatz durch sein ganzes Werk hindurch, die drei Wege aufzuzeigen, durch die Gott die Beziehung zu seiner Schöpfung unterhält: im Schöpfungsakt, bei der eschatologischen Vollendung und in der Versöhnung mit sich selbst. Um dies zu spiegeln, ist die Arbeit in drei Teile gegliedert, und das ganze Schema erhält dabei eine trinitarische Architektur. Im ersten Band erforscht Kelsey die beiden ersten dieser Erzählungen: Schöpfung und Vollendung. In seinem zweiten Band behandelt er die letzte dieser drei Erzählungen, die Versöhnung.

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From time to time, one comes across a book that instils a feeling of anticipation in the reader; a quiet excitement betraying the realisation that the text lying before you may change the way you view the world or affect whole swathes of opinion within the intellectual sphere. David Kelsey's long expected theological anthropology, *Eccentric Existence*, may well prove to be such a work. Twenty-five years in the making, it may well offer the first real English-language alternative to the extensive anthropologies of Pannenberg, Moltmann, Rahner and Brunner.

The work is broadly developed around two claims. First, exactly what it means to be human is not something that is intrinsic to the human, but is located extrinsically in the active relating of God to 'all-that-is-not-God' (120) – this is precisely what 'eccentric existence' means. Secondly, in light of the importance of 'God relating' for anthropology, Kelsey stresses that this relational account of anthropology should not be unhooked from the traditional accounts of Trinitarian relations without which

the Christian doctrine of God threatens to collapse in on itself. Therefore, rather than utilising a one-dimensional narrative of God-creature relation which underpins a theological account of anthropology, Kelsey argues that, 'because it is the perichoretically triune God who relates to creatures, all three hypostases are involved in each of the three ways God relates to creatures, but only in a certain pattern' (121). Whilst the God-creature relation is underlined by the claim that *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*, Kelsey emphasises the asymmetry of the three sets of scriptural stories in which the pattern of relationships between the three hypostases changes. Consequently, the work is divided into three parts in which Kelsey develops the God-creature relation in three interrelated but distinct ways: God is understood 'as One who creates, grounding our reality, and its value and well being; as One who promises us an eschatological consummation and draws us to it; as One who reconciles us in our multiple estrangements' (159). In this, the first volume of two, Kelsey's focus is upon the first two of these three narratives – that of creation and that of eschatological consummation. The third narrative, that of reconciliation, is the subject matter of the second volume.

Within each section of the overall work, Kelsey is careful to divide his focus between the context that faces humanity universally ('our ultimate context') and those contexts that face us as specific individuals ('our proximate context'). Such a methodological move betrays a keen desire not to prioritise those aspects of our own proximate context over against those of other contexts, be it temporally or geographically distinct from our own. Thus, the ultimate context in which the creature finds itself is 'God's relating to them as their creator' (160) rather than a more specific account of creatureliness which promotes a principle intrinsic to the creature into a position of superiority above all others (for example rationality, language or self-relation). What it is that makes us creatures is not some compartmental aspect of our being (often determined by ourselves as it suits) but rather the simple fact of our created existence as those related to creatively by God the Father. Nevertheless, rather than simply reifying the general at the expense of the particular, Kelsey also turns to our 'proximate contexts'. Thus, in terms of creation, our proximate context is, quite simply, the quotidian in all its finitude. This is a bold move by Kelsey. In his view, previous accounts of anthropology have confused the asymmetrical narrative accounts of the God-creature relation and, as a result of the narrative of reconciliation supposed that particularity and the finite are to be understood as results of the sinful brokenness of humanity. However, Kelsey suggests that to imagine a humanity without these ambiguities or limitations is impossible and to do so would simply evince a Feuerbachian-type projection onto a *tabula rasa* anthropology.

Consequently, Kelsey can speak of a second manner of God's creative relating in creation: mediately within

the quotidian, through address. It is as a result of this that the notion of faith becomes the important aspect of our *created* existence (rather than *reconciled* existence) as we respond to the address of God within the proximate contexts in which we find ourselves. Any deferral or distortion of this faith in God in both ultimate and proximate contexts is the root of evil and sin.

The second part of the volume, focusing on the eschatological consummation of creation, is far more conventional than part one. The ultimate context into which we are born is not simply determined by our creative relating to the triune God but is also determined by 'a second aspect, by God drawing all creation, and with it humankind, to the blessing of final consummation' (442). Whilst God relates creatively in the Father, God relates eschatologically through the Spirit. Proximately, this works itself out in a 'certain goal-oriented overall direction to changes across time in our social and cultural proximate contexts' (499). If faith is the attitude of the proximate context of creation, hope is the attitude of the proximate context of consummation. In this sense, the notion of the quotidian developed in the first part is used beneficially to suggest that the church should not lose its focus upon the everydayness of existence between the times. We should never be in danger of prompting the question, 'Why do you stand here looking into the sky?' Instead, God's relating to us by eschatological consummation leads us to proclaim, 'We are finite creatures empowered by God's call to be and to act, to give and receive in our own places and times.' (525)

In conclusion, Kelsey's work almost defies a simple depiction. Much like the author of the epistle of Hebrews I do not have time to tell about the exploration of subjectivity, election, sin and evil, biological issues, death, ethics and so the list continues. There is no substitute for the reading of a book and, if any book of the last ten years deserves to be read it is this one. If there are to be any overall criticisms of the work they are few and fastidious: the bibliographical material is all found in the second volume; there are too many typographical errors; Kelsey neglects to talk about the recent postmodern criticisms of 'gift giving' and those theological responses, even so far as not referencing the debates in footnotes; there is also an annoying tendency by Kelsey to use 'intentionality' in a phenomenological manner and yet misapplying the term. Nevertheless, such criticisms do little to diminish the importance of such an impressively thought out and well-argued book.

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Eccentric Existence: a Theological Anthropology – Volume Two

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Within the first volume of his theological anthropology (reviewed above), David Kelsey was concerned to develop a structural account of anthropology which took into account not simply the importance of the relation of the human to the divine, but more particularly the relation of the human to the Trinitarian God of Christian theology. Once such a methodological move is made, one is not faced with a unidimensional narrative against which to relate the human person, but rather there appear three asymmetrical accounts of the ways in which God relates to his creation: 'as One who creates, grounding our reality, and its value and well being; as One who promises us an eschatological consummation and draws us to it; as One who reconciles us in our multiple estrangements.' (Vol. 1, 159) In exploring each of these relations as a separate (yet absolutely interrelated) scriptural narratives, Kelsey implies that previous theological anthropologies have been overly reliant upon a universal description of the *ordo salutis*, an approach which undoubtedly leads to reduction in one of his three areas of focus: creation, consummation or reconciliation. In this final volume, Kelsey turns his attention to the canonical narrative of reconciliation.

As before, Kelsey carefully delineates between those aspects of human existence which face all humans ('ultimate contexts') and those aspects of human existence which face us individually ('proximate context'). With respect to the narrative of God's relationship of reconciliation, the ultimate context of the human person is defined in light of the Incarnation: 'In the third mode of divine relating, the triune God's immanence is nothing other than God's being one among us as the incarnate Son to share with us his relationship with the Father.' (624). In light of this relating, the ultimate context of human existence is defined by God's response to the pervasive self-destructive, self-estrangement of the human person. Our ultimate context is, therefore, defined as *agape* and grace. It is because God relates to us in reconciliation by the Father sending the Son in the power of the Spirit that the destructive tendencies of sinful humanity are not our ultimate context but rather love and grace.

Consequently, in shifting to explore the proximate contexts in which we live, move and have our being, any account of anthropological flourishing will be in response to this ultimate context, a context circumscribed by *agape* and grace. 'The flourishing of human personal bodies' identities lies in their responding appropriately to the ways in which the triune God actively relates to them. The appropriate human response to God relating