

Message from the Publisher / Geleitwort des Herausgebers

The academic discipline of theology predates Christianity and has its roots in ancient Greece. Theologians were described as people who spoke about the myths of the Gods, critically and philosophically appraised these myths and adapted them to the everyday situation of human beings. A correlation thus exists here between a myth and the attempts to search for and to capture this myth by rationally reflecting on events.

The question as to whether a term – theology – which has its historical foundations in the aforementioned ancient Greek civilisation can be directly transferred into Islam is one which can certainly be critically discussed. The deceased Bosnian-Austrian Muslim Smail Balic took up a critical position on this question. „An Islamic correlation to the nature of theologians’ work cannot exist, as ‘God’s discourse’ can only concern God as a singular and unique being” (S. Balic, „Islamische Theologie“, in: A. T. Khoury, *Lexikon religiöser Grundbegriffe. Judentum, Christentum, Islam*, Wiesbaden 2007, pp: 1044).

Historical developments however, have shown that Muslim theologians have, at least from a descriptive point of view, indeed spoken on and occupied themselves with the subject. This has taken place under the influence of the Greek philosophy and by making use of Islamic source material, the Koran and Sunna, and by rationally reflecting on God. At the same time, it is correct to say that Islam is predominately a practically oriented religion, and the acquisition of a profound knowledge and understanding is regarded as being merely a first step towards the implementation of this knowledge.

Another question which is connected to the key areas of theology concerns the meaning and aims of the discipline. This question is not just confined to Islamic Theology, but also concerns other religions and systems of belief to an equal extent. The debate between religious devoutness and the acquisition of knowledge, which has been carried out under the influence of and by making reference to ancient Greek philosophers, has traditionally – such as by Maimonides and probably by most Christian theologians – been decided in favour of the latter, in sharp contrast to the previously mentioned situation in Islamic Theology. This situation has, however, been criticised by other Jewish scholars like Chasdj Crescas (1340-1410):

„Foreign philosophers have developed this viewpoint, and Jewish intellectuals have unfortunately also come to support this view, without seriously considering how they destroy the peculiarities of the religions.” (D. Vetter, „Jüdische Theologie“, in: A. T. Khoury, *Lexikon religiöser Grundbegriffe. Judentum, Christentum, Islam*, Wiesbaden 2007, pp.1042).

While the question about whether the term ‘Islamic Theology’, ‘Islamic Sciences’ or ‘Islamic Studies’ is to be used should be expanded upon, it appears to take on a secondary importance when considered in this context. Especially the term ‘İlahiyat Fakültesi’ (Theological faculty) is now widely employed in Turkey. Concluding, it is worth stressing that Islamic Theology in Europe is a nascent independent academic discipline, which will surely follow its own epistemic, methodical, normative-ontological and finally teleological premises.

The subject of Islamic religious education in Europe and particularly in Germany is still in its infancy, and the theological and empirical consideration of Islam at an academic level has still to begin. Although the first scientific studies of these areas have begun to

develop, both in a qualitative and in a quantitative sense, there still remains a large need for further continuous academic discussion on issues relevant to the lives of Muslims in Europe in a theological and religiously practical as well as educational way. The intention of this scientific periodical is make a contribution towards closing this gap.

The scientific journal *HIKMA* thus aims at providing a platform in order to assist the development of theory in religious education and to enhance the practical organization of Islamic religious life in Europe, and in particular in the German-speaking parts of the continent. The journal publishes articles dealing firstly with a large range of issues concerning religious education, secondly with places in which the Islamic religion is taught and thirdly with the scientific theory of religious instruction, both on a local and on a global scale. Scientific articles dealing with the practice of religious education are also explicitly welcomed in the journal. An important part of each issue is dedicated to reviewing literary publications by Muslim and non-Muslim scholars concerning issues pertaining both to the classic Islamic sciences and to religious pedagogy.

In addition, the periodical addresses theologians and religious educators who work academically and are actively in practice, in Europe and particularly in the German-speaking parts of the world.

HIKMA is published twice a year, on the 1st of April and the 1st of October.

The *Journal of Islamic Theology and Religious Education* publishes contributions on general topics and areas of research in Islam as well as special editions focusing on the key issues of religious education and theology. Moreover, it also takes into account the current main problematic areas of the Islamic academic discourse. Extensive review essays examine innovative evolutions within the German and international Islamic Theology and religious education, providing information on the current state of research in key realms of Islam.

Furthermore, the journal publishes scientific articles, research notes (short accounts of unpublished, completed projects of more general interest), reports (of events, activities, initiatives), short descriptions of Islamic scientific institutes, book reviews as well as statements and comments on national and international publications.

The periodical understands itself as a universal scientific journal on Islamic Theology and religious education which publishes contributions on all topics and areas of research of Islamic studies and religious education. From the very start, the central aim of the journal is to provide a forum for the discussion and evolution of central problem fields in the light of contemporary theoretical and social changes. The periodical will focus on two key issues in the future, which will thus shape its profile and future development: on the one hand, the integration of Islam in European, and especially in the German, school systems, and on the other hand, the discourse on Islamic religion and culture in a larger, European context. At the same time, much emphasis will be placed on processes of integration and the transformation of Muslim minorities in societies which are strongly influenced by Christianity and the repercussions which these processes have on the social interaction of Muslims and non-Muslims in western societies.

The scientific guidelines of the proposed journal are briefly summarised below:

a) The consideration of a range of different viewpoints

The periodical examines issues connected with Islamic Theology and religious education from different points of view, both from the „inner“ and the „outer“ perspective (i.e. from the perspective of both people actively involved in Islamic religious education and theology, and those examining these issues from ‘outside’). It aims at facilitating a scientific and constructive encounter of the aforementioned different experiences and approaches, which goes beyond the polemical debates which dominate the contemporary public discussion. However, the theological inside perspective remains the most important one for *HIKMA*. Therefore, the journal understands itself to be a publication dealing primarily with theological issues and not with religious-scientific issues.

b) Platform for basic and empirical research

Articles about basic research on Islamic religious education and on Islamic Theology as well as those related to empirical research in the fields of Islamic religious education and Muslims’ religious socialization are suitably taken into account in this scientific publication. Religious phenomena come to take on new meanings in the context of the interrelationship between religious texts and the nature of everyday life; this being particularly the case in secular societies.

c) Internationality

One of the journal’s priorities is to have an international orientation. With this in mind, it is intended to publish in this periodical not only contributions from Germany, but also from other European and Islamic countries, so that the journal might offer a platform for efficient, up-to-date discussions at an international level. Such discussions can contribute to further scientific development and serve as a basis for the development of constructive projects. As Islam is a relatively new phenomenon in Europe and Muslims are to a large degree influenced by both debates taking place in their countries of origin and by the established academic structures, such a co-operation is urgently necessary.

d) Inter- and multi-disciplinarily approach

The journal seeks not just to look at Islamic Theology and Islamic religious education as separate disciplines, but it also takes up those topics which bridge theology and religious education and thus tries to examine the extent to which these fields are interrelated and influence each other. Furthermore, the journal also welcomes contributions from different disciplines of the humanities, of social sciences and of cultural sciences which deal with issues deemed relevant to Islamic Theology and Islamic religious education.