

kehrt" im Hinblick darauf in Frage gestellt, ob es Gottes Freiheit wahrhaftig respektieren kann oder nicht. Molnar behauptet, dass Gott als Vater, Sohn und Heiliger Geist frei ist, unabhängig von der Schöpfung, vor der Schöpfung und in Ewigkeit.

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This is a scholarly work of great depth and thorough research, in a complex and detailed subject. Molnar raises concerns over pressing issues regarding the immanent Trinity. He always desires to uphold God's freedom, while recognising the limitations of our finiteness, where from necessity we describe the eternal God with human projections of earthly relations. At the very beginning he asks the question, '... how may we know God in accordance with his nature rather than creating God in our own image?' (x). He argues that God is not just God for us, simply because God was God before us. God is not only the believer's Creator, Redeemer and Mediator, in relation to his creation, but God was and is always Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The danger that needs to be avoided in Molnar's opinion is that of reducing God to merely what he has accomplished for us. Molnar concludes, 'we therefore end where we began, that is, with a recognition of God's freedom to be and to have been the eternal Father, Son and Spirit who existed prior to and apart from creation;...' (316).

So how does Molnar reach this conclusion? He begins in chapter one by examining the role of experience in determining a doctrine of the immanent Trinity, plus issues raised by contemporary feminist theology. Molnar examines the theologies of G. Kaufman, C. LaCugna, S. McFague, and E. Johnson, and shows how any theology which fails to think from a centre in God by revelation, will leave us never truly knowing God as he is, and we will '... only image God in ways that seem appropriate to ourselves' (25). He wants to stress from the start, that Jesus Christ should be the starting point and norm for theology, not human experience, or things outside of God's revelation of himself.

In the remaining nine chapters, as Molnar's argument develops, he encompasses a wide range of related subjects for tackling the task of revealing the necessity for a well conceived doctrine of the immanent Trinity, which can otherwise lead to a number of unwanted ends, such as dualism, pantheism or panentheism, or in Christology, Docetic or Ebionite tendencies. His solution for avoiding these conclusions is for theology to take God himself as the definition for his eternal being, rather than just the economy. And he repeatedly highlights the need for starting trinitarian theology with Jesus Christ, the self revelation of God, the eternal Logos.

The chapters explore God's self-communication in Christ, with emphasis on the resurrection in the views of Rahner and T. F. Torrance, plus the function of the Trinity in J. Moltmann's ecological doctrine of creation, and the doctrine of the immanent Trinity in the thoughts of A. Torrance, E. Jungel, and lastly C. Gunton. As Mol-

nar's argument develops, various points become clear that he sees as essential for understanding the immanent Trinity. 1) God is God apart from creation, and was free to remain himself if both creation and salvation never materialized. God did not become trinitarian in his creative and redemptive works. 2) The history of God acting for us should not alone define who God is in his own *ousia* pre-creation. This is to avoid a doctrine of the immanent Trinity which is dependent upon the works of God *ad extra*, for example, the Word was the Word before the incarnation and resurrection, the Word did not become the Word through or by these events, or as Molnar says, '... God's eternity is not defined by its relation to time. . . ' (81). 3) Both divine and human freedom is maintained when a doctrine of the immanent Trinity establishes that human beings and their history do not condition God. 4) God's freedom *in se*, revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is never dependent upon human experience of faith. God is independent of the world. And, 5) In Molnar's own words, 'In this book I am arguing that Barth did not separate or collapse the immanent into the economic Trinity but distinguished and united them in accordance with the fact that creation, reconciliation and redemption were factual necessities grounded only in God's free grace. Barth did not allow God's being and act to be defined by his relations *ad extra*.' (270).

This book will be of great worth to any reader wishing to develop a richer understanding of the Trinity, not least because of its depth of research and the interaction with Barth and many other theologians. It should make the reader question their starting point in formulating their own doctrine of the immanent Trinity, and should instil the necessity to let God be God, rather than to make our own.

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Habermas and Theology

Nicholas Adams

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Pp. 267 + ix

SUMMARY

This study is a welcome theological appreciation and critique of the work of the influential German philosopher Jürgen Habermas examining his 'communicative action' and 'discourse ethics' theories. It also addresses the narratives of intellectual and social history of the West which underwrite these ideas. The peculiar focus throughout is upon treatment of theology and religion in connection with Habermas' theorising about the modern public sphere.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Diese Studie ist eine willkommene theologische Würdigung und Kritik des Werkes des einflussreichen deutschen Philosophen Jürgen Habermas. Sie untersucht seine

Theorien der "kommunikativen Handlung" und der "diskursiven Ethik". Sie behandelt auch die Erzählungen der intellektuellen und sozialen Geschichte des Westens, die im Hintergrund dieser Gedanken stehen. Das besondere Augenmerk liegt durchgängig auf der Behandlung von Theologie und Religion in Verbindung mit Habermas' Theorien zum modernen öffentlichen Bereich.

RÉSUMÉ

Cette étude est une analyse critique de l'œuvre du philosophe allemand Jürgen Habermas qui s'intéresse en particulier à sa théorie de « l'action communicative » et à son « éthique du discours ». L'auteur traite également des récits de l'histoire intellectuelle et sociale de l'Occident qui sous-tendent les idées de Habermas. Il se concentre surtout sur le traitement réservé à la théologie et à la religion qui découle des théories de Habermas sur la sphère publique moderne.

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This study is a welcome theological appreciation and critique of the work of the influential German philosopher Jürgen Habermas which examines both elements of his theories of 'communicative action' and 'discourse ethics,' as well as the narratives of intellectual and social history of the West which underwrite them. The peculiar focus throughout is upon treatment of theology and religion in connection with Habermas' theorising about the modern public sphere. Equally important is the context in which Adams chiefly reads Habermas, namely that provided by German philosophy from Kant to Adorno. The combination of clarity, detail and winsomeness that marks Adams' prose would be praiseworthy in any work; it is all the more so in this one given the notorious technicality and sometimes obscurity of both Habermas' own writing as well as that of German Idealism generally. Though not intended as an introductory survey, the expositions and arguments that populate the book betray a teacher's hand and will be accessible to non-specialist readers who will benefit time and again from the deft combination of clear restatement and effective examples Adams deploys in building his case.

Adams moves between two modes of engagement which he calls 'repair' and 'obstruction'. Critical arguments are made in order to complicate the terrain Habermas negotiates, i.e., to identify things (theoretical or practical) that make the road traveled by Habermas' theories rather bumpy, if not treacherous and sometimes finally impassible. Positively, Adams works at various points to help these same theories get over the difficult ground by recommending ways in which identifiable problems might be fixed. Often the recommended repair is quite radical: there are several problematic aspects of Habermas' theory which Adams thinks can simply be left off without compromising his chief practical aim. Key among these is his account of the intellectual history of religion in the modern period, and of the nature of secularisation or rationalisation. This strategy reflects

Adams' overarching worry about Habermas, namely his seemingly irrepressible 'desire for theory' itself (201) and climaxes in a judgment that it seems "true that Habermas has the best available theory of argumentation in the public sphere, and equally true that this theory is unusable" (201). The good news will be that a theory is not exactly what is needed any way. More about this below. Again, even non-specialists readers will learn much from paying attention to the form and style of Adams' argumentation, one which reflects his own theological and philosophical formation at Cambridge.

While the book is an extended appreciation and criticism of Habermas' main theoretical achievements, there is also something else afoot throughout. The exposition of Habermas in fact feeds a case Adams makes for a better post-liberal theology. These two undertakings may seem discontinuous, but in fact they prove highly complementary. This is because at the heart of both projects is a common question. For Habermas the driving question is how there can be truly public political and ethical debate between persons of markedly different traditions. For Christian theology after liberalism, the question is similarly one about identity and involvement: how can Christians maintain their identity as Christians while being fully engaged with the world in which they live, including its political and ethical debates. Alert to this overlapping *problématique*, Adams' analysis of key aspects of Habermas' project readily bears fruit for theological reflection upon this dilemma of 'identity – involvement', and the final chapters of the book are given over to a preliminary harvest. One of Adams' achievements is to show that while, for Habermas, a theologian might be 'either an uninteresting liberal or a useless sectarian' (195) there are other kinds of theologians about who – happily – break these moulds.

The work of the opening chapters is to scrutinize the chief elements of Habermas' ideas about religion and theology and the uses to which they are put in his thinking about publicity. Chapter two considers an important idea from Habermas' early work, namely the 'ideal speech situation' in which persons in public dialogue are thought to be able to argue rationally and peaceably because they do so as equally autonomous subjects free to give and demand reasons from one another in a relationship of symmetry and transparency. The sense in which this procedural vision is 'ideal' – first as an 'anticipation' and later more accurately as an 'abstraction' – is explored, as are the resonances of all this with features of Christian eschatology. Also set forth are the scorching criticisms of the idea from both those who think the rules for reasoning are always themselves embedded in communal contexts and so in principal not prone to being made 'universal' (the Hegelian) and from those who, while not disputing that the universal *per se* exists, deny that it can be theorised as such (the Schellingian).

Chapter three takes up Habermas' important claim that one of the chief impacts of modernity is to distance us from our own traditions by making our relationship

to them reflective and so our societies *post*-traditional in some important sense. The key here is *reflection*, which for Habermas means becoming conscious that our representations and interpretations of the world are just that, representations and interpretations and so not strictly identifiable with the world as such. To grasp one's tradition as a tradition 'rather than as the only reality there is' (55) is, for Habermas, a mainspring of modernity in which, even if traditional norms continue to be affirmed, the nature of that affirmation is fundamentally altered. Upon reflection, in this sense, truths once taken for granted becomes norms and values whose authority must be re-instated by other than traditional means. Adams explores the stakes in all this by considering the debate between Habermas and Gadamer on the losses and gains of reflective distancing from tradition.

Important among these losses Habermas thinks is any clear motivation for moderns to commit to those norms and values that come down to them from their traditions. Adams' fourth chapter dwells on this problem. Reflection corrodes and so loosens the ties that bind people to the substantial visions of the good traditionally proffered, and in turn sets modern ethical theory a crucial task: to compensate for this 'motivational deficit' (66). What is needed, Habermas argues, is a modern reflective version of the authorisation of morality by 'the sacred' as he believes was true in traditional societies. Secularisation itself brings precisely this about. This achievement Habermas calls, rather awkwardly, the 'linguistification of the sacred' by which he means that 'the authority of the holy is gradually replaced by the authority of an achieved consensus' built by rational discourse (79). Communicative action itself now must do the work of authorising morals; the binding power of the sacred migrates into that of rational agreement. In relation to this Adams explores the way in which Habermas' view of the constructive power of discourse closely parallels the theological function of revelation (Rowan Williams provides the comparative account here). The fifth chapter presses further along these lines to examine Habermas' defense of a post-metaphysical universalism, i.e., the identification of those aspects of human action which are the self-same regardless of localities of time and space. Here, again, what is at stake is the possibility of transcending particular traditions in pursuit of a rational *and only so* authoritative public discourse. In discussing Habermas' criticisms of varieties of contemporary theory (post modern and historicist) which despair of such universalism, Adams points to the signal importance for Habermas of distinguishing narrative from argument, and his assertion that it is only within the embrace of the 'unavoidable presuppositions' of the latter that 'all the different narratives that occupy the public sphere' can be co-ordinated without violence. Again, Adams here registers his dismay that Habermas thinks it necessary to theorise all this, rather than simply take note of the 'fact' that such communicative action does in fact take place and so is, on some basis, actually possible (98).

Chapters six through ten treat in some detail Habermas' understanding of religion and theology, and their putatively problematic character within modern public discourse. Here Adams focuses in upon the various ways Habermas tells the tale of the coming of modernity and of religion's displacement by rationalisation and modern politics. In these histories, religion is consistently marked by three essential features: it is metaphysical (i.e., claims a 'God's-eye-view' of things), mythical (i.e., substitutes sub-rational narrative for rational argument) and unreflective. Adams contends that in each case these characterisations of religion and religious thought are over-simple and ignorant of important tensions and distinctions *within* Christian tradition. So, for instance, attention is drawn to the long *pre*-modern history *within* theology of 'metaphysical reserve' when it comes to claiming any 'God's-eye-view', and the way intra-Christian diversity already schools a kind of reflective posture. At another point, Adams effectively takes apart Habermas' appeal to Hegel as the philosopher who 'takes leave of religion' in favour of modernity (156ff.), demonstrating briefly but clearly that this appeal rests a bad reading deaf to Hegel's strong investments in a kind of (speculative) trinitarian theology.

While these chapters offer quite close readings of several of Habermas' key essays on these themes, Adams is also making an overarching point: for all that he talks about it, Habermas is not really interested in religion itself. Rather, religion is cast as modernity's foil and its often crude handling similarly reflects the fact that real interest lies elsewhere, namely in accounting for the need, possibility and practices of universalisable rationality. Adams draws two conclusions from the hard labour of expounding these and other related claims: first, that Habermas' theories are not finally dependent upon the story of secularisation for their cogency, and second, that for all the critical things theologians might wish to say about Habermas' treatment of religion, 'it is a mistake to take Habermas' remarks on religion too seriously' because 'religion is just a casualty of his systematic intentions' (152). Theological dispute with Habermas is best focused on his account of rationality itself.

And indeed, this is what the final chapters of the book go on to do. The upshot of consideration of debates between Habermas and two leading theological critics, Peukert and Theunissen, in chapter nine is to drive home the double thesis of Adams book: first, given that members of religious traditions wish to be heard in important public policy debates '... something like Habermas' theory of communicative action is vitally needed. There needs to be some way for members of different traditions to be intelligible to their neighbours. ... and there is thus a need for a public sphere in which claims can be raised, challenged, redeemed and transformed' (200-01). But, second, this need cannot finally be met by a 'theory for argumentation' aimed at circumscribing the grounds on which it may be possible. Here Adams shows himself convinced by Schelling's argument that

the kinds of universal elements that must populate any such theory simply cannot in principle be uncovered and grasped (44-45).

The final two chapters make a case for the existence of 'an *alternative* way of considering the question of what Habermas calls "rationality"' (153). The penultimate chapter pursues two issues: first, it asks about the critical *distance* from tradition Habermas takes to be the hallmark of modern life and thought, and argues that the tradition of Christian theology already embraces something similar. Within Christian theology, it is an eschatological reserve, an acknowledgment of 'the difference between divine promise and human institutions' (206) that warrants criticism of tradition. Adams admits that this is not quite what Habermas has in view, but that its recognition complicates the picture of tradition and criticism usefully. The second question concerns narrative, argument and their relation as a manner of revisiting the question of tradition and rationality. Habermas makes a sharp distinction between them, understanding narrative as about the business of 'world-disclosure' while the point of argument is 'problem solving' (215), with the later trumping the former in public discourse. Comparing the contrasting views of Habermas and Milbank (who is quite positively received), Adams argues here that while distinct, these two forms of discourse cannot be cleanly separated, and that there is a 'basic, and rightly mixed up, practice of argumentative narrative' (218) indicative of the fact there are both particular traditions and that 'there is understanding' amongst them (225). He advises in the end that 'the problem about how traditions encounter each other might best be tackled at the same time as the problem of how argumentation *within* traditions is possible' (228), i.e., the resources needed for tackling Habermas' issues must come out of specific traditions, rather than from outwith.

Given that assent to Habermas' theory is 'impossible for Christians, and surely not only for Christians' (226) the final chapter recommends *not* another theory of public rationality – the ground of which is, as Adams has tried to show, 'theory-resistant' (230) – but rather the practice of something called 'scriptural reasoning' as a suggestive alternative to Habermas' own proposals. Adams contends that this practice (which has developed its own literary and social fora in recent years) does all that an alternative to Habermas must do: it acknowledges the complex relation of narrative and argument, it promotes genuine argument in the public sphere, and it eschews grounding any of this theoretically. It also sits well within a Hegelian account of *Sittlichkeit* and a Schellingian view of 'untheorisable thinking' (251). Adams goes on to describe the practice of scriptural reasoning (240f.) which in brief, involves Christians, Muslims and Jews each interpreting their own sacred texts with and before each other and debating with one another in an attempt to make their 'deep reasonings public' (242). What makes argument possible is the friendship and hospitality the traditions themselves enjoy upon their

members *from within*. Although the aim of the practice is chiefly study, when agreement occurs it does so 'across traditions' rather than in spite of them (247) and disagreement is often found to be 'tolerable' (250) rather than a warrant for social coercion.

While Adams' advocacy of scriptural reasoning is guarded and hesitant, one can ask about its limits as a profitable construct of public argument. First, the possibility and cogency of the practice, as well as the friendship and hospitality which drive it, seem themselves to be rooted in a cluster of shared or at least strongly parallel convictions and practices: the invocation of 'God', orientation in life and thought towards an authoritative scripture, the promotion of certain mutually recognizable virtues (hospitality, friendship) as well as overlapping philosophical conceptualities. As Adams observes, this is already extant, and so different from the kind of 'achieved consensus' Habermas pursues. One wonders what are the analogies to this kind of *de facto* basis for conversation in the wider and more radically diverse public *civitas*?

Second, scriptural reasoning aims at study and not agreement (247) whereas Habermas is worried about communicative consensus in relation to democratic governance, where such agreement cannot be infinitely deferred, but must indeed be achieved. Does this not expose Adams' proposal to Schmitt's criticism of the discursive public sphere as merely an 'everlasting conversation' (116)? Gilbert Meilander has similarly criticised Jeffrey Stout's not entirely unanalogous proposal regarding the plural public sphere, calling into question whether this sphere is in fact best thought of on the model of a classroom or seminar discussion, both tropes which efface the reality of power, law, governance and the legal and physical coercion integral to all democratic politics. Adams acknowledges this limitation at one point, remarking that 'we are still some way off from an account that can show how something like scriptural reasoning illuminates argumentation in the public sphere at the level of drafting and passing legislation' (250). Traversing the ground needed to offer such illumination will be interesting and important work. Whether scriptural reasoning will be wanted on *this* journey remains to be seen.

In his conclusions, Adams identifies a further theological task that follows on from his investigations. Despite the public sphere being a 'Christian institution by virtue of arising in Christian Europe, it has not been properly theorised within contemporary Christian theology' (250) but in fact this must be done. Similarly, Christian theologians, it is said, ought to adhere to a variant of 'Thesis 11': 'The theologians have only refuted the secular, in various ways: the point is to change it' (251), and this too will require that 'the secular' also be theorised within theology. With these remarks Adams himself points up a notable limit to the kind of pragmatics scriptural reasoning represents. While that exercise is made possible by a 'theory-resistant' *ethos* of friend-

ship and hospitality, this other work will be driven by the salutary power of a particular *logos*. It will require the provision of thick doctrinal descriptions of the reality of the world in which 'the public' and 'the secular' are actualities. Such descriptions will furnish a Christian theological description of things within which a practice like 'scriptural reasoning' makes sense as prudent and possibly also faithful ways for Christians to get on in the world. Here, the priority of *logos* to *ethos* seems clear. A Christian alternative to Habermas' theory of public discourse may well be practical, as Adams has argued, but it will no doubt also be *doctrinal*, unfolding an account of the social and political world in terms of their effective determination by the realities of divine reconciliation, providence, and a human hope for redemption derived from the person and work of one whose execution was a public event (Acts 26:26) outside the walls of the *polis* for its sake. Could it be that the fruitful negotiation of the 'identity – involvement dilemma' is finally and more properly a task of dogmatics than it is of pragmatics, universal or otherwise?

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Hindustan Evangelical Review: Journal of Missiological Reflection (HER-JMR), Vol 1 (January-December 2006).

Editor J. Baskar Jeyaraj

Subscription Euro 20 per year
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SUMMARY

This review introduces a newly launched evangelical theological journal in India. It describes the purpose and format of the *Hindustan Evangelical Review: Journal of Missiological Reflection*, lists and reviews the contributions of the first issue. The journal is devoted to missiology, which in an Indian context includes more subjects than in Europe. The contributions raise interesting issues and offer some fresh and stimulation solutions and ideas. Journals like these will become more important for European readers as our continent becomes more like India: increasingly more multicultural, multireligious and multiethnic. To listen to an Indian evangelical voice can prepare and help us.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Diese Rezension führt eine neu gegründete evangelikale theologische Zeitschrift in Indien ein. Sie beschreibt den Zweck und das Format des *Hindustan Evangelical Review: Journal of Missiological Reflection*, listet die Beiträge des ersten Bandes auf und rezensiert die Beiträge. Die Zeitschrift widmet sich der Missiologie, die in einem indischen Kontext mehr Bereiche als in Europa umfasst. Die Beiträge werfen interessante Fragen auf und bieten einige frische und stimulierende Lösungen und Ideen. Zeitschriften wie diese werden für europäische Leser immer wichtiger werden, da unser Kontinent immer mehr wie Indien wird:

verstärkt multikulturell, multireligiös und multiethnisch. Auf eine indische evangelikale Stimme zu hören kann uns vorbereiten und helfen.

RÉSUMÉ

Un nouveau journal théologique évangélique vient d'être lancé en Inde, la *Hindustan Evangelical Review: Journal of Missiological Reflection*. La présente recension décrit ses buts, donne la liste des articles de la première livraison et en fait la recension. Ce journal est consacré à la missiologie, un domaine qui, dans le contexte indien, englobe un plus large éventail de sujets qu'en Europe. Les articles soulèvent des problèmes intéressants et offrent des solutions ou idées nouvelles et stimulantes. De tels périodiques vont acquérir une importance croissante pour les lecteurs européens dans la mesure où notre continent va ressembler de plus en plus à l'Inde : toujours plus multi-culturel, multi-religieux et multi-ethnique. Écouter une voix évangélique indienne peut nous y préparer et nous aider.

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The first issue of this new Indian missiological journal looks promising. It is published by the Academic department of the *Hindustan Bible Institute and College* in Chennai (the former Madras, 86-89 Medavakkam Tank Road, Kilpauk, Chennai – 600 010) in South East India (for details see www.hbionline.org). The journal "intends to publish papers written by former and present faculty members, graduates, visiting professors and others associated with the ministry of HBI. ... It is to bring out the reflections of scholars on the missiological issues, problems and prospects, based on their research, experience, collection of data and concern for ministry" (from the editorial). It is primarily addressed to theological students, missionaries, evangelists and pastors.

The thirteen articles of the first issue are of different length, quality and nature. Some are more informative and well researched scholarly articles; others are more of the style and level of reflections. I list them in order to indicate the range of topics addressed:

P. Rajkumar Gupta, founder and president of HBI writes on "Global Church and the West: Mission and Partnership" (1-14, listing several principles "as a national Christian leader trained in the West, that are crucial for effective partnerships", 9). B. C. Wintle provides "Some New Testament Reflections on Christian Partnership" (15-22), concluding that in view of the NT "We need to continue with our efforts to bring together all those involved in the same task, and to challenge them with the benefits of resource sharing and corporate accountability" (22). J. N. Manokaran describes the "Challenge of Postmodernism for Missions" (23-28, including some principles for formulating a strategy for reaching post-modern society). G. E. van der Hout contributes "Christ the Sinless Sinner: A Critique of the Hamartiological Aspect of Bonhoeffer's Christology" (29-34).

P. N. Samuel Saravanan examines the "Sourashtrians and their Response to Christ" (35-54), describ-