Christentum und Europa

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schiedlicher religiöser Orientierung vorgesehen. Unter anderem wurden mittels sozialwissenschaftlich-empirischer Forschung Fallstudien zu Möglichkeiten und Grenzen religionsbezogenen Dialogs im städtischen Raum und im Bildungsbereich in den Metropolregionen Hamburg, Rhein-Ruhr, London, Oslo und Stockholm erhoben.[55] Auf der Basis der Ergebnisse dieser Analysen können Grundelemente Dialogischer Theologie in Beziehung gesetzt werden zu gelebtem religionsbezogenen Dialog. Es können auch Ansätze einer dialogisch-interreligiösen Hermeneutik für die Bereiche Schule und Gemeinde fruchtbar gemacht werden, weil wir durch unsere empirischen Analysen u. a. zu einer mehrperspektivischen, interreligiösen Jugendtheologie besser wissen, welche Voraussetzungen und Interessen im Feld gelebter Religion anzutreffen sind.[56] Die Verbindung von akademischer Theologie und Jugend- oder Laientheologie wird beide Seiten verändern und stärken können. Hierbei kommt der Praktischen Theologie in Verbindung mit ökumenisch-interreligiöser Theologie und Empirie eine Schlüsselrolle zu.

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[55] Vgl. JULIA IPGRAVE / THORSTEN KNAUTH / ANNA KÖRS, et al. (Hg.), Religion and Dialogue in the City. Case Studies on Interreligious Encounters in Urban Community and Education, Münster 2018.

[56] Vgl. THORSTEN KNAUTH / DÖRTHE VIEREGGE / MARIUS VAN HOOGSTRATEN / CAROLA ROLOFF (Hg.), Jugendtheologie – dialogisch und interreligiös (Religion im Dialog. Eine Schriftenreihe der Akademie der Weltreligionen der Universität Hamburg Bd. 16), Münster 2018 (in Vorbereitung).

RELIGIONSWISSENSCHAFT UND INTERKULTURELLE THEOLOGIE

History of Religion in »Europe«

Religious Affiliation by Decision – Reflections in the Interspace between Religious Studies and Theology of Religions

Helmut Zander

In the following observations and theses I present the main ideas of my »Europäische‹ Religionsgeschichte« (Berlin: de Gruyter 2016), which I was thankfully invited to present the Vienna conference of the »Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft für Theologie« as a stimulus for the discussion. All information given below may be identified in the index and the table of contents of this book. The text is written from the perspective of a scholar in religious studies, although I am also a Catholic theologian.

To begin, two terminological clarifications: »Europe« is used with quotes, because our concept of this cultural unit has been shaped in early modern times, predominantly in the 19th century, and shouldn't be applied to older times. »Religion«, as we use the term today, has also been coined in early modern times, and raises the same problems in its application; it can thus only be applied with great reservations to non-Christian traditions. Finally, it should be clear that »religions« do not exist as separate entities, but always as intertwined traditions which mutually influence each other.

Some major consequences of these epistemological considerations for the theological discussion are the following aspects: 1. From my perspective, it is reasonable to focus on differences instead of communalities. 2. I propose to discuss not only concrete differences or communalities, but also the deeper structures (»grammar«) of cultural traditions. 3. With the focus on differences right down to this grammar of cultures I raise the question of how distant from the concrete world and how abstract a theology of religions is forced to be, at least with regard to communalities in or between different religions.

1. Grammar

The main intention of the book is the analysis of a cultural grammar underlying the concrete history of social structures, events and ideas. This grammar is no anthropological constant, but coined by cultural traditions. I discuss this dimension with regard to one question: How do people enter into a religious tradition, how do they become adherents, and, in specific traditions, a member of a religious community.

2. Innovations

In the Mediterranean world, the mode of affiliation to a religious tradition was changed in late antiquity, predominantly by one group of Christians, those in the Pauline communities. They claimed that people should no longer be religious practitioners because they were born into a given ethnic or social group (people, tribe, gens, clan), but because of a decision. This decision should lead to an exclusive veneration of one God and also to an exclusive affiliation to one community. Some antecedents of this concept are to be found in Judaism (proselytes) and in the so-called mystery cults.

The shift from affiliation by birth to affiliation by decision triggered many additional innovations, which have either no or only very weak parallels in the religious environment of the emerging Christianity.

- The changeover to a new religious practice was accompanied by an entrance ritual, the »baptism«. (I give Christian terms as borrowings from the object language in quotes in order to indicate their problematic status for use as non-normative, analytical tools in religious studies.) As an entrance ritual it seems to be unprecedented, there are no known pagan equivalents: Ablutions were wide-spread, but no equivalent to the *rite de passage* of a baptism existed; and the »blood-baptism« in the »mystery cults« has turned out to be a highly problematic construction, probably under Christian influence. The nearest parallel – the baptisms by John the Baptist – has a totally different, inner-Jewish objective, it was no *rite de passage* which accompanied the way into another religion.
- The socialization of the new members required the transmission of knowledge; Christians created a new form of religious education (»catechumenate«, »catechism«).
- This passage into a new religious context was described with a new concept, the »conversion«.
- If the change of a religious practice becomes possible, the promotion of this step (»mission«) is a possible consequence.

- In combination with the claim for exclusivity, the handling of religious difference changed. »Orthodoxy« and »heterodoxy« seem to be invented or at least redefined for the religious field in the Christian context.
- Last but not least, in this process the term »religion« took on defining characteristics, which have continued to characterize it up to now, such as its sharp boundaries and an often binary relation to other »religions«, which cannot be understood (in my perspective) without taking into account the consequences of affiliation based on decision.

This new form of religious adherence needed social coherence. One central element to achieve this was an authoritative set of scriptures, the »Bible«, which was later formed into a »canon« (in an excursion I date its constitution, using a narrow definition of »canon«, into the 16th century). But the canonical process ran parallel to the genesis of organized Christianity.

This decision-based structure fostered the emergence of social institutions, which were based on a contractual organization (being a social equivalent of an individual decision). In three chapters I discuss probable consequences for the history of the medieval town, the university and the associations in the natural sciences; in all cases, affiliation by decision played a key role.

3. Gender

I touch only briefly on the consequences for gender relations. The claim that everybody, regardless of gender, should decide their own religious affiliation relativized the hierarchy between men and women. Over the centuries, Christians changed for example the structures of kinship, replacing the patriarch in the center of the gens by the spouses, or opened new spheres for female members, e.g. monasteries for women.

4. Theory – Practice

Of course the practical fulfillment of the claim for decision was very different from the theory. For the longest time in history, Christians did not decide to be Christians. Most widespread was the social »inheritance« of religious affiliation: people became Christians because their parents were Christians. This tension between theory and practice was rooted in an extremely practical reason. To choose a new religion did not only mean to change one's religious practice or conviction, but to leave the social safety net which provided help in case of pregnancy, birth, illness or accident, and also took care of religious rites (e.g. funeral). The regentilisation

of Christianity, which is obvious in all centuries and all regions, was caused by the dominance of daily needs over theological ideas.

One element was especially contradictory to the theological theories: the elimination of decision by infant baptism. Probably documented already in New Testament scriptures (baptism of »houses«), the practice became widespread starting in the $3^{rd}/4^{th}$ century and became the standard form in the centuries to follow. But theory never lost its influence on Christian practice. Two examples illustrate this impact: The confirmation, established in the $11^{th}/12^{th}$ century, aimed (among others) at the decision of a mature Christian. And the Baptists, especially since the 16th century, intended to achieve nothing less than the total reform of the church, refusing the legitimacy of infant baptism. But some spiritualists could be more radical and replace baptism with an inner »conversion«.

5. Fulfillment

The possibility to choose one's religious affiliation reappeared after late antiquity in early modern Europe. Two developments were pivotal. (1.) The neutralization of the state, with the consequence that the right to religious freedom was embedded in the constitutions. This process often ran against the (political) interests of the great churches, but was strongly fostered by Christian dissenters. (2.) The welfare state took over the social services of clans and other closed social groups. Exercising religious freedom no longer meant being faced with the choice of living without social protection to cover basic needs.

6. Theory of Tradition

In the background of the book can be found a theory of tradition, which might explain an aspect that is often too easily taken for granted – the existence of a tradition for over nearly 2000 years. I propose the following two elements to explain continuity: (1.) Path dependence. I assume that the intellectual and social history of the West (here: with regard to an affiliation by decision) follows a path which was largely determined by authoritative texts, predominantly the Bible and the writings of the Christian authors of late antiquity (»church fathers«). (2.) Memory. Flexibility on this path was provided by techniques of refreshing cultural memory (here I use reflections of Jan and Aleida Assmann): Stored memory, which often has very little effect on cultural practices, may be transformed into communicative memory, which is part of an active discourse and thus has an impact on a society.

These two aspects describe central elements of the way in which affiliation by decision took root. The Pauline texts and the practice of early Christians opened a specific path. The memory of this concept was stored in cultural archives (Bible, texts of early Christian intellectuals) and could be updated and »fed« into a discussion as communicative knowledge through the reading of these texts – as occurred previously in the case of confirmation or the claim for adult-only baptism.

I maintain in this context that the history of religions can be understood in an adequate way only by weaving together two sometimes separated approaches: We have to combine the social history (e.g. with regard to the relevance of associations in Christian circles or concerning the use of codices) with the history of ideas (e.g. the idea of an affiliation by decision as an actualized memory).

7. Comparison

In extensive parts of my book I compare central elements of the above-mentioned topics in Western Christianity (point 2) with similar developments in Eurasian religions. The central dimension of affiliation by decision takes on different forms. I provide examples of four forms of affiliation with their corresponding concepts:
- Buddhists: People became a member of the *sangha* by decision.
- Jews: People became Jews if they were born as Jews, which, starting around the 2nd century, meant being born to a Jewish woman. In exceptional cases, people could affiliate themselves with Judaism, adopting parts of its ideas or practices or even become members with nearly full rights (»proselytes«);
- Christians: People became Christians by decision;
- Muslims: People could become Muslims in one of two ways. They could be recognized by a Muslim father; in this case one was Muslim by birth. Alternatively, non-Muslims could say the *shahada*, the Muslim »creed«, and thus become Muslims by decision.

Practice was, as pointed out (cf. point 4), often different – perhaps all the more so the stricter regulations were in theory (Christianity is a striking example of this). I don't discuss these concepts with their huge variety of regulations, but I do indicate some consequences with regard to the aforementioned »innovations«.
- In practice, the relationship between adherence by birth and adherence by decision, between ethnic and social affiliation, created blurred boundaries, since distancing oneself from one's ancestral religion led to social insecurity. Thus, all religions tended to delimit free decision and its consequences: In practice, Christianity became a religion by birth, as did Buddhism. To a considerable extent, Muslims maintained ethnic structures and furthermore, starting in the second century, developed the theology of the »fitra«, which claimed that people were naturally Muslims; in this conception, one becomes a non-Muslim only as a result of (a false) education.

- »Mission« seems to be a Christian invention, on condition that a distinction is made between dissemination (without an intention to spread your religion) and »mission« (with intention). In its early years, Buddhism was probably spread by monks wandering along transport routes as well as by hostages, envoys and soldiers; pragmatic disclosure seems to have dominated over intentional transfer of their ideas. In contrast to this, Christianity created an explicit concept of intentional »mission« and »conversion«, although no exact equivalence of these terms appears in the New Testament. In Islam, the Christian concept of »mission« was known, but wasn't adopted. During the first centuries of its existence, Islamic theology was not characterized by the idea of »converting« subjugated peoples, but rather by the idea of conquering territories; Islam was embraced mostly for social reasons, for example to improve one's social standing. The idea of »mission« with the intention to »convert« people was adopted in Buddhism and Islam only starting in mainly the late 19th century.
- »Conversion« is an interesting term in this context. In Buddhism, the act of taking refuge in the Buddha, in the *dharma* and in the *sangha* might be regarded as a structural equivalent to the Christian concept of »conversion«. In Islam, on the other hand, a certain distancing from this term may currently be found. Over the last few years, some Muslims have claimed that the concept of »fitra« and the concept of »conversion« contradict each other. If people are considered to be naturally Muslims by the »fitra«, they wouldn't »convert« to Islam, but, as it has been proposed recently in Muslim circles, they would »revert« to Islam.
- Finally, the concept of religion – based on institution and dogma and combined with exclusive membership – became one of the most momentous ideas in modern history of religions. It is clear that it can't be understood apart from its Western Christian roots. In this context (and in an intersectionalist perspective) affiliation by decision is crucial. But »religion« only became common in the wake of the European expansion. Just to give a brief example: Religious statistics which document membership in combination with an exclusivist notion of »religion« only make sense if you can count people individually and minimize multiple memberships and hybrid practice.

8. Religion (and) Politics

The reflection on the grammar of Western culture might seem to be far removed from contemporary questions, but it is not the case. I shall give two examples to demonstrate this: In the constitutions of several Indian federal states we find limits of the right to do »missionary« work, often declared as a protection against seduction and fraud. In fact, these regulations are a result of a reaction against missionaries, namely Christian, since Hindus are Hindus by birth and consequently don't have the concept of a »mission« (with some exceptions since the 19th century under European influence). Second example: Saudi Arabia did not ratify the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights because they realized that the concept of the *dhimmi* status, which attributes different rights to the non-Muslim religious groups under Muslim rule, is (simply) different from the Western and strongly Christian-rooted concept of the choice of religion, underlying the respective article 18 of that UN-Constitution.

Several elements of a choice-based religion, especially the derivative concept of religious freedom, ending up in the right to choose, change and leave a religion and to have no religion, has become a constitutive part of most Western democracies. Its consequences concern all religions, including, of course, the non-Christian ones. The right to exercise their own religion freely is linked to the same right for other religions. Western societies normally don't accept positions which deny the right to religious freedom, even if a religion has a different concept for the regulation of religious plurality, be it conceived by Christians or Muslims. That means, we force different traditions to accept this regulation, regardless of their tradition. From this perspective, the consequences of the concept of affiliation by decision have become hegemonic – at least in legal theory.

9. Theology of Religions – Interreligious Dialogue

The consequences of my reflections for a »theology of religions« and the interreligious dialogue include a specific starting point. For a scholar in the study of religion(s), who takes a non-theological perspective, theology of religions is also an object of analysis – since it contains not only empirical data, but also normative assumptions. This concerns predominantly the allegation that an »inter-« or »transreligious« dimension exists and is a hypothesis moulded, at least partly, by the theological pre-condition, that (all) religions participate in an overarching divine dimension.

I know quite well that this presumption of a common dimension has been perhaps the most important and successful perspective in interreligious dialogue. Nevertheless I propose another access to the analysis of the relations between religions, due to the necessity to work in the study of religions without normative presuppositions (or at least with the claim to reduce them). This access is based on the methodological recognition that every identification of differences or common dimensions is based on an act of comparison, where similarities (*genera proxima*) and differences (*differenciae specificae*) are both necessary elements for the identification of a common meta-level (*tertium comparationis*). I propose to start from the *differenciae specificae* with the following justification: If a historian accepts that we have historical data only clothed in theory, that means in interpretations

(knowing, that, rewriting Kant, data without theory are blind and theory without data is empty) and that these interpretations are based on different languages and embedded in different cultural contexts, then the identification of common dimensions, of »inter-« or »trans-«religious dimensions is a secondary act of construing history, dependent on the perception of differences. *Genera proxima* may be very abstract and far away from the concrete historical world.

The second reason to start with and to focus on differences is the impact of our scholarly debates on the political discussion. The handling of conflicts starts with differences. Common convictions may be an element in the way of finding solutions to conflicts, and in this perspective theology of religions, based on presumed common dimensions, may be helpful. But we have to realize the reasons why we often search for a common perspective: because we have to cope with differences. To be conciliatory: I know quite well that there are sometimes good reasons, mostly psychological, to open a discussion with a remembrance of common traditions and shared values.

Eingrenzungen und Ausgrenzungen
Elemente europäischer Religionsgeschichte

Daniel Cyranka

1. Vorüberlegungen

Anlass für diese Fragestellung ist das Kongressthema: »Christentum und Europa«. Die heutige Sektion bezieht sich auf die Einheit oder Vielfalt der in Rede kommenden Themen »Religion« und »Europa« unter dem Titel »Europäische Religionsgeschichte«. Das setzt einen spezifischen Rahmen, der auf das Kongressthema und das Hauptprogramm reagiert. Europa ist hier demnach der thematisch vorgegebene Bezugsrahmen, und das verstehe ich angesichts globalgeschichtlicher Perspektiven und interkultureller Verwobenheiten nicht als eine programmatische, sondern als eine pragmatische Eingrenzung. Mein Interesse ist dabei ein religionshistorisches. Es geht um unsere heutige Religionsgeschichtsschreibung als die Art und Weise, das Thema »Religion« zu konstituieren und zu konstruieren, indem wir Ein- und Ausgrenzungen vornehmen. Diese Prozesse sollten sichtbar gemacht und reflektiert werden. Dass Konstruktionen von Europa notwendig an ihr Anderes, ihr »Nicht-Europa« gebunden sind, setze ich dabei voraus.[1] Die (wie auch immer vorgenommene) Eingrenzung »Europa« impliziert und erzeugt immer »Nicht-Europa« als Ausgrenzung.[2] Das ist ein unvermeidlicher Prozess. Europäische Religionsgeschichte ist global verwoben.

Was aber sind Elemente europäischer Religionsgeschichte respektive Religionsgeschichtsschreibung? Ich beginne mit schlichten Fragen: Ist die »Religi-

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[1]   Einführend ist nach wie vor sehr empfehlenswert die 2010 erschienene Aufsatzsammlung von Dipesh Chakrabarty, Europa als Provinz. Perspektiven postkolonialer Geschichtsschreibung, Frankfurt / New York 2010.

[2]   Vgl. Michael Bergunder, »Religion« and »Science« within a Global Religious History, in: Aries. Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism 16 (2016), 86–141, bes. 87 f. sowie Daniel Cyranka, Thesenpapier: The Western as Positioning. Preliminary reflections: The ›Western‹ and its ›East‹, Aarhus 2017, http: http://wcms.itz.uni-halle.de/download.php?down=47762&elem=3093396 (abgerufen am 12.01.2018).