

Judith Gruber

Theologie nach dem Cultural Turn. Interkulturalität als theologische Ressource

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The present volume is the author's (slightly revised) doctoral dissertation as it was defended at the Faculty of Catholic Theology of the University of Salzburg, Austria, in 2012. The author currently serves as an assistant professor of systematic theology at Loyola University New Orleans, USA. The book's main aim is to study the notion of 'interculturality' and to make it fruitful for theology (p. 12), taking into account the insights of the 'cultural turn' in the humanities. Given that the book addresses the fundamentally culturally embedded character of Christian identity/ies, the volume is of significance for ecclesiology and ecumenical studies, not least because it questions and undermines 'essentialist' notions of Christian identity (p. 11).

Following an introduction, the first part of the monograph is dedicated to a historical contextualization of the concept of 'interculturality' (understood, with Homi Bhabha, as a space of absence and difference: p. 227), discussing the notion of culture, the encounter between cultures and the transfer of 'contents' from one culture to another in the context of missiology (pp. 17–33; key concept: 'accommodation'), contextual theologies (pp. 34–53; key concept: 'inculturation'), and then turns to the emergence of intercultural theology (pp. 54–82; key concept: 'interculturalization' ['Interkulturalisation']). In the latter discourse, the reciprocity of processes of interpretation and translation of Christian identities is emphasized and understood as something that fundamentally belongs to Christian theology that is characterized by the revelation of the universal in the particular (incarnation). The church, therefore, becomes a 'universal hermeneutical community' (p. 81). The second part of the book focuses on systematic theological approaches to the intercultural character of Christianity. Gruber offers four such explorations. The first part concentrates on Christian identity after the cultural turn (pp. 85–137), noting the hybrid character of all Christian identities and, hence, their intercultural character (example: early Christian identity between 'Judaism' and 'Hellenism'). The second part pays attention to the particular and contingent character of all speaking of God (*theo*-logy) as well as to the fact that the original event is 'lost' and can only be recovered through attempts to re-present it. Absence becomes, in this way, an important catalyst of Christian theology. The third part pays attention to various modes of dealing with interculturality, specifically to attempts to deny the intercultural character of Christianity and those that seek to embrace it (pp. 196–208). Gruber, of course, wishes to do the latter. The fourth

exploration discusses the notion of the canon from the perspective of interculturality, showing how the Scriptures themselves are intercultural in character and how the canon canonizes precisely also this aspect of (early) Christian identity (pp. 209–226); this section, it seems, opens interesting vistas for biblical hermeneutics. Finally, the work offers a number of theses concerning the systematization of theology that is done in an intercultural way ('Theologie interkulturell').

Gruber's work is both well-informed and informative and the author is not afraid to explore new territories and lines of thought. Certainly it demonstrates how the notion of interculturality helps to describe both what Christian identity is and how it functions and how many aspect of Christian theology are intercultural in character. Notably, Gruber does not argue for the establishment of a (further) theological discipline such as 'theology in an intercultural mode', but proposes to integrate attention for the intercultural character of Christian identities and theologies in their study at large (p. 229), which I would find very fruitful indeed. It would be especially interesting to see how it would inform the fields of ecclesiology and ecumenical studies further, prone as they often are to work with implicit notions of Christian and/or ecclesial 'essentials'. To be sure, *Theologie nach dem Cultural Turn* is no light reading – advanced German is a must; should the volume ever be translated, however, its somewhat hermetic style could be remedied (as could a series of minor typographical errors and inconsistencies).

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