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REVIEW ARTICLES

DISCUSSION ON THE ISLAMIC THEOLOGY

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In the present review article, the author discusses problems of the Islamic theology in Germany. The book dealt with is: Neumann, Ursula (ed.): *Islamische Theologie. Internationale Beiträge zur hamburger Debatte.* Hamburg, Körber-Stiftung 2002. 168 pp. ISBN 3-89684-049-5.

The Muslim communities of Western Europe constitute diasporic communities which maintain multiple links with their countries of origin and with similar communities in other Western countries. The political, social and economic situation of these immigrant communities differs in many respect from that of Muslims in the home countries. Every day they are confronted with a whole range of new problems that require an Islamic answer. The new countries of residence provide different constraints and opportunities for the development of Muslim institutions and Islamic practices. In the long run European forms of Islam are likely to develop, based on the locally elaborated Islamic knowledge. (Bruinessen 2001). Recent development in inter-cultural relations in Germany made the issue of locally produced Islamic knowledge an unlikely subject of discussion in which, besides others, the leaders of the City of Hamburg and Hamburg University took part.

In Hamburg with its considerable Muslim minority a number of interculturally and interreligiously oriented communal organizations have already been active for some time. The initiative "Religion for all" supports the idea that in state schools religious instruction should be offered in courses which would not divide the students according to their confession or religion. "Interreligious Forum of Hamburg" associates the Christian Churches, representatives of the Council of Muslim communities (*Shura),* the Alevite community, the Jewish community and the Tibetan Centre. At the University the Department of Evangelical Theology initiated a programme "Interreligious Dialogue" supporting

contacts between different religious communities so that students preparing for jobs in parishes and schools will be better equipped for work in a multicultural society. It was only natural that Hamburg was the place where the idea of establishing an Islamic religious institution in Germany slowly acquired a concrete shape, in the final stage as a prestigeous project of a chair for Islamic theology at Hamburg University.

Although there were indications that other universities may have considered similar steps (Vienna, Strasbourg, Paris), no one doubted the project needed a thorough scrutiny even before the first steps could be planned.To provide a competent forum for the discussion of the issue, a workshop was organized in Hamburg on March 31, 2001, in which Islamic theologians and Islamic scholars took part. In our view it was expedient to invite scholars from the countries with significant Muslim minorities (Great Britain, the Netherlands, Southern Africa), from predominantly Muslim Indonesia and, naturally, from Turkey. Discussions with the public, the representatives of the city, the University and the the Muslim communities of Hamburg were part of the project as well. The materials presented at the workshop were edited by Ursula Neumann, a representative of the Hamburg Senate responsible for relations with foreigners and published by Korber Stiftung.

In her Preface Professor Neumann explains the reasons for her engagement in the project. Intercultural dialogue, in her words, is always also an interreligious dialogue. And German society can no longer remain blind to the fact that it has for quite a long time been a multicultural society. The influx of foreign workers and a liberal policy towards fugitives and asylum-seekers have made Islam the third religious force in the country. This circumstance has to be taken into cosideration when prospects for future development are being pondered. In view of the fact that the new legislation will make the process of acquiring German citizenship easier, the idea of what it means to be a German will have to be extended. The new concept will have to include Islam as the religion of German citizens.

At present about 450,000 German citizens are Muslims. The first Muslim communities in Germany originated as early as in the twenties of the last century. Their number grew rapidly in the seventies with massive immigration of guest-workers from Turkey, Morocco and Tunisia. Today there are about 3 million Muslims in the country representing all streams and sects which can be found in Islam today. As most of the immigrants come from Turkey (2.5 mil.) the Turkish influence on Islam in Germany is predominant. Turkey as the country of origin of the majority is followed by Bosnia (180,000), Iran (120,000), Morocco (110,000), Afghanistan (86,000) and 20 other countries.

Though part of the German public still sticks to the idea of a homogenous nation state, the fact that the cultural normality, especially in the cities, is constituted by ethnic and religious diversity, is gradually being acknowledged. These developments left most Germans unconcerned, as the relations between members of both communities in daily life were generally good. Nevertheless, in public discourse arguments flared up, revealing a deeply felt contrariety between the Christian and Muslim faiths. Muslim claims to particularity met with

resistance, because, in the view of some observers (Jonker 2001), Muslim activities were suspected of serving political, not religious aims.

It has to be stressed that the Hamburg workshop took place before September 11, 2001 and therefore these events are not reflected in the contributions. It is difficult to know how these crimes would have affected the contributors' arguments. Professor Neumann admits that the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington were a serious blow for those who hoped for better understanding between the German population and the Muslim immigrants. Now even more than before Muslims are seen in connection with events abroad. The way they are viewed is very much determined by the reporting in the media and the public discussion on the international conflicts. The impass, caused by fear of political Islam on the side of the host country and the satanization of the West and modernity on the side of some Muslim leaders, calls for new efforts on the way to constructive solutions. In this process education is destined to play the crucial role.

In the Preface Professor Neumann mentions the issue of religious leaders, *imams.* It is one of the problems which urgently need attention everywhere in the Muslim diaspora. In the German case, both Ankara and Bonn have tried to keep the Turkish population in Germany under control suspecting some extremist groups may be involved in the activities aiming at overthrowing the Turkish government. According to the agreement between the two governments the Turkish party is responsible for supplying its minority in Germany with imams and for their salaries. The stay of these men in Germany is limited to three or four years. The fact that the religious leaders of the Muslim minority in Germany are controlled by a foreign governmet endangers the prospects of integration. It is only natural that these imams are actively promoting the version of islam that is oficially accepted at home, neglecting other streams. As a rule they speak no German and their knowledge of the political and social structures of the host country is zero. There is urgent need for a new type of religious leader who is better equipped to work in a non-Islamic environment and who is independent of foreign governments.

Elsewhere the situation is very similar. In the Netherlands the majority of professional imams are recruited in the country of origin, Turkey or Morocco. Since the beginning of the eighties, the external recruitment of imams has been criticized as being an unwelcome foreign influence on the Muslim communities in the country and as a hindrance to their integration into Dutch society. Some imams call on their audience to limit contacts with the unbelieving infidels or discourage Muslim girls from pursuing a career. In 1988 the Dutch government published a policy document on imams and their training. The document recommended that establishment of a theological institution for the training of imams within the Dutch educational system should be taken into consideration (Landman 1999). To our knowledge the project has not materialized so far.

It has to be stressed that mosque imams appear to be far more influential in the diaspora than in the home countries. This is the result of the pastoral role and authority attributed to them by local governments and other institutions and also because of the different functions the mosque fulfils in the diaspora. Be-

sides being a place of worship it is an Islamic centre which offers various programmes such as Qur'anic teaching, courses on the language of the country of origin and often also courses on Arabic. It is a place where various celebrations are organized and the social and cultural activities of the Muslim community take place. Besides mosques, there are other institutions which would profit from having personnel with at least basic theological knowledge of Islam, such as Christian parishes and groups of activists. Last but not least there is a need for religious teachers to instruct Muslim children on a professional level.

The chairman of the Körber Stiftung in Hamburg, Dr.Wolf Schmidt found it appropriate to explain why a strictly secular foundation decided to support a religious programme. The foundation has been active in promoting the integration of the Turkish immigrants into German society since the early nineties, basically within the framework of civil society. Although the Turkish authorities stress the secular character of the Turkish state, Islam has always been very much on the agenda. On the ground of this experience Dr. Schmidt formulated his ideas on co-existence with Islam, presenting the problem both in German and global perspectives. For Germany the Turkish immigrants are often a cause of controversy with the Turkish government. Islamist groups, repressed at home, find much better conditions in Germany, where they feel safe and free to develop. Thus the German government is accused of supporting anti-government agitation in Turkey. On the other hand many Muslim communities in Germany (Alevite, Shi'a[1] etc.) accuse the Turkish government of supporting only the official Sunni Hanafite version of Islam. According to Dr. Smith it seems that instead of making efforts to integrate into German society some immigrants prepare for conflicts elsewhere. The people of Hamburg were shocked when they were told that some of the perpetrators of the September 11th attacks had lived in their city. Muslim communities should critically examine their own doings and their thinking to see if they are not promoting extremism and violence. Such an attitude would be a genuine contribution to the improvement of the atmosphere.

In Dr. Schmidt's view the state should be strictly neutral in the matters of religion. In a multicultural society it would certainly make sense. As long as it is not the case in Germany and the state provides for the needs of Christian churches in many respects, the education of religious leaders included, then the Muslim community cannot be denied the same right. Religions are orientation systems which help people give sense to their lives. Although the values and attitudes of our societies have been formed by Christianity, that does not exclude the positive influences of other religious systems. The dialogue between reli-

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[1] *šīʿa* , in the way of writing Arabic terms currently used in scholarly texts; in this transcription, the rest of Arabic technical terms, occurring in the review, will assume the following form:

ʿulūm ad-dīn; tafsīr; tağwīd; ʿaqīda; ʿilm al-kalām ; ḥadīṯ; as-sunna, sunnat an-nabīy; ʾuṣūl al-fiqh; al-fiqh; ʿibādāt; muʿāmalāt; aš-šarīʿa; ʾaḫlāq, taṣawwuf (see p. 199).

gions and between cultures needs qualified voices on both sides. Christians have to be prepared to listen to educated Muslims explaining Islam, and Muslims will have to rely on competent Christian representatives to be able to understand Christianity better. In this context, though, the utterly sceptical words of Gustave Weigel in *The Modern God* come to one's mind: "Faith cannot debate with faith because they have no ultimate common ground. Faiths can only rail at each other.Yet all are human things and we can analyse them." Even taken with this dose of scepticism the project of establishing the chair of Islamic theology seems to be a legitimate endeavour.

Finally Dr. Schmidt identified the most important questions that have to be carefully examined before the whole project of a chair for Islamic theology in Hamburg could be started. They can be summed up as follows:

First: How can Islam as a revealed religion be understood in connection with Western concepts of enlightenment and critical science?

Second: How can a professor of Islamic theology be recognized both by the academy and by Islamic organizations as an accepted authority?

Third: How can the plurality of Islamic streams be dealt with if there is only one professor?

The participants of the workshop in their contributions dealt with these problems to greater or lesser degrees, in a more practical or theoretical way according to the character of their own work and orientation. As a basis for their work a "Profile for a Chair for Islamic Theology at the Hamburg University" had been elaborated in advance by a special commission of experts in paedagogics, Evangelical Theology and Oriental studies.The document offered suggestions and recommendations concerning the field of research, the curriculum and organizational structures of the new discipline. The paper stressed that Islamic theology should be studied and developed under conditions of Westerm social and cultural environment. Islamic exegesis and jurisprudence have to be dealt with in their complexity and examined for their relevance to the questions of today. Empirical data on the life of Muslims in Germany and other parts of Europe should be collected and analysed to identify problems requiring Islamic answers. Here Islamic theology should proceed in cooperation with other disciplines (Evangelical theology, sociology etc.). The variety of beliefs that to a greater or lesser degree differ from the maintream Sunni doctrine and from each other have to be included both in the research and in the teaching programme so that the graduates could find recognition on the part of all Muslim groups. The whole area of research and teaching has to be dialogue-oriented to avoid ideological and scholarly isolation.

Five Islamic scholars took part in the workshop: Prof. Dr. Mehmet Aydin, Islamic scholar at the Dokuz Eylül University, Izmir, Turkey; Prof. Dr. Komaruddin Hidayat, head of the department for the development of Islamic higher education at the Ministry for Religious Affairs, Jakarta, Indonesia; Dr. Suha Taji-Farouki, Islamic scholar at the Institute for the Study of the Middle East and Islamic Scholarship (IMEIS), Durham University and the visiting professor at the Institute for Ismaili Studies, London, Great Britain; Prof. Dr. Abdulkader Tay-

ob, Islamic scholar, Capetown University, South Africa; and finally Prof. Dr. Nasr Abu Zayd, Islamic scholar, Leiden University, The Netherlands.

It has to be conceded that from among the five contributors Dr. Suha Taji-Farouki presented the most thorough and detailed analysis of the project, assessing both its possibilities and dangers. She had the advantage of her experience in Britain where similar projects have already been discussed for some time and some practical steps undertaken.

Taji-Farouki starts her article with the definition of the field to be discussed. The term *Islamic theology* in the context of the discussions at the workshop represents what the Arabic term describes as *'ulum ad-din,* that means the sciences and disciplines of the faith which include the essential teaching and sources of the faith. Taji-Farouki refers to the systematic typology and categorization of *'ulum ad-din* by Tariq Ramadan (1999:40):

1. Koranic disciplines (relevations in Mecca and Medina and their respective circumstances, abrogation; *tafsir* (exegesis); *tajwid* (recitation rules).
2. Disciplines of the *'aqida,* that means those of the doctrine (the study of *tawhid,* (God's unity), God's names and attributes, the angels, the prophets etc., *'ilm al-kalam* (Islamic theology and philosophy).
3. *Hadith* – disciplines (the study of tradents and the tradent – chains, contents of *hadith*; the degree of authenticity); the study of the *sunna* of the Prophet.
4. *Usul al-fiqh* (principles and sources of jurisprudence, the foundations of Islamic law, principles and methods of deriving law from the sources), *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *'ibadat* (worship prescriptions) and *mu'amalat* (various spheres of human interaction), and *shari'a.*
5. *Akhlaq* (morals and ethics)
6. *Tasawwuf* (sufism).

Here Taji-Farouki addresses the first of the key problems posed above: the incompatibility between Islamic and Western scholarly traditions.

Within the Islamic tradition knowledge and learning have one purpose only: to know God better and serve him better. Under this principle all branches of knowledge were firmly united. Although critical approaches as practiced in Western scholarship and science have been known in the Muslim countries since the 19th century and were applied in many spheres of learning, the religious disciplines have remained untouched, being jealously protected by the defenders of the tradition. Western scholarly production which examined parts of the Islamic tradition with the tools of textual criticism brought about fierce attacks accusing the authors of falsifying the sources and of the revision of the Islamic heritage. (Muslim reactions to Western Islamic scholarship have been well researched by Ekkehard Rudolph (1991).)

The reluctance of the majority of Muslim Islamic scholars and theologians to acknowledge Western critical scholarship as a legitimate method of examining religious texts is to be regretted, the more so that, as some western scholars argue, Islam, more than other religions, is compatible with modernity. (Scholarly Islam, according to Ernest Gellner (1985:18) can be modernized. The popular variant of Islam can be rejected and made responsible for the backwardness of

the society.) Mark Woodward argues that Christian understandings of the Bible as a universal history, cosmology and cosmogony give rise to "an all or nothing" struggle between religion and science. On the other hand Islamic understandings of the relationship between religious and worldly things leave room for a more principled compromise. "While the foundational texts of Islam make it clear that all that exist is the product of Allah's creative powers, there is no Islamic Book of Genesis. The Prophet Muhammad did not claim to be a scientific authority and encouraged the quest for empirical knowledge of the natural world. The Koran also makes it clear that when it suits his purposes Allah can suspend the laws of nature he has established in order to bring humanity towards Him. This perspective motivates an Islamic natural theology in which understanding nature is a way of coming to know Allah." (Woodward 2002:125).

The concept of unchanging religious knowledge which cannot be scrutinized by human reason must be seen as fundamental hindrance for efforts trying to open the rich resources of Islam and remove obstacles so that the legitimate needs of the believers can be met. These legitimate needs include, for example, the needs of Muslim women who oppose the idea of the unchanging authority of the *shari' a*. The conception of the *shari'a* as divine law conceals its material bases in the social norms of a medieval society which was stratified on the basis of status, sex and religion, with the differential treatment of women, non-Muslims and slaves. The problem is that when the social norms were assimilated into the *shari'a*, they came to be seen as immutable owing to the conception of *shari'a* as divine. Muslim jurists have been trying for quite a long time to bring the legal norms closer to the social norms of today. They can claim support on the side of Muslim thinkers such as the Iranian philosopher Abdolkarim Soroush. Soroush distinguishes between religion and religious knowledge: religion is divine, eternal, immutable and sacred, while human understanding of it is in constant exchange with every field of human knowledge. As such, religious knowledge is in flux, relative and time-bound. This means that issues of reform can be addressed without compromising the sacredness of religion (Jahanbaksh 2001).

For the time being and probably for the foreseeable future, however, the traditional concept is very likely to remain in place. That means that the prospects for engagement with Islamic theology in the West are far from bright. According to Taji-Farouki, British experience shows this clearly enough. In general, the elements of Islamic theology in the British academic institutions can be learnt in the context of Christian theology or religious studies. The students are mostly individuals who adhere to some Islamic stream (sufi etc.) or foreigners from various Muslim countries. Many of them show great sensitivity and express their criticism when they think the lecturer neglects their respective stream or sect or interprets it in an unfavourable way. Part of the Muslim minority in Britain sees the influence of the Western science as damaging for religion. Therefore special educational institutions have been founded with the aim of providing an Islamic alternative in the form of teaching Islamic tradition and, at the same time, conforming to the current academic standards. In both "Islamic Col-

lege for Advanced Studies", (Shi'a), and the Sunni "Muslim College" the medium is English. Although these institutions were established for British students, only very few were interested so that majority are from abroad. Taji-Farouki (42) characterizes the courses offered as 'scholarly packed" but otherwise traditional in every respect. In spite of the fact that there is a growing amount of European literature in the area of *'ulum ad-din*, this literature is not used, or in case it is used, the course leader accompanies it with a warning. The use of original sources is limited by the inadequate linguistic abilities of the students.

Although well aware of the current difficulties, Taji-Farouki in her detailed and comprehensive analysis, expresses cautious optimism for the future. During the last decades many Western scholars and almost all Western journalists dealing with Islam focused on the political and ideological contents of the religion. These reflected the climate of defensiveness and introversion where everything that was considered incompatible with the teaching of Islam was rejected. The last years, however, have brought prospects of renewal of the modernist and reformist tendencies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.The spheres of Islamic thinking which are being examined and searched for new perspectives are the universal ethics of Islam and its comprehensive and pluralistic character as against the legalistic and politicizing / ideologizing tendencies.

What then should be the centres of gravity in the general plan of the master course of Islamic theology in Germany? What aims are to be striven for?

According to Taji-Farouki the fundamental requirement the curriculum should meet is a comparative inner-Islamic approach, which will stress the plurality of positions and reveal the confessional, doctrinal, geographical, cultural and ideological differences from both diachronic and synchronic points of view. This would shed light on the richness of the Islamic tradition and help to rediscover its intellectual and juridical plurality (45).

If possible, the introduction of the new programme should provide a context within which the understanding of traditional Islamic knowledge could be supplemented by Western critical approaches. Taji-Farouki suggests that after having studied *'ulum ad-din* in a traditional way the students may get an overview of the analyses and criticism as produced in the West. The students should learn to see these not as an attack on their faith, but as an opportunity to engage with their own beliefs and values. The programme should promote the development of critical tendencies within the modern contemporary Islamic scholarship. The experience has shown that Muslim students take the critical writings of their co-religionists far more seriously than those of the Western scholars. This approach will help to develop tolerant attitudes to dissident voices within the Islamic tradition (46).

The construction of the curriculum should make the comparative studies of Islamic and Christian / Jewish theology possible. Islamic scholars who are well versed in the basic teaching of Christianity and Judaism can be good partners in future dialogic projects. At present there are very few Muslim scholars who have formally studied other religions. This is a handicap in the dialogue where the partners are Jewish or Christian experts engaged in the study of Islam. At

the same time the programme should also be accessible to non-Muslim students, for example those who study theology or religion. The dialogic approach could encourage developing programmes such as common study of topical contemporary issues (ethical problems of medicine, the environment and so on).

Taji-Farouki has much to say about the education of imams. Here the main challenge is developing a plan, which would overcome the inner-Turkish rivalries and be accessible to Muslims of other nationalities. There are many practical issues to be considered, last but not least the problem of the imams' salaries. In Taji-Farouki's view the traditional image of imam needs some adaptation to the European context, so that the young people can see him as a person of authority. It can be expected that the role of imam as a leader of a community will develop further and become one of the characteristic features of European Islam.

An interesting part of Taji-Farouki's contribution are suggestions for possible themes of research that could be undertaken in cooperation with European Muslims. They comprise such problematics as the intellectual life of European Muslims, the religious life of the communities (possible changes of ritual and so on), the way the shari'a is applied, the relations of the diaspora with the country of origin, the influence of the transnational nets, the study of Islamic spirituality in the West and so on.

In general Taji-Farouki warns against premature optimism. As for the conservative Muslim/critical scientific controversy, she opts for a compromise. She sees it as a necessary first step that can make the project work.

The contribution of Professor Abdulkader Tayob, an Islamic scholar from Capetown, South Africa, was set in a context of discussions going on in the field of Islamic scholarship and elsewhere in the humanities. Though interesting in itself, its relevance for the discussion was minimal.

Professor Zayd stressed the fact that historically, Islamic theology developed not only on the basis of inner-Islamic discussions, but also through the polemic between Muslims and other people of the book, especially Christians (86). In his view this is important when thinking of establishing a chair for Islamic theology in a non-Muslim country. The study of Christian theology would open new ways of understanding both faiths in themselves as well as in their mutual relations. Future teachers of religion in a multireligious society must be acquainted with the complexities of doctrines, dogmas and ideas of the most important creeds in the country.

In order to avoid an undue stress on dogmatic differences between various streams within Islam Professor Zayd proposes to concentrate on ideas, not on dogmas (87). It is important to see the teaching and the principles of the different Islamic streams as results of discussions on important problems. The doctrines should be presented in the original plurality of interpretation. In our view this approach could help the students comprehend the whole behind the particular.

Professor Mehmet Aydin sees the practical approach as one of the basic demands of the modern religious education and one of the targets of the chair for Islamic theology. The successful religious education in the academy consists not only in *reading* about theology, but in *practicing* theology in the everyday

situations.The life of a community as a whole should become the field of theological reflexion and at the same time the field of research. Theology is not only a methodological frame for the interpretation of the social and the personal, but enables us to understand education as a means to help people fulfil their social roles (92).

Professor Aydin also expressed his view that although the Islamic theology could be studied and taught in the West as other great world religions can, the main obstacle in the case of the Islamic disciplines is the absence of the scholarly and academic standards, which are the norm at all academic institutions in the West. It is clear that it is easier to teach Islamic theology in a Muslim country than in the West, on the other hand practicing theology in a Muslim country is far from easy. So far Islamic theology has not developed an adequate critical attitude towards itself. As the craft of theology to a certain degree also includes social criticism, the engagement with political theology which is an important part of practical theology, can be seen as dangerous for the establishment and can bring the theologian into political difficulties. "The ideological control effected by the regimes of today over all research concerning Islam is more strict than it ever was in the past, since these regimes have modern means of control much more effective than in the times of the khalifat, the sultanat and the emirs." (Arkoun 1986:146). Besides, theology needs support from social sciences, and this is not the case in Muslim societies in the Middle East.

The situation can be different in South-East Asia. Professor Komaruddin Hidayat believes that religious education must go hand in hand with social and intellectual development. The history of Islamic education in the Archipelago seems to proceed in this direction. The traditional institutions of Islamic education were the *pesantren* or Islamic boarding schools. Since the 1960s it was the Institut Agama Negeri (IAIN) or State Institute of Islamic Studies that has played an important role in the religious and educational life of the Indonesian Republic and this role may even be more prominent in future. The first IAIN was oficially created in 1960 in Yogyakarta with a branch in Jakarta. Today, Indonesia has 14 IANS with about 65,000 students.

It is the reformed al-Azhar which became one of the main references for the IAIN. This model, however, was not adopted blindly. Johan Meuleman, a lecturer at the Leiden University who worked at one of the IAINs, confirms: "A particular Indonesian element of the IAIN is the education of specialists in religious sciences, who, among other roles, should contribute to the development of harmonious relations between the different communities of the variegated Indonesian society. At the doctrinal level, one reason why many Indonesian Islamic scholars stress the need for an autonomous development of higher education in Islamic studies, is their conviction that Islam has developed in various ways, in conformity with different historical and cultural contexts, and that it should do so in future". (Meuleman 2002:285).

There were several reforms in the contents of the study programme and the methods of instruction. The principal change was the introduction of a general introductory course to Islamic religious studies and an increase in the attention paid to Western and Muslim philosophy. In the case of teaching methods, ratio-

nal, critical, and independent thinking as well as discussion were stimulated in order to replace the blind imitation of the teacher and more or less classical texts. These reforms stressed that the IAINs should become institutes for the development of religious sciences, rather than centres of Islamic doctrine. Many students were sent to the West for advanced studies, mostly to McGill and Leiden Universities. There is also cooperation with the centres in the Middle East. The process of combining different traditions seems fruitful. What is important is the perspective to study religion with the help of the progressive methods of the social sciences. The efforts in this direction have already brought positive results. Many former students have become active in communal development programmes, as social workers, journalists and activists of NGOs.

At the beginning of his article Professor Komaruddin posed the question about the relation between Islamic theology and the development of the way the people in Indonesia deal with religious pluralism. What is the influence of education on the religious understanding in the Muslim communities in Indonesia? At the end he does not hesitate to ask the painful question: how was it possible that religious and ethnic groups in Indonesia became involved in so much violence in spite of the fact that many Muslim intellectuals had tried hard to deal with religious and ethnic pluralism? Although the initial causes of the massacres have certainly been of a political and economic character, the religious and ethnic factors were decisive in the formation of groups and group solidarities. This face of religion has to be taken into consideration and too much optimism may easily end in disappointment.

In their final statement the international advisers from the Islamic countries proposed that the work unit "Islamic Theology" would be best positioned within the framework of an "Academy of World Religions" as an institute attached to the University. As it proved extremely difficult to provide a clear definition of the work unit from the beginning, it was suggested to start with guest professors and exchange of students. The interdisciplinary character and cooperation with similar disciplines at the university (education, theology, Islamic scholarship) should be a rule. Dialogue is to be seen as an important principle enabling the engagement with the various streams within Islam as well as cooperation between Muslims and other believers. The advisers stressed the importance of the chair for Islamic theology in Hamburg and expressed their belief it could possibly serve as a model for other European countries with substantial Muslim minorities.

At the end the participants in the workshop as well as other persons who contributed to the discussion must have felt that although the question posed by the organizers: "Brauchen wir eine Professur für islamische Theologie an der Universität Hamburg?" has been answered in the positive, all doubts have not been cleared and could not be cleared. Besides many problems which are visible now there are very probably many more ahead. Moreover, there are practical problems that have not been solved, such as the crucial question of finances.

The attitude of the University was expressed in the speech of its President, Professor Fisher-Appelt. He stressed that the holder of the chair of Islamic the-

ology at the University must conform to requirements of critical scholarship. He or she must have adequate qualifications. Besides he mentioned the legal obligations the professor has with respect to the constitution of the country. Freedom of teaching does not empower anybody to act against the constitution, to call for the invalidation of the constitution. The President did not try to hide his conviction that the host country was doing much already and more effort is expected on the side of the guests.

It was Olaf Scholz, representing the social democratic party in Hamburg, who was able to grasp the main potential of the project. In his view teaching Islam in Hamburg, experiencing it in one's own environment, taking it out of places far away and clearing it of its strangeness can help to naturalize Islam in Germany. Religions are not bound to places, they are not local specialities. This is also true of Islam. It can be studied and practiced here as well as in any other place. Academic education for religious teachers and imams will make people see Islam in the German context and accept it as part of that context. Islam in Germany has to speak German. Only then the debates can leave the ivory tower of scholarship and enter the public space among the people who distrust Islam mainly because they do not know it.

The publication offers valuable impulses for a profound discussion of "Islamic Theology" in Germany and possibly also elsewhere in the West.

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