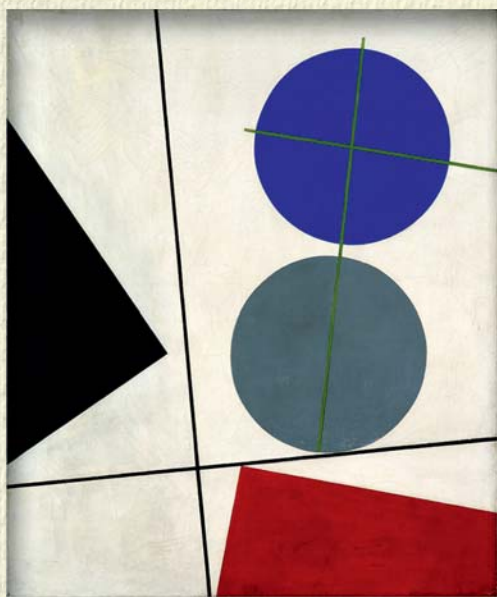


Margit Eckholt / Habib El Mallouki /
Gregor Etzelmüller (Hg.)

Religiöse Differenzen gestalten

Hermeneutische Grundlagen des
christlich-muslimischen Gesprächs



HERDER

Religiöse Differenzen gestalten

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Hermeneutische Grundlagen
des christlich-muslimischen
Gesprächs

Herausgegeben von
Margit Eckholt, Habib El Mallouki
und Gregor Etzelmüller

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Einführung

Seit Oktober 2018 arbeitet an der Universität Osnabrück eine Gruppe von Doktorandinnen und Doktoranden der evangelischen, islamischen und katholischen Theologie gemeinsam mit Professoren der drei Theologien in einem Graduiertenkolleg zum Thema „Religiöse Differenzen gestalten. Pluralismusbildung in Christentum und Islam“. Jedes interreligiöse Gespräch mag als Fernziel eine neue „große Erzählung“ über das Verhältnis der Religionen untereinander haben. Indes hat die neuere Religionstheologie deutlich gemacht, dass mit allgemeinen und abstrakten Verhältnisbestimmungen im Blick auf das Zusammenleben im globalen Kontext kein Verständigungsfortschritt zu erzielen ist. Das Graduiertenkolleg der christlichen Theologien und der islamischen Theologie erkundet darum, was theologisch und interreligiös reflektierte religiöse Traditionen und spirituelle Praktiken der jeweiligen Religion bzw. Konfession zu einer produktiven Gestaltung religiöser Differenzen beitragen können. Es geht vor allem auch darum, „Kontaktzonen“ zu identifizieren, in denen sich neue „Räume des Zwischen“ ausbilden, in denen Differenzen in einer produktiven Weise Miteinander gestalten können.

Christentum und Islam sind schon von ihren normativen Überlieferungen her plural verfasst. Sie haben sich zudem nicht nur plural ausdifferenziert, sondern auch Formen entwickelt, mit religiös pluralistischen Konstellationen umzugehen. Pluralismusbildung bewegt sich so zwischen dem unhintergehbaren Verwiesensein an die je eigene religiöse Tradition und dem humanen Gebot, Andersheit „als Andersheit wertzuschätzen“¹. Weder kontextlose Gemeinsamkeitsfeststellungen noch gegenseitige exklusivistische Abwertungen vermögen dem Empfinden einer „continued alterity“² Rechnung zu

¹ Stosch, Klaus von, *Komparative Theologie als Herausforderung für die Theologie des 21. Jahrhunderts*, in: *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 130 (2008) 401–422, hier 402.

² Fletcher, Jeannine Hill, *As Long as We Wonder: Possibilities in the Impossibility of Interreligious Dialogue*, in: *Theological Studies* 68 (2007) 531–554, hier 553.

tragen. Stattdessen enthalten sich die konfessionellen Theologien in den Kontaktzonen angesichts des Anderen eines Urteils, halten sich aber für unableitbar neues Geschehen („wonder“) offen³ und suchen in der Begegnung nach Phänomenen der Resonanz⁴. Die – nur scheinbar skeptische – Zurückhaltung erweist sich dabei gerade als der kritisch-reflektierte Weg, zu einer neuen Verhältnisbestimmung vorzustoßen.

In der konstruktiven Auseinandersetzung mit religiösen Differenzen, die in verschiedenen Promotionsprojekten austariert werden, kann, so die Leitperspektive des Graduiertenkollegs, deutlich werden: Christentum und Islam sind schon in sich pluralistisch verfasst und haben je eigene Verfahren zum Umgang mit religiösem Pluralismus hervorgebracht. Dieser prägt bereits die normativen Quellentexte, vor allem Bibel und Koran, und strahlt von dort in die verschiedenen religiösen Narrative und in die spirituellen und sozialen Praktiken beider Religionen aus. Die innere Vielstimmigkeit der kanonischen Texte unterläuft auf Dauer jegliche diskursive Selbstabschließung religiöser Formationen. Sie wirkt sich auch auf die in der weiteren geschichtlichen Entwicklung hinzukommenden normativ bedeutsamen Texte aus. Um das Phänomen der Pluralismusbildung in interreligiöser Perspektive bearbeiten zu können, bedarf es so der Schärfung der Wahrnehmung des *internen* Pluralismus der je eigenen Religion. Hier kommt der theologischen Reflexion, die die Differenziertheit der eigenen Tradition erschließt, entscheidende Bedeutung zu. Das Vertrautsein mit intrareligiösem Pluralismus trägt, so die Leitthese des Kollegs, auch zu einem konstruktiven Umgang mit interreligiösen Differenzen bei. Über eine Relektüre der in sich pluralen Quellentexte und des internen Pluralismus von Christentum und Islam soll die in Christentum und Islam je schon angelegte Pluralismusbildung sichtbar werden. Eine sich der eigenen Pluralität bewusste Religion kann einen Beitrag dazu leisten, religiöse Menschen zu einem konstruktiven Umgang mit einem religiösen und weltanschaulichen Pluralismus zu befähigen – und in diesem Sinne zur aktiven Pluralismusbildung beitragen. Dazu bedarf es des inter-

³ Fletcher, *As Long as We Wonder*, 549.

⁴ Legenhausen, Hajj Muhammad, *Responding to the Religious Reasons of Others. Resonance and Non-reductive Religious Pluralism*, in: *European Journal for Religion* 5/2 (2013) 23–46, hier 36.

disziplinären Gesprächs der verschiedenen theologischen Disziplinen und des kontinuierlichen Dialogs mit den religiösen Narrativen und Praktiken der „anderen“. Selbst- und Fremdwahrnehmung sind dabei kontinuierlich aufeinander zu beziehen.

Eine solche Relektüre wird hermeneutische Grundlagen für interkonfessionelle und interreligiöse Gespräche erarbeiten, die die ‚Entweder-Oder‘-Logik klassischer theologischer Methodik – sei es im Christentum, sei es im Islam – zugunsten eines neuen Entdeckungsprozesses der Vielfalt von Wahrheits- und Sinnansprüchen transzendieren. In den verschiedenen Promotionsprojekten des Kollegs wird diese Vielfalt nach innen und nach außen auf neue Weise buchstabiert – im Dienst einer bereichernden Konvivenz in von großen religiösen Dynamiken geprägten Zeiten.⁵ Das bedeutet auch, Prozesse von In- und Transkulturation in den Blick zu nehmen, Differenz-erfahrungen auszuhalten und den Umgang mit „Ambiguitäten“⁶ wieder zu erlernen.

Sich auf einen solchen Entdeckungs- und Lernprozess einzulassen, ist bis heute keineswegs selbstverständlich. „Kontaktzonen“⁷ zwischen den Religionen sind zwar weitgehend etabliert, aber interreligiöse Dialoge erreichen häufig nicht das, was sich die Dialogpartner erhoffen. Sie führen keineswegs an sich zu weniger Vorurteilen, größerem Verständnis oder gesellschaftlichem Frieden. Es bedarf deshalb einer wissenschaftlichen Selbstaufklärung von interreligiösen Kontaktzonen. Dazu müssen die Dialogpartner zum einen die intrareligiöse Pluralismusbildung in den Dialog einbringen. Zum anderen darf der Dialog nicht isoliert von denjenigen Praxisfeldern geführt werden, auf denen religiöse Pluralität als konkrete Herausforderung erlebt wird. Die sich mit der wissenschaftlichen Aufklärung von interreligiösen Begegnungen stellenden Fragen werden im Rahmen des Promotionskollegs deshalb durch die Berücksichtigung verschiedener Felder religiöser Praxis geklärt.

⁵ Vgl. Müller, Gesine, Konvivenz und Relationalität im französischen Kolonialreich. Atlantische und pazifische Meerlandschaften im Vergleich, in: Mäder, Marie-Therese u. a. (Hg.), Brücken bauen. Kulturwissenschaft aus interkultureller und multidisziplinärer Perspektive, Bielefeld 2016, 257–272.

⁶ Bauer, Thomas, Die Kultur der Ambiguität. Eine andere Geschichte des Islams, Berlin 2011.

⁷ Becker, Judith (Hg.), European Missions in Contact Zones. Transformation through Interaction in a (Post-)Colonial World, Göttingen 2015 (in Aufnahme von Pratt, Mary Louise, Arts of the Contact Zone, in: Profession 91 (1991) 33–40).

Die vorliegende Publikation geht auf eine im Sommersemester 2019 durchgeführte Ringvorlesung „Kon-Kurrenz – Hermeneutische Grundlagen des christlich-muslimischen Dialogs“ zurück. Die verschiedenen Aufsätze aus evangelisch-, islamisch- und katholisch-theologischer Perspektive knüpfen einerseits an bereits vorliegende hermeneutische Arbeiten auf dem Feld des interreligiösen Dialogs an und entfalten andererseits diese Ansätze im Sinne der Grundthese des Kollegs weiter. Die Doktorandinnen und Doktoranden des Kollegs, namentlich Annika Göbel, Mohammed Mansour, Severin Parzinger, Adam Shehata und Anne Rüdel, sowie die am Kolleg tätige Nachwuchswissenschaftlerin Dr. Jennifer Griggs haben sich mit den Beiträgen der Ringvorlesung intensiv auseinandergesetzt, die Früchte ihrer Arbeit sind ebenso in die Publikation aufgenommen worden wie einige Beiträge aus der Feder der am Kolleg beteiligten Professoren.

Wir verstehen unser Osnabrücker Graduiertenkolleg als Ort eines lebendigen und strukturierten Diskurses von Promovierenden, Professorinnen und Professoren, an dem die christlichen Theologien und die islamische Theologie ihre je eigenen Narrative und Praktiken konsequent im intertheologischen Austausch und im Blick auf die Potentiale der beiden Religionen zur Pluralismusbildung reflektieren. Diese Publikation soll Interessierten ermöglichen, an diesem Diskurs Anteil zu nehmen – auch im Sinn einer kritisch-konstruktiven Auseinandersetzung mit der Leitperspektive des Kollegs. Post-säkulare Gesellschaften müssen sich nicht nur auf die bleibende Gegenwart von Religion einstellen, sondern, weil Religion immer nur im Plural begegnet, auch auf religiöse Differenzen. Der gesellschaftliche Umgang mit diesen stellt eine zentrale Zukunftsaufgabe dar.

Wir danken Herrn Dr. Stephan Weber vom Herder-Verlag für die wohlwollende Begleitung des Projekts und für die Aufnahme der Publikation in das Verlagsprogramm. Ebenso gilt unser Dank der studentischen Hilfskraft Svenja Polinski für Unterstützung bei der Vorbereitung des Buchmanuskripts. Der Leitung der Universität Osnabrück, vor allem der Rektorin Frau Professorin Susanne Menzel-Riedl und der Vizepräsidentin Frau Professorin Martina Blasberg-Kuhnke, die den Aufbau der islamischen Theologie an der Universität Osnabrück von Beginn an begleitet, danken wir für das entgegengebrachte Vertrauen und die finanzielle Unterstützung der Ar-

beit des Kollegs und dieser Publikation. Wir hoffen, dass sich in den nächsten Jahren weitere solcher konstruktiver Orte des universitären interreligiösen Dialogs erschließen – im Dienst eines Miteinanders in gegenseitiger Wertschätzung und in diesem Sinn als friedensstiftender Beitrag der Religionen im öffentlichen Raum von Wissenschaft und Gesellschaft.

Osnabrück, 6. April 2020

Prof. Dr. Margit Eckholt, Institut für Katholische Theologie
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Christian-Muslim Commonality as Dialogical Difficulty

JOSHUA RALSTON

1. Introduction

A common assumption in most approaches to Christian-Muslim theological debate, although often unstated and under-theorized, is that the chief problem hindering dialogue is the undeniable fact of difference. What makes Christian-Muslim theological exchange uniquely challenging are fundamental disagreements over central confessions in each religious tradition: the (tri)unity of God, the person of Jesus, the prophethood of Muhammad, as well as the human condition and means of salvation. In the face of this intractable disagreement, it is further presumed that for Christian-Muslim encounter to find a new productive path forward, a turn to the deep commonalities between the religions is needed. The most common theological bases cited to ground dialogue are understandings of God as the creator and sustainer, the heritage of Abraham, or the call to worship and social action.

Nostra Aetate 3 encapsulates the fundamental assumptions about differences as the problem and commonalities as the solution. It lists how Muslims “adore the one God” who revealed the divine will to humanity, link themselves to Abraham, revere Jesus as a prophet, “honour Mary” and seek to live moral lives. While the council of *Nostra Aetate 3* also names disagreements, chiefly over the status of Jesus, it still assumes that these broad similarities are sufficient reason to “forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding.”¹ Disagreement and difference are surely present, and will remain, but the council envisions broad agreement as the terrain of

¹ Paul VI., Declaration on the relation of the church to non-Christian religions *Nostra Aetate*, 28. October 1965, Nr. 3, in: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html (06.06.2020).

common action and dialogue beyond polemics. *A Common Word Between Us and You*, the 2007 document written by a number of prominent Muslim intellectuals, takes a similar approach. After noting the rivalry and violence between members of the two religions, it avers that the basis for peace and justice between Christians and Muslims could be found in “the very foundational principles of both faiths: love of the One God, and love of the neighbour.”² It offers an extended exegetical justification for the primacy of love in the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, and the Qur’an in order to encourage mutual dialogue and shared action for peace and justice. “Whilst Islam and Christianity are obviously different religions – and whilst there is no minimising some of their formal differences – it is clear that the *Two Greatest Commandments* are an area of common ground and a link between the Qur’an, the Torah and the New Testament.”³ Here differences are acknowledged even as they are sublimated within a shared foundational commitment. Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad of Jordan, one of the driving forces behind the document, said that the focus on love of God and love of neighbour was chosen since it could function as a “theological platform” to bring “faithful Muslims and Christians together.”⁴

Two presumptions undergird these and other recent approaches to Christian-Muslim relations, which thereby condition the hermeneutical approaches to theological engagement. First, differences over God, Jesus, and Muhammad are considered the main problems facing Christian-Muslim relations. Based on this claim, the chief aim of dialogue is to address the problem of difference through seeking out areas of commonality to build theological consensus. While these theological ideas have led to constructive exchange and improved Christian-Muslim encounter, this chapter challenges the assumption that fundamental difference is the problem and theological commonality is the productive alternative. Instead, I contend that apparent commonality is just as much, if not more so, the primary challenge facing Christian-Muslim debate.

² Volf, Miroslav / bin Muhammad, Ghazi / Yarrington, Melissa (Ed.), *A Common Word: Muslims and Christians on Loving God and Neighbor*, Grand Rapids 2010, 28.

³ Volf / Bin Muhammad / Yarrington (Ed.), *A Common Word*, 45

⁴ Bin Muhammad, Ghazi, *A Common Word Between Us and You: Two Years Summary*, Oct 2007–2009, in: <https://www.acommonword.com/two-years-summary-oct-2007-oct-2009/> (06.06.2020).

2. Shared Frameworks, Diverging Criterion of Judgment

It may appear counter-intuitive to argue that commonality is a key source for the intractable and often vitriolic disagreements between Christians and Muslims. A cursory glance at major texts in the history of Christian-Muslim dialogue illustrate the opposite; the most common topics of polemics are disagreements over God, scripture, prophethood and the like. To take two examples, both John of Damascus' view of Islam as the Ishmaelite heresy and Ibn Ḥazm's critique of the corruptions of Christian scripture and theology focus on how the other tradition diverges from proper law, theology, scriptures, and ritual practices. The problems they both identify are not similarities in philosophical notions of monotheism, but diverging accounts of God, ritual practice, and scripture. So why claim more attention needs to be given to the problem of commonality? Difference is an obvious source of polemics and recrimination. However, the particular vitriol of Christian-Muslim relations arises in large part from the combustible combination of having a shared conceptual framework but diverging theological norms of judgement.

Christianity and Islam – in all their internal diversity – share a broad conceptual framework. This includes claims about God's unity and attributes, God's engagement with the world through creation and revelation, that God has spoken decisively in human history, and that God's Word has fundamental import for each individual and for the whole world. Theological terms like creation, providence, revelation, and justice are part of the intellectual terrain of both traditions. The scriptures in both traditions recount God's engagement with Abraham, Jesus, Moses, Mary, and a host of other figures. These conceptual similarities are part of what leads the historian Richard Bulliett to argue that Christianity and Islam can be conceptualised as disagreeing cousins who share in and contribute to a broader Islamo-Christian civilization.

Yet, these shared concepts are marked by fundamentally distinct criteria of judgement, or what is called *al-furqān* in the Qur'an. While Christians and Muslim share concepts and questions, the criteria – or *furqān* – from which they evaluate claims and develop theological statements differ. Ideas and practices may overlap but they are also shaped and conditioned by the fundamental criterion of Christ and Qur'ān that differ. These norms of judgement go all the way down into the very foundational claims that Christians and

Muslims make about God, Abraham, and justice. For all the intra-Christian disagreement about the nature and meaning of Jesus, it remains the reference point for Christian thought and practice. For Muslims, the guide by and through which right and wrong are known and adjudicated is the event of the Qur'an and the accompanying affirmation that Muhammad is the seal of the prophets. Abu Hamid al-Ghazali emphasises the importance of revelation and the prophet when he states that "there is no basis for the divine teaching other than the statements of the master of mankind."⁵ These criteria or standards for judgments fundamentally shape and inform apparent commonalities. Views of God, depictions of a common Abrahamic lineage, or the struggle for justice, to name the three most oft-cited theological platforms of agreement in Christian-Muslim, are marked to their very core by the diverging norms of each religion. As such, appeals to a foundational commonality are bound to fail unless they also account for fundamental divergence. There is no Islamic account of God or Abraham that is entirely free from the normative power of the Qur'an; there is no Christian theology of God or Abraham that is not marked in some way by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.⁶ Josef von Ess notes: "On the whole, taken in relation to Christianity, Islam did not treat new problems; it treated the same problems differently."⁷ By answering the same question, for instance about God and the human condition, in a different way and with appeal to an alternative event, Islamic theology and practices present a direct challenge to Christian confession and worship. The disagreements are so significant in part because the questions being asked, the figures being debated, and the God being referenced are so close.

If we take a closer look at both John of Damascus and Ibn Ḥazm, we see how the apparent commonalities in understandings of the one God or scriptural figures, are actually the locations of some of

⁵ al-Ghazali, Abu Hamid, *al-Iqtisād fi l-i'tiqād*, ed. by Çubukçu, Ibrahim Agah / Atay, Hüseyin, Ankara 1962, 5.

⁶ Schleiermacher shows how Christianity is inherently concerned with the belief in Christ when he writes in § 10 of the *Glaubenslehre*, "if the belief in Christ had no influence upon the separately pre-existing consciousness of God and on its mode of uniting with the sensible emotions, either that belief would stand quite outside the realm of religion, and would consequently (...) be a mere nothing." He goes on to write how each "distinctive religious communion" includes a specific and unique "different determination."

⁷ Van Ess, Josef, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, Cambridge 2006, 15.

their fiercest polemics. The shared reference to the God of Abraham does not function as a bridge or foundation, but as a sign of how dangerous or deviant the other tradition is. For John of Damascus, the fact that Muslims say that God is one, and the “creator of all things” is only a passing affirmation on the way to a more substantial critique. In the very same sentence, he notes how the Qur’an and Muslim views of God explicitly reject Christian orthodoxy when they claim that God has “neither been begotten nor has begotten.” The Damascene also sketches a response to Islamic critiques of Christians as guilty of *shirk* or taking associates to God. In his response to the common accusation about Christian trinitarian discourse, John notes how Muslims and the Qur’an claim that Jesus is both the Word of God (*kalimatullah*) and Spirit of God (*ruhullah*). He also affirms the Islamic claim that God speaks and is Spirit. By drawing on this shared recognition that God’s *tawhid* also includes predication or attribution, John turns Islamic cirques on their head. Far from associating anything with God, then, John suggests that God’s Word and Spirit are “inseparable from that in which it naturally has existence” and that if the Word of God is said to be in God, it must be none other than God.⁸ To deny this is, as John colourfully put it: “to mutilate God.”⁹ While John affirms a shared commitment to divine unicity, this affirmation is so generic that it offers no significant ground for agreement. Instead, the shared affirmation of God is a subject of debate about the meaning of God’s word, spirit, and attributes.

Similarly, Ibn Ḥazm’s lengthy analysis of Jewish and Christian scriptures is replete with a recognition of overlap between the traditions, especially shared figures such as Mary, Abraham, Noah, and Solomon. Like John of Damascus, however, the recognition of similarity is conditioned by a deeper commitment to the supremacy of the Islamic and Qur’anic account. As such any divergence found in the Bible from either the Qur’an or later developments in prophethology, especially around the impeccability of prophets, is read as a sign of Jewish and Christian corruption. It is well known that Ibn Ḥazm developed a radical account of *tahrīf* or the corruption of scripture to account for these divergences. However, he also offers alternative

⁸ John of Damascus, *Writings: The Fathers of the Church*, Translated by Chase, Frederick H., Washington D.C. 1951, 156.

⁹ *Ibid.*

interpretations of the Abraham's relationship with his two sons, Ishmael and Isaac, to prove the prophetic office of Muḥammad. Initially Ibn Ḥazm affirms the joint divine blessing of both Isaac, representing Israel and later Judaism, and Ishmael. Yet this historical affirmation is not oriented toward the construction of a general Abrahamic framework, but is rather a means to affirm Islamic superiority. He writes that "when the Messenger of God was sent to us, the prophethood passed to Ishmael's offspring, and kings bowed to him, nations submitted to him; God abrogated through him every law and sealed with him the prophets."¹⁰ The commonality of Abraham is not a ground for common dialogue or joint action, but justification for Islamic prophethology.

One may protest that by using the examples of John of Damascus and Ibn Ḥazm, I have chosen two thinkers in the 'polemical mode'¹¹ and that more productive models of dialogue about God and Abraham are possible, especially in the modern period. This is surely the case, and I do not want to imply that Christian-Muslim dialogue is always polemical. Still, any hermeneutical approach to Christian-Muslim dialogue must be able to account for polemics and disagreement in a more profound way than *Nostra Aetate*, *A Common Word* or other approaches that excessively focus on commonality. Even scholars who emphasise positive intellectual exchange between Jews, Christians, and Muslims concerning God's essence, attributes and transcendence during the classical and medieval eras recognise the persistent presence of disagreement. The work of David Burrell on Thomas, Ibn Sina, al-Ghazali, Maimonides and others is a case in point. He affirms genuine learning, even if accidental or unacknowledged, between Christians and Muslims over God's essence and action, but also shows how these are still shaped by scriptural and doctrinal difference. His strategy is to fold "difference into a larger common scheme" focused on creation, providence, and human action, but this does not negate the "neurological" issues. God here might be a source of unity, but only in so far as God is the subject of our mutual learning and debate. Divine oneness does not necessitate an affirmation of sameness or common unity. The fact that our

¹⁰ Adang, Camilla, Some Hitherto Neglected Biblical Material in the Work of Ibn Ḥazm, in: Adang, Camilla / Schmidtke, Sabine (Ed.), *Muslim Perceptions and Receptions of the Bible*, Atlanta 2019, 73–82, hier 77.

¹¹ Renard, John, *Islam and Christianity. Theological Themes in Comparative Perspective*, Berkeley 2011, xvii–xx.

understandings of God are constantly debated, and that the question of whether Jews, Christians, and Muslims worship the same God is not agreed upon, indicates that doctrines of God cannot be a foundation or platform for dialogue. As Daniel Madigan writes, “Ethical monotheism is no bad thing, of course, and actually quite an exalted aim. However, it is not the Gospel.”¹² Nor is it the full confession of Islam, which centrally affirms Muhammad’s prophethood.

Turning to Abraham, Christian Troll writes that the accounts of Abraham are inevitably “expressions of distinctively Jewish, Christian, and Muslim perspectives. Furthermore, even those narratives about Abraham that appear to be shared ground between the faiths are interpreted by believers within the three traditions in a great variety of ways.”¹³ For instance, following Paul’s reading in Romans 4 and Galatians 3, Christians understand Abraham as an exemplum of faith that is thereby justified by God’s grace. In contrast, Muslims view Ibrahim as an ideal monotheist and the builder of the Ka’ba. This is not even to mention the diverging interpretations of Isaac and Ishmael and the ways that Genesis 16–21 have fed into anti-Muslim and anti-Christian polemic.¹⁴ Aaron Hughes argues that appeal to the “Abrahamic” is marked by an overt or covert “liberal theological hope for interreligious coexistence.”¹⁵ Apparent theological and scriptural commonality, when investigated with any depth, quickly leads back to the most fundamental debates and disagreements. Even Louis Massignon, often cited as a vital source behind Vatican II’s reappraisal of Islam, presents a nuanced and complex account of Islam’s relationship to Abraham. For him the Abrahamic is a framework for justifying further interpretation and debate. The claim that Islam is a “Abrahamic schism” does not function to level out difference in the name of an essential core, but becomes a means to investigate and explore the dynamics of commonality and difference in history, theology, ritual, and practice.

¹² Madigan, Daniel A, *Our Next Word in Common: A Mea Culpa?*, in: Said, Yazid / Demiri, Lejla, *The Future of Interfaith Dialogue: Muslim-Christian Encounters Through a Common Word*, Cambridge 2018, 180.

¹³ Troll, Christian W., *Dialogue and Difference: Clarity in Christian-Muslim Relations*. Translated by David Marshall, Maryknoll 2009, 98.

¹⁴ Gregg, Robert C., *Shared Stories, Rival Tellings: Early Encounters of Jews, Christians, and Muslims*, Oxford 2015, 117–220.

¹⁵ Hughes, Aaron, *Abrahamic Religions: On the Uses and Abuses of History*, New York 2012, 76.

Neither a pure monotheism nor a shared Abraham exist in a straightforward or clear manner. This is not to say that discussions about God or Abraham are not vital. The limitation arises when the assertion that we worship the same God is used as a doctrinal foundation on which to build subsequent Christian-Muslim engagement. Rather than seeking out a theological platform of general agreement, we should eschew that quest as inevitably quixotic. Not only does such an approach depend on generalities that ignore genuine differences in the traditions, it also limits aims of dialogue. It would be beneficial to re-orient debates about Christian and Muslim theologies away from a fixation on whether or not we worship the same God or share an Abrahamic heritage, and instead turn to ask what it means that we both claim to worship the One God of Abraham. To accomplish this, an alternative approach to dialogue is needed, one that refuses essentialisms or a focus on the priority of general agreement, but instead encourages non-polemical debate that might lead to mutual learning and theological discovery.

The focus on a framework for productive debate, rather than a foundation of general agreements, shifts the aims of dialogue. Too often appeals to commonality function to limit the aims of dialogue to general agreement on broad ideas. Rather than theological exchange, or even acute disagreement, being engaged as a possible source for mutual enrichment, they are dismissed as inherently conflictual. John Thatamanil points out, however, that “conflict itself may be vital to the work of truth-seeking inquiry. Not every conflict is a sign that conversation has collapsed.”¹⁶ Challenge is central to intellectual learning, all the more so when engaging across religious differences. Some of the most creative Christian and Islamic theologies have come in response to intellectual challenges, be they from philosophy, the sciences, or even the other religious tradition. The quest for commonality limits the imaginative horizons of inter-religious exchange by constricting dialogue to a quest for agreement. Much of the longer and rich history of Christian-Muslim debate is dismissed as minor footnotes to be forgotten. True learning and inter-religious challenge are thus foreclosed or evaded and the difficult work of solving and engaging longstanding problems around God, justice, scripture, and the human condition ignored. Disagreement

¹⁶ Thatamanil, John J., *Circling the Elephant. A Comparative Theology of Religious Diversity*, New York 2020, 5.

and theological challenge, especially across religious traditions, can in fact be a source for learning and discovery.

3. From Foundation to Non-Foundational Hermeneutical Framework

Rather than focusing on the aim of dialogue as seeking out a shared theological platform or any *a priori* agreement, Christian-Muslim encounter should be reframed as a mode of contestation and mutual exchange where polemics are chastened and difference becomes a mode for theological discovery and the advancement of learning, clarity, and coherence. To encourage this shift from agreement to challenge and learning, Christian-Muslim dialogue can borrow and adapt the emerging methods and insights of comparative theology. In her recent book Catherine Cornille writes that the “goal of comparative theology is the advancement of theological truth through a process of learning from and through other religious traditions.”¹⁷ This focus on theological discovery and the quest for truth is a central reason for shifting the hermeneutical focus away from a fixation on theological commonality as such. Comparative theology proposes a method to better account for theological and ethical distinctions while remaining open to learning from religious others. To do this, it critically appropriates from comparative studies of religion, in which religious traditions are theoretically analysed on their own terms without recourse to a universal normative perspective. Jerusha Rhodes write that, “Comparative theology is the double process of venturing out of one’s tradition(s) to learn deeply about and from other traditions, and then returning to one’s own tradition(s) with new insights, questions, and perspectives. This journey grows out of commitment to a particular tradition(s) – not lack of commitment – and is impelled by the idea that there is something profound to be learned about, from, and with other traditions.”¹⁸ At its best, comparative theology does not seek a neutral ground in which to analyze all religions, but instead writes theology in and through comparative and dialogical study. However, the longer history of encounter that

¹⁷ Cornille, Catherine, *Meaning and Method in Comparative Theology*, Hoboken 2020, 115.

¹⁸ Tanner, Jerusha, *Divine Words, Female Voices. Muslima Explorations in Comparative Feminist Theology*, New York 2018, 28.

marks Jewish-Christian-Muslim relations demands that comparative theology's method be adapted in order to account for both polemics and supersessionism. Christianity and Islam emerged as distinct religious communities in part through distinguishing themselves, often with vitriol, from Judaism and also from each other. A hermeneutic for Christian-Muslim comparative theology, not to mention engagement with Judaism, must account for these realities and cannot simply apply comparative theology's method of reading across religious texts without attention to the ongoing power of politics and polemics.

Drawing on recent work in comparative theology, but altering it to better account for the longer history of Christian-Muslim conflict, I propose that Christian-Muslim encounter can be reframed as ongoing practice of bearing witness to God. The call to bear witness is a recurring invitation and demand in both the New Testament and the Qur'an. In the prologue to the Gospel according to John, the author describes John the Baptizer as one that is sent to bear witness to the light (John 1:6–8). Similarly, in the post-resurrection scenes of both Matthew 28 and Acts 1, the disciples are given the task of bearing witnesses to Jesus Christ. The Islamic tradition shares an overlapping, albeit distinct, focus on the category of witness. The primary criteria for becoming a Muslim is to recite the *Shahada*, a term that means testimony or witness and derives from the Arabic root for witness: *sh-h-d*. In one sense to be a Muslim is to be one that bears witness. The centrality of witness is reinforced in each of the five daily calls to prayer, where the *muezzin* calls out *ashhadu* (I bear witness) that there is no God but God and that Muhammad is the messenger of God. Throughout the Qur'an, there are numerous mentions of the importance of bearing witness to the unity and uniqueness of God. God is said to have taken the children of Adam and "made them bear witness" (*Surat al-A'raf*, 7:172) to God, even as God "witness that there is no deity but God, and so do the angels and those with knowledge – that God is maintaining creation in justice. There is no deity except God, the Exalted in Might, the Wise" (*Surat Al 'Imran*, 3:18). In the collection and codification of the ḥadīth, the status of the human witness is and remains central. The moral character and veracity of the witness – and the trustworthiness of the witness and their account – is central to justify the moral, legal, and ethical power of a ḥadīth. For an individual ḥadīth or a collection to be *ṣaḥīḥ*, it must be grounded in faithful and just witness.

While the category of witness is indigenous to both religious traditions, the term is supple enough to not presuppose a shared agreement about God, justice, or scripture. In fact, one of the benefits of considering Christian-Muslim encounter through the lens of witness is that it remains open-ended and dynamic. To bear witness is to give an account or a testimony, but one that is inherently contestable and thereby leaves room for cross examination, debate, and mutual learning. For instance, central to the personalism of the Muslim Moroccan philosopher Muhammad Aziz Lahbabi is the act of bearing witness, especially through the *shahada*. By bearing witness to the unity of God and the prophethood of Muhammad, Lahabi argues that a person enters into “an historical, material horizon; the ‘me’ finds itself situated in a universe, in solidarity with other ‘mes’ in the ‘we.’”¹⁹ Bearing witness is an act of self-constitution that moves an individual from internal contemplation or subjectivity into a recognition of a life lived before God and in a larger historical community. Witness then makes the individual a part of a faith community and accountable to both their object of witness, God, but also to the challenges and debates of history.

While the category of witness might conjure up negative images of proselytizing and polemics, proper attention to theological claims about God’s transcendence and role in conversion press against such an interpretation. To bear witness is, as in the famous Grünewald alter piece, to point away from oneself and to God’s action in the world. Witness is neither polemics nor apology. As Karl Barth quipped in his seminal commentary on Romans, “no divinity which needs anything, any human propaganda, – can be God.”²⁰ In fact, a strong view of God’s transcendence and freedom – whether grounded in the Christian or Islamic tradition – presents checks against an account of witness as a possession to be distilled or an argument to be defended. Linn Marie Tonstad suggest that “a theology that recognises its own proclivity toward failure, and its own incomplete status prior to the eschaton, will offer its propositions tentatively rather than dogmatically.”²¹ Witness recognises the pro-

¹⁹ Lahbabi, Mohammad Azzi, *Le personalisme musulman*, Paris 1967, 46.

²⁰ Barth, Karl, *The Epistle to the Romans*, translated by E. C. Hoskyns, Oxford 1968, 36.

²¹ Tonstad, Linn Marie, (Un)Wise Theologians. *Systematic Theology in the University*, in: *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 2020, 17, in: <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijst.12361> (06.06.2020).

visional nature of all theological statements in light of the transcendence of God and the eschatological horizons of truth. This calls into questions all theological claims to finality, demanding epistemic humility and constant re-evaluation within given contexts.

This is not to say that Christian theology or Islamic theology should give up on its commitments to truth-seeking. In fact, it is through the very act of witness and counter-witness that theological learning occurs. The influential American theologian Kathryn Tanner has shown how theology is partly – or even primarily – a series of contestations and disagreements over the meaning of scripture, culture and politics. In *Theories of Culture*, she challenges post-liberals like Hans Frei and George Lindbeck who argue for a distinctively Christian cultural-linguistic practice of theology which diverges from either propositional theology of the Scholastic or correlational theologians, such as Rahner or Schleiermacher. While sympathetic to their attention to tradition and practice, she argues that there is no distinctively Christian theology or culture. Instead, she maintains that Christian theology is always a practice of taking up cultural, philosophical, and other material and putting them to particular theological use. For Tanner, the “theologian is always ultimately making meaning rather than find it” and thus “offering situation-specific arguments that he or she knows cannot be immunized against contestation by others.”²² To take the example of the Nicaea-Constantinople confession, this was the result of an extended and extracted debate over the meaning of Jesus in Christian worship, theology and scripture. Both intra-Christian debate and the borrowing of concepts from Greek philosophy were fundamental to the creation of the ecumenical Nicæan Creed. The philosophical concept of *homoousis*, for instance, is not found in Scripture but became instrumental for making sense of the eternal sonship of Christ. This borrowing and debate is a constitutive part of both Christian theology and practice, from the earliest engagement with Greek philosophy to the current engagement with philosophy or sciences. Engagement with knowledge and practice outside of the Christian community need not come at a loss to Christian confession or worship, but can in fact be a tool for new and fresh expression. As Tanner writes:

²² Tanner, Kathryn, *Theories of Culture. A New Agenda for Theology*, Minneapolis 1997, 93.

“The test for the proper use of borrowed material is not whether those materials seem to threaten the established character of Christianity. What counts is whether that use distorts that to which Christians are trying to witness.”²³

For her, engagement beyond the boundaries of the church or the traditions of theology is a necessary response to the freedom of the divine Word and the reality of Christians and Christian communities as embedded people in history.

Christian theology has always been an act of theological imagination and construction that takes not only Scripture and the varied and various Church traditions – but also broader philosophical, semantic, scientific, and cultural contexts. While Tanner does not connect her cultural and social analysis to non-Christian traditions, there is nothing within her work that mitigates against such use. In fact, her argument that Christian theology and social practices are not a united singular culture, but a “genuine community of argument” that involves “mutual correction and uplift”²⁴ could easily be expanded beyond the boundaries of the Christian church to include Muslims. The fact that the Qur’an explicitly addresses Christians and that the long history of Islamic theology and exegesis has challenged a number of central Christian theological commitments would in fact make Christian-Muslim engagement as rational as engagement with philosophers or scientists, if not more so. As Aaron Langenfeld writes: “Theology has to be both dogmatic and comparative: dogmatic for the sake of the rationality of faith, comparative for the sake of questioning one’s own and the truth of the other’s faith.”²⁵ To enter into inter-religious dialogue about God’s (tri)unity, the prophecy of Muhammad, the Qur’an, the relationship between law and grace and any of the other debated claims, is not a compromise to one’s identity in the name of relevance but an act of creative learning and mutual witness. The witness of Muslims, for instance, to the mercy and compassion of God recited in the *basmallah* challenges Christian theology to better articulate understandings of the atonement, even as this dialogue serves as a corrective to Christian misunderstandings of Islamic ideas of God as merely a judge or lawgiver.

²³ Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 150.

²⁴ Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 123.

²⁵ Langenfeld, Aaron, *The Moment of Truth*, in: Clooney, Francis X./ Stosch, Klaus von (Ed.), *How to Do Comparative Theology*, New York 2017, 59.

Similarly, the task of articulating in a coherent fashion why Christian theology confesses the incarnation of God in Jesus of Nazareth requires creative new theological work. The recent book on Jesus in the Qur'an by Mouhanad Khorchide and Klaus von Stosch, exemplifies the possibilities of such rich comparative dialogical learning. Through a close reading of Suras 19, 3 and 5 that builds on the work of Angelika Neuwirth's *Corpus Coranicum* project, as well as critical historical and historical reading of the late antique context, Khorchide and von Stosch find their respective Muslim and Christian perspectives on Jesus challenged and altered by the process of encounter.²⁶ Critical differences regarding the place of Jesus within the divine acts are not finally resolved, but reframed beyond the polemical tropes that have made up much of Christian-Muslim dialogue. Interreligious dialogue represents opportunities to advance theological learning and engage in constructive debate that clarifies differences, all while offering and receiving mutual witness.

Part of thinking with a tradition is to recover new categories and questions that then allow us to return to doctrinal and ethical debates in new ways. It also takes more seriously the lived and concrete reality of religious dialogue and encounter. That is to say, I am not generally confronted with a religious tradition in the abstract but with a concrete address and challenge from a human person, text or tradition that asks specific questions: 'Why cannot you affirm the prophethood of Muhammad when we affirm the place of Jesus in Islam?', 'How is it that you can claim the Messiah is Jesus of Nazareth, when the promised reign of God's peace and justice has not been made present?' To engage with these questions, what is needed is not so much an *a priori* theological interpretation of Islam or an account of a claim to revelation after Jesus, although these are all important, but a willingness to enter into deep nuanced discussion based on genuine learning and debate. To do so requires cultivating a theological disposition marked by humble particularity. Such a non-anxious, humble and unapologetic theology does not entail either Christian or Islamic triumphalism (here understood as unflinching rejection of others) or a domestication of the Christian Gospel or the Qur'an as *furqān* of judgment. Instead, inter-religious encounter should be a space for non-anxious witness to the One in whom we

²⁶ Khorchide, Mouhanad / Stosch, Klaus von, *Der andere Prophet. Jesus im Koran*, Freiburg i. Br. 2018.

place our trust and for mutual exchange with and learning from other traditions. Such mutual witness challenges theological formulations and prompts us to return to our own interpretation of God's Word, thereby clarifying and even altering our own witness in light of the testimony of the other. The aim, then, is not commonality or agreement but constructive contestation and mutual learning – one that pushes us back to central claims about God and ourselves.

Spirituelle Praktiken und religiöse Narrative

Differenzen gestalten im christlich-muslimischen Dialog im lebendigen Raum des „Zwischen“

MARGIT ECKHOLT

1. Einführung: Christlich-muslimischer Dialog als Raum lebendiger Traditionsbildung im Dienst des Friedens

Die Mitte des letzten Jahrhunderts nach dem 2. Weltkrieg ansetzenden Globalisierungsprozesse haben weltweit und in den einzelnen Regionen zu geostrategischen Veränderungen, zur Entkolonialisierung, neuen Staatenbildungen und neuen politischen Gewichten weltweit geführt; durch kapitalistische Wirtschaftsprozesse und vor allem die neuen Kommunikationsmedien ist die Welt zusammengewachsen. Begegnung mit anderen Kulturen und Religionen ist zu einer alltäglichen Gegebenheit geworden. Immer mehr treten dabei aber auch die Herausforderungen in das Bewusstsein, die mit der Erfahrung verbunden sind, in „einer Welt“ zu leben: die Schattenseiten vor allem der wirtschaftlichen Globalisierung, die ökologischen Probleme, die Erschöpfung der Ressourcen unseres Heimatplaneten. Während auf der einen Seite ein Verständnis wächst, dass wir alle – weltweit – in diese „Strukturen der Sünde“ eingebunden sind, entstehen auf der anderen Seite Ängste, Gewalt, Orientierungslosigkeit, ein Beet, in dem populistische und fundamentalistische politische Bewegungen gedeihen. Religionssoziologische Untersuchungen arbeiten dabei heraus, dass gerade in den Ländern des Südens und Südostens, die die negativen Auswirkungen der Globalisierung – Gewalt durch Krieg und Bürgerkrieg, bedrohliche Folgen des Klimawandels – in besonderer Weise zu spüren bekommen, auch fundamentalistische Ausprägungen von Religion zunehmen. Das Christentum wächst weltweit vor allem in den Ländern Afrikas, Asiens und Lateinamerikas durch die Zunahme pfingstlicher-charismatischer Bewegungen; nach jüngsten Berechnungen des PEW-Forums werden weltweit ca. 25 % zu pfingstlich-charismatischen christlichen Gemeinschaften gezählt, und diese gehen – sicher je nach politischem und kulturellem Kontext unterschiedlich akzentu-