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PROJECT

Deutschsprachige Islamische Theologie: Hermeneutik und Kritik

In den letzten beiden Jahrzehnten sind in Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz universitäre Einrichtungen für Islamische Theologie entstanden: in Freiburg (Schweiz) und Wien sowie in Berlin, Erlangen-Nürnberg, Frankfurt/Gießen, Münster, Osnabrück und Tübingen. Die ersten islamisch-theologischen Originalpublikationen erschienen auf Deutsch. Gegenwärtig wächst die zweite Generation von deutschsprachigen Islamtheologinnen und -theologen heran.

Die interdisziplinäre Auseinandersetzung kritisiert, dass Vertreter der islamischen Religionsgemeinschaften die Wissenschaftsfreiheit einschränken. Die öffentliche Debatte moniert dagegen mitunter, dass es so etwas wie islamische Theologie gar nicht gebe oder dass der akademische Betrieb realitäts-, nämlich gemeindefern sei.

Ich untersuche die deutschsprachige islam-theologische Entwicklung unter dreierlei Rücksicht: 1) in Form einer Methodenbeschreibung, 2) einer Kontextualisierung in Europa und in der islamischen Welt sowie 3) in Form einer begrifflich-inhaltlichen Auseinandersetzung. Dreimal kann das Leitmotiv dafür "Hermeneutik und Kritik" lauten.

Zu fragen ist nämlich genauerhin: 1) Welche hermeneutischen und kritischen Verfahren kommen in den Textwissenschaften, der historischen Selbstreflexion, der systematischen Darstellung der Glaubenslehre und der gegenwartsbezogenen Normbildung zur Anwendung? 2) Was bedeutet die Herausbildung des neuen Gesprächspartners "Islamische Theologie" für das Verhältnis der Religionen und ihrer Diskurse im deutschsprachigen Raum sowie für den Islam und seine Selbsterschließungsgeschichte weltweit? 3) Wie bewährt sich das jeweilige Organisationsmodell? Ist zugleich Wissenschaftsfreiheit gewährt und ein Austausch mit dem Glaubensleben heutiger Muslime, sodass islamische Theologie weder Indoktrination noch Islamwissenschaft ist? Sind die erzielten Forschungsergebnisse auch für die anderen deutschsprachigen Theologien nutzbar? Wo muss das Gespräch mit europäischen philosophisch-theologischen Kategorien ansetzen?

Lektüreempfehlung

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COLLOQUIUM

Islamic University Theology: A Critical Interlocutor in the German-

Speaking World

Some two dozen German-language universities offer programs in Islamic Studies. (The discipline is traditionally a philological one and now uses various methods of literary and historical research as well as approaches from social and cultural studies.) But the last decade has seen the rise of another academic discipline dealing with Islam, namely "Islamic Theology," which is presently being offered at ten universities in the German-speaking world. Here at Wiko I am examining the first research findings of this new discipline. But what exactly is Islamic Theology?

My basic formula for conceptualizing theology is that theology is a religion's rational discourse. This implies that theologians belong to the religion they study - and they reflect upon it in light of that belonging. But their reflection is in order to achieve what? I suggest that we distinguish three different theological agendas, with possible overlaps:

- If you want to show that your religion is right, you work "apologetically" - not in the sense of begging pardon or as a defensive reaction but by demonstrating, through arguments, your belief's coherence. (See 1 Peter 3:15, "Always be prepared to give an answer [apología] to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.")
- If you want to present your religion's meaning for today, you are being "hermeneutic" - in translating, interpreting and thus developing your tradition, proposing implications for present understanding and action, even by criticizing your own community or contemporary society.
- But there are also researchers who simply want to immerse themselves in their religious traditions without any kind of "apologetic" or "hermeneutic" agenda. They say things like "I simply try to understand the logics of the sacred." If that is your intent, you might still be called a theologian; and I would then perhaps call your agenda "talmudic" - even if it is not the Talmud you study.

And if you have none of these three agendas? Then I would say that you are not a theologian.

If theology is a religion's rational discourse, it would seem that some connection to a living religious community is necessary. One must even allow such a community to say: this or that person has shown, through their opinion or lifestyle, that (s)he cannot speak in our name.

If the state claims neutrality in matters of religious doctrine, no political authority can decide on issues of faith. In the case of Christian university theology, the state delegates judgments on true or false belief to ecclesiastical authorities - to the local bishop in the case of the Catholic Church; and there are institutionalized doctrinal procedures also in Protestant territorial churches in Austria, Germany and Switzerland. But for Islam - who can assess, in the name of the religious community, a professor's orthodoxy? Each university has found its own way to compose and authorize a Muslim commission approving of the professors and curricula. In many cases, not unexpectedly, that commission (Beirat) creates difficulties: the largest Muslim associations want to be represented but are often problematically linked to a foreign state's policies; they hardly represent the concerns of local Muslims; they tend to lack academic expertise; and they may fundamentally disagree among themselves.

So why would a secular state, a pluralist society and an independent academia want university theology to exist in the first place? The attractive point here is that Islamic Theology gives an academic training to future teachers of confessional religious education (also taught at public schools in the German-speaking world) and to religious community leaders. In fact, the German Council of Science said in 2010 that theology at the university is good for religious communities and for the public sphere as well as for the university.

As already indicated, I am presently reading Islamic Theology's German teaching materials, doctoral theses and research papers. In my presentation I will share my first impressions of these publications, suggest a typology of Muslim theologians, and try to answer four questions: (1) Are we forcing Muslims to create an Islamic theology - something that never existed in the history of Islam? (2) Is there a dangerous collaboration between politics and religion at work here, a collaboration which is bound to produce "Mrs. Merkel's Mild Muslims," i.e. some deceptive and divisive "Euro-Islam"? (3) Is it likely and desirable that German-language Islamic thought should have an impact on other Muslim cultures? (4) What can non-Muslims learn from this new disciplinary interlocutor in our religious and academic scene?

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