

IS SOMETHING ROTTEN IN VATICAN CITY?

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**From an average Muslim
To H. H. Pope of the Catholic Church**

AN ANSWER TO H. H. POPE BENEDICT XVI LECTURE at the Aula Magna of the
University of Regensburg. Tuesday, 12 September 2006: *Faith, Reason and the
University Memories and Reflections*

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PRELUDE

H.H Pope Benedict XVI,

I thought to send you a letter or an ordinary email, and then I retracted because I guessed you must be very busy to rule your Kingdom and you will never find the time to read the missive of an average Muslim. I finally decided to address you these guidelines.

H.H Pope Benedict XVI,

We are bound by our religion to respect Christians and Jews as well. We are also asked to be good with the good, and good even with the less good. But we are legitimately allowed to treat people in kind.

I would have never dared to criticize –even through an honest and fair debate- a religious man of your stature, although I'll be focusing on the ideas and the status of the man behind them. Nevertheless, you opened widely the door and allowed a response to your public conference held in the Aula Magna of the University of Regensburg Tuesday, 12 September 2006, and titled: *Faith, Reason and the University Memories and Reflections*, and translated in three languages on the Vatican website (why not in French?). I'll rely on the English version, but I'll consult the German and the Italian ones in case of uncertainty.

I have read more than once your lecture to make sure I unequivocally understood your words, and I ask you no more than to understand mine. In my point of view, we're both two human beings, born after nine months in our mothers' uterus and going slowly but surely to death. Each of us eats (I like Cuscus), drink (No alcoholics for me, thanks!) and sleep. I have a single privilege you don't have: I'm married (happily, thanks God!). We will not consider other privileges that your followers and/or your Church have given you, because I do not recognize them, they're part of your culture, but not of mine.

I know you are a German (no one can hide the moon!) and I had in my life very good experiences with Germans. They used to come in big numbers for holidays in Tunisia, my country, and I used to travel around with them as a tourist guide, showing them the beauties of my Lilliputian country. I even remember a certain lady called Helga who told me once in such a sincere vibrating tone: "Your country is magic". To tell you the truth, I believed her, because I have read, when I studied arts that Paul Klee said years before her, the same things in other words: "In Tunisia, I discovered the colours!" Now, allow me also to say that the Germans that used to visit my country were more appreciated by the merchants than those who come today. Ah! The merchants, you know, they understand only what they have in their purses at the end of the day. And it seems that they cash less and less from the above-mentioned tourists.

Once, I accompanied for a ten-day tour a nice group of German tourists. They were men and women of a certain age accompanied by a Priest. We travelled all along Tunisia, and we used to spend one night or two in each major Tunisian

town. I used to make available for them a free conference room in the hotel where they would make their morning and evening prayers. I did mine with the Muslim driver in our room. I also stopped the coach each morning while travelling for a second prayer, that they used to do in the middle of the olive groves (by the way, we have one of the best olive oil in the world!) or in the open air in the middle of our Mediterranean landscapes. I was also asked as part of the program to bring them for a prayer in the German military graveyards of the Second World War. I won't tell my shame and confusion, when instead of bringing them to a German Graveyard; I brought them inadvertently in a British one. Well, I just saw their pink faces turn blue, and I had to rush in excuses and apologies when I read in the front door: "Commonwealth Second World War Cemetery".

The driver thought that after all, they were all people dead during the war, and a priest should pray for all Christians. That man doesn't understand a lot, and I was happy enough that he understood how to drive and stop his coach, and put air conditioning and play the magneto where we heard a good deal of religious songs brought by the fervent guests. Anyhow, the Priest talked to them about The Holy Augustine and the Holy Cyprian and they forgot the incident.

But now that I remembered the Second World War, I want to tell this. I understand perfectly why, as soon as you became Pope, you rushed to state that the Jews were your dear friends. Of course, many Germans still feel the guilt of the millions of slaughtered Jews, and as a German you wanted to show your sympathy and have peace. Well, I know very honest Germans who believe in individual responsibility and who do not feel concerned at all by those times. It doesn't mean that they're not sorry for what happened to the victims of the Second World War; but they feel sorry for all the victims: Jews, Polish, Germans, Russian... It's not completely stupid, because you must not feel guilty because the Church has killed Galileo for his science, or because it issued the absolution cheques, or even because some priests fornicated with children or for any other dark souvenir.

H.H Pope Benedict XVI!

You're not responsible even for the declarations of your predecessors. I ensure you that individual responsibility is much lighter than collective one.

Can we imagine a modern man like you agree with "Pope Pius IX who, "infallibly" declared in 1864, that the idea that people have a right to freedom of conscience and freedom of worship is "insanity," "evil," "depraved," and "reprobate"? He also declared that non-Catholics who live in Catholic countries should not be allowed to publicly practice their religion. "¹

"According to Roman Catholic doctrine, popes and Catholic church councils are infallible. This means that whenever they make official declarations concerning matters of faith or morals, God supernaturally protects them from making errors.

¹ www.catholicconcerns.com/Download/Infallible.doc by Mary Ann Collis

Infallibility applies to all Roman Catholic popes and church councils: past, present, and future... ²

No, you're not and you can't be held responsible if "in 1888, Pope Leo XIII "infallibly" declared that freedom of thought and freedom of worship are wrong."³

But regarding this fallibility (mine of course) and infallibility (yours?), there are really things that my humble intelligence cannot assimilate.

One of the definitions that the American Heritage® Dictionary⁴ gives of "infallible" is "incapable of erring". The authoritative Dictionary states, in another definition, that "infallible" for the Roman Catholic Church is "incapable of error in expounding doctrines on faith or morals".

In Islam, only and exclusively God is infallible. Prophets are protected against error (maasum). The rest are all Humans that err. Don't you say in Latin: "errare humanum est ⁵".

How can a human being (except inspired Prophets) be infallible? It's so hard to assimilate for me! Overall when I remember that the Church used to argue that Blacks (and women) lacked a soul. It's so hard to assimilate for me!

If the conference I'm going to debate with you is the ex-cathedra of an "infallible", I'm really in a tough situation. But considering that I don't believe one second in human infallibility, I will give a try.

I better leave infallibles and infallibility for awhile, and go back to declarations.

Concerning your warm declaration of friendship between Jews and Christians, I really wish you will not feel jealous because I preferred the declaration of your predecessor, Pope John Paul II who used to defend the idea of a common Abrahamic religion. He said that Jews, Christians along with Muslims were united around one single God. Oh! That was so nice towards the one Billion + of Muslims, isn't it?

As long as we're talking about declarations, I was impressed by another one you made at the very beginning of your election as a Pope. I found it very philosophic and reasonable.

You (or exactly Cardinal Ratzinger) said once: "Truth is not determined by a majority vote ⁶". But some may object: "the doctrine that Jesus is from the same substance as God was voted by a majority during the First Council in Nicea, in 325". Rationality seems questioned here!

I will not give much importance to the political aspect of your lecture, and I will close my eyes to its political adequacy in the current burning context where

² Idem

³ <http://www.catholicundertow.com/Chapter-02.shtml>

⁴ The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language: Fourth Edition. 2000. Entry : Infallible

⁵ Latin: to err is human.

⁶ The Cardinal Ratzinger Fun Club: <http://www.cafepress.com/ratzfanclub/22828>

Christians and Jews are slaughtering Muslims almost everywhere on God's earth. I will not consider that the soldiers followed by Catholic priests colonized our countries de facto since mid XIX century, and economically until this very day. I will convince myself that your conference is just a scholarly debate and I will discuss it as such. I know that many of my Muslims brothers do not agree on my approach, they consider that your conference is part of a crusade against Muslims started some 200 years ago, and still continuing with Bush, Blair and their acolytes and mercenaries.

So I will explain you some matters and give you my opinions. They're nothing more than the opinions of an average Muslim.

I accept both your invitations!

H. H. Pope Benedict XVI,

As a conclusion to your lecture, you state: "It is to this great logos, to this breadth of reason, that we invite our partners in the dialogue of cultures."

I will rely on reason intended as mechanisms of thought widely accepted, that use our discerning capabilities. Gifts that we all have, as long as they're not banned by any authority or spoiled by superstition, or want-to-be objectivity. *Logos versus mythos* was the central theme of many heated debates among thinkers from so different backgrounds: your, our and other's cultures.

Remembering your souvenirs in the University where you taught, you talk also in the beginning about: "This profound sense of coherence within the universe of reason (*universitas scientiarum*)..." Considering that you're talking about universal matters, you agree that there's place for me and any human being to take part in the debate.

This was then for the legitimacy of my attempt. I can say that my words and my opinions mean that I accepted the two invitations you indirectly sent me from Regensburg: in my quality of a member of a given culture, and as an inhabitant of this universe. Thank you H. H. Pope Benedict XVI!

I will try in this humble attempt to explain my point of view from an Islamic perspective, concerning themes that you discussed in your conference and that are related to my faith and my culture.

A HOT REACTION

I read in your conference: " I was reminded of all this recently, when I read the edition by Professor Theodore Khoury (Münster) of part of the dialogue carried on - perhaps in 1391 in the winter barracks near Ankara - by the erudite Byzantine emperor Manuel II Paleologus and an educated Persian on the subject of Christianity and Islam, and the truth of both."

And I read in Wikipedia: "Professor Adel Theodor Khoury, editor of the cited writings, criticized the lack of understanding of the historical context in the debate and denounced both the Emperor's argument and the Islamist reaction to the Pope's speech."

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manuel_II_Palaeologus (September 16, 2006).

Well, it's surprising that Professor Adel Khoury (he has an Arab name) "criticized the lack of understanding of the historical context in the debate" without criticizing:

- The use in a public conference by the Pope of an incredibly heated historical context (the Fall of Constantinople and the war between Byzantines and Turks), mainly when we know that the Pope was (in his quality of Cardinal Ratzinger) opposed to the entry of Turkey in what many consider as "the Christian Club of the European Union".
- The bias in the presentation of the two central persons of the debate. In one side, the Pope quotes the "erudite" Byzantine emperor; then an "educated Persian" in the other side. It's easy to find the biography of Manuel II Paleologus, but almost impossible to know anything about this "educated Persian".
- The total absence of any answer coming from the emperor interlocutor, i.e. the educated Persian. If it was a dialogue, I'm sorry to say that it was presented by the illustrious lecturer as a monologue.
- Usually, in a dialogue, one puts the themes and the questions, and then argues to try to reach, show his truth. How can the subject of a dialogue be: "Christianity and Islam, and the truth of both"? It would have been simpler if it were the truth *about them* at least. Or: "*some thoughts about their truth*". But if it's the Pope who presents "their truths", then allow some Muslims the right to answer.

But even considering the Pope as an ordinary lecturer –which he is not! - wouldn't it be more appropriate for a scholarly debate to listen to both parties and present both arguments, as judges do in courts, when seeking the truth? I'll come back to this one-way stream later.

WHERE DID THE DIALOGUE TAKE PLACE?

The location: The Pope quotes with uncertainty (saying “perhaps”) “the winter barracks near Ankara...” Let’s see the meaning of the word barrack in the head of a normal reader through its use in Modern Western literature:

“The very prisoners in the guard-room were shaking the bars of their cells and howling like wild beasts, and from every **barrack** poured the booming as of a big war-drum.”

The Mutiny of the Mavericks by Rudyard Kipling⁷

“But the thing which clean broke my heart was something which happened in front of our old **barrack** in a square, while we were enduring the spectacle of a man being boiled to death in oil for counterfeiting pennies.”

A Connecticut Yankee by Mark Twain⁸

A small historic inquiry (as we’ll see) would have shown that the debates occurred de facto while the emperor (Who became meanwhile the vassal of the Turks) “enjoyed the hospitality of the *Muderris* (= *Kadi*) at Ankara”.

Can we imagine a second that a *Kadi* (magistrate) receives his honoured guest (who was also a vassal) in “the barracks” near Ankara? The image that comes to my mind when I read “barracks near Ankara” is some dusty poor houses for tired veteran soldiers, located in the suburbs of Ankara. And knowing that hospitality is directly connected to faith in Islam⁹, I can easily imagine that the emperor was surely in some nice palace, honoured as a guest and a non-Muslim.

And the least we can say to conclude about the location of this debate is that it doesn’t suggest a nice place according to the way it has been presented, when historic sources suggest the contrary.

⁷ <http://kipling.thefreelibrary.com/Mutiny-of-the-Mavericks>

⁸ <http://twain.thefreelibrary.com/Connecticut-Yankee>

⁹ The Messenger of God said: : « He who believes in God and in the Judgement Day must honour his guest »

TIME KEEPS ON SLIPPING INTO THE FUTURE

When did this dialogue take place? According to the Pope and Adel Khoury to whom he refers:

“during the siege of Constantinople between 1394 and 1402”

But according to our independent source¹⁰:

“From October to December of 1391”.

Well, we're really far from the siege of Constantinople, unless this important historic event, was useful to remind (even though indirectly) to the audience. Does it mean: Constantinople was Byzantine before its fall in the hands of the Muslims? Well, in this case Regensburg, from where the Pope was speaking as well as the whole Europe was Pagan before the arrival of the Christians. Jesus-Christ lived in Palestine, and that's far from Europe.

If we launch history in the reverse direction, we will have a lot of funny surprises.

¹⁰ <http://www.roman-emperors.org/manuel2.htm>

MANUEL II PALEOLOGUS “the erudite”

Let's see from a historic point of view how this “erudite” Emperor is considered: [Byzantium, however, held to the bitter end onto the dogma that its ruler was the only legitimate emperor and hence was the head of the civilized world.¹¹ . Yes, the “head of the civilized world” at the end XIV and mid XV Century, when Muslim Civilization was in its golden age, and Ming Dynasty shining in China. But this “head of the civilized world” seems more inspired by nowadays globalization, rather than by a pragmatic and true-to-facts vision of the World. Rather than the head of the civilized world, it seems to me that the poor emperor Manuel II Paleologus, was hopelessly trying to save something of a falling empire. “In vain Manuel sent appeals for help to the Pope [Boniface IX], the Doge of Venice, and the kings of France, England, and Aragon, as well as the Grand Prince of Moscow [and King Sigismund of Hungary].” (Ibid).

But there's a fact that explains clearly why it may be understandable to call Manuel II an “erudite” from a Byzantine point of view.

“The first result of the battle of Ankara was that the siege of Constantinople was lifted... On this occasion Manuel composed a dramatic piece, an imaginative construct of what Timur (=Tamerlane) might say to a person in so humiliating a situation as the sultan now found himself in. This sultan who, so long as things went well for him, “uttered big, proud words and was intolerable with his threats,” actually now was trundled around in a cage. The emperor remained entirely within the limits of rhetorical norms with this piece of literature which was popular in Byzantium.” (Ibid)

I understand that such literary success, has given the emperor the “erudite” epithet that H. H. Pope Benedict XVI gave him. But let's make a distinct separation between a “dramatic piece” of “literature” composed by Manuel II and a philosophical debate, where imagination may help but is not essential, mainly when the theme of the debate is, as stated: “Christianity and Islam, and the truth of both”!

Anyhow, let's see what the referred source writes about this “dialogue carried ... by the erudite Byzantine emperor Manuel II Paleologus and an educated Persian on the subject of Christianity and Islam, and the truth of both.”

“From October to December of 1391 the emperor enjoyed the hospitality of the *Muderris* (=Kadi) at Ankara. A Muslim born to Christian parents acted as interpreter between the emperor and the *Kadi*. The result of these conversations was the “Twenty-six Dialogues with a Persian,” dedicated to his brother Theodore I. By 1399 the work had received its final editing. Presumably the emperor took notes at the time of the conversations. Apart from the emperor's writings there is no independent proof that the conversations ever took place. They must represent a mixture of fact and fiction. At the end, the *Kadi* declared that he was ready to come to Constantinople and continue the conversation with Manuel.

¹¹ <http://www.roman-emperors.org/manuel2.htm>

With this work, which must have been composed between the end of the campaign and the break with *Bayazit* (1392-94), Manuel made an important contribution to the knowledge of Islam on the part of the Christians. » (Ibid)

Then, this emperor is presented to us by the Pope through the editor, Theodore Khoury, who observes: "the emperor, as a Byzantine shaped by Greek philosophy..."

When were Byzantines shaped by Greek Philosophy in the XIV Century? Is it the Greek philosophy that the Muslims translated in Arabic in Cordoba and Baghdad? Because, according to my sources, the Church considered Greek philosophy as the product of the Devil. Just read the book of Umberto Eco, "The Name of the Rose" or watch the homonymous film to see what I'm talking about.

Here's the same Church that used to curse Greek Philosophy that now pretends that it's its heritage.

I understand that there was an evolution now, in the XXI C. But here we're in the context of Byzantine emperors? And we're not far from the arrival of the terrible so-called "Holy Inquisition".

ANY RELIABLE REFERENCE? Why The Persian precisely?

The reference to the dialogue between the emperor and the Persian: The Pope refers to his source as an "edition by Professor Theodore Khoury (Münster) of part of the dialogue..."

For a reputed scholar as H. H. Pope Benedict XVI, who is a reference for millions of human beings, the reference should have been clearer during the Conference. In fact, the Pope refers to the above mentioned: "Twenty-six Dialogues with a Persian" that Manuel II wrote and dedicated to his brother Theodore I. Our source indicates that "By 1399 the work had received its final editing". It doesn't seem so final, since Adel Khoury edited it again. In which language, which translation, how accurate? We cannot know by now.

Now, that we have the original title of the works from which the Pope quoted and that he exposed in his dissertation about Christianity and Islam, and their truths, let's have a close look at this title, before proceeding in the analysis of the contents and whereabouts.

"The emperor relied for his sources on the Apology of Christianity against Islam by his maternal grandfather, John VI Cantacuzenus. That in turn rested on the "Confutatio Alchorani" by the Dominican friar Ricoldo of Montecroce (died 1320), which Demetrius Kydones had translated into Greek. Grandfather and grandson thus remained entirely within the framework of traditional Byzantine anti-Islamic polemics. It is noteworthy that the emperor does not use the concept of Sarakenoi (Saracens), customary in Byzantine terminology."¹²

How can I as a Muslim living in the XXI Century understand why H. H. Pope Benedict XVI relies on the traditional Byzantine anti-Islamic literature?
How can I tell myself that the choice of Theodore Khoury is innocent?

Are we living in the same world than the world that saw the fierce opposition between Byzantines and Muslims, or is someone trying to wake up old dark demons?

That was for the intellectual orientations and the thought guidelines.

On a more down-to-earth literary consideration, it's not easy for me to understand either why such a title was given to such work. My concern focuses on the part of the title that reads: "... with a Persian". The emperor was in Ankara or its surroundings, guest of a Turkish magistrate, and he discussed with people and took notes that he compiled to produce this work; so what do the Persian has to do in this story?

To answer myself, I immediately thought about The Persian Letters of the admirable French Baron de Montesquieu. And I also thought that Popes may probably be somehow disappointed by the lack of courtesy embedded in many of these letters. "for instance, in [Letter] XXIV Rica describes the Pope as a

¹² <http://www.roman-emperors.org/manuel2.htm>

"magician" who can "make the king believe that three are only one, or else that the bread one eats is not bread, or that the wine one drinks is not wine, and a thousand other things of the same kind,¹³" as a literary satire of certain aspects of Christian dogma."

But I quickly realized I was making a wrong connection since "*Twenty-six Dialogues with a Persian*" was ready in 1399 when *Les Lettres persanes* was first published in Amsterdam in 1721.

So here am I in the first case again: What do the Persian has to do in this story?

I tried to investigate in other sources, and thought that those extraordinary German classic composers would help me. I almost thought that I've found my guide in Robert Schumann's *Das paradies and die Peri* (op. 50, 1843). His story tells about Peri, a spirit in Persian mythology. I felt I was not far from the truth since I had many ingredients: a German, a Persian, a spirit, Angels and some mythology that can simply arrange some missing stones in my mental building. Here's the excerpt from the article written by Christopher H. Gibbs¹⁴:

"The story tells of a Peri, a spirit in Persian mythology born of the union between a fallen angel and a mortal, who offers a series of three gifts, the first two unsuccessful, before ultimately entering Paradise. Schumann's score is divided into three sections reflecting the penitential offerings she presents for admittance. An angel announces (in Moore's words): "'Tis written in the Book of Fate/The Peri yet may be forgiven/Who brings to the eterman gate/The gift that is most dear to Heaven!/Go, seek it, and redeem thy sin/'Tis sweet to let the pardon'd in!" The first gift is the blood of a young fallen soldier slain in India by the tyrant Gazna ("the last glorious drop his heart has shed"). After this offering is rejected, the Peri, now in plague-stricken Egypt, presents as her second gift the last sigh of a maiden who chooses to infect herself, dying in the arms of her sick lover ("One kiss the maiden gives, one last/Long kiss, which she expires in giving!"). Moving on to Syria, the Peri finds the gift that unlocks the gates to Paradise: tears of a despicable man who has wrought untold evil but who is overcome when he sees an innocent youth saying his prayers ("Blest tears of soul-felt penitence!")."

But except the pleasure of reading about mythology and classic music, I understood that I won't find anything related to "The Persian".

The bibliographic research suggested also some hints. In fact, the Fordham website gave me a list of the works pertinent to my subject:

"Manuel II, Emperor 1350-1425
14-15C

ed and French trans. *Entretiens avec un **Musulman** : 7e controverse: introd., texte critique, traduction et notes*, by Theodore Khoury, (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1966) Series title: Sources chretiennes ; no 115.

German.

*Dialoge mit einem **Muslim***, (Wurzburg : Echter ; Altenberge : Oros, 1993-),

¹³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persian_Letters

¹⁴ http://www.americansymphony.org/dialogues_extensions/season/dialogue_detail.cfm?ID=59&season=2005-2006

Corpus Islamo-Christianum 4.

Dialoge mit einem "Perser", [hrsg. von] Erich Trapp, (Vienna: In Kommission bei G. Bohlaus, Nachf., 1966), Wiener byzantinistische Studien ; Bd."

As you can see in bold (my emphasis), the French and the first German translation talk about a dialogue with a **Muslim**. In the French one, even the name of Theodore Khoury is provided.

Things get somehow complicated with the third, where we find again our Persian under its German translation: "**Perser**".

Are we talking about the same book? Are they different versions? If so, why should the Pope rely on the older (1966) with "the **Persian**", rather than the relatively new one (1993) with "the **Muslim**".

Going back to Greek resources, The Thesaurus Linguae Graecae of the University of California gave me a new title:

Dialogi cum **mahometano** {3200.002}

Theol.

E. Trapp, *Manuel II. Palaiologos. Dialoge mit einem "Perser"* [Wiener Byzantinistische Studien 2. Vienna: Böhlau, 1966]: 3-302.

Being a translator myself, I really can't understand how a translator transforms the Latin "mahometano" into the German "Perser" even though he has put brackets as an excuse!

You can see a reasonable translation in the following reference, where matrimonio (marriage) was in fact translated as marriage, and not as divorce or free union:

Dialogus de **matrimonio** {3200.005}

Rhet., Dialog.

A.D. Angelou, *Manuel Palaiologos, Dialogue with the Empress-Mother on Marriage* [Byzantina Vindobonensia 19. Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1991]: 60-116.

My last attempt was to go to the church; no, not for praying, because I'm an ordinary Muslim who goes to a mosque or prays at home or in other places. I went to the biographic/bibliographic glossary of the Church lexicon¹⁵ in German, searching for our Manuel Palaiologos.

I found that the author to which the Pope refers: (Adel Théodore Khoury), has indeed written a biographic essay about this emperor: Adel-Théodore Khoury, *L'empereur Manuel II Paléologue (1350-1425). Esquisse biographique*, in: Proche-Orient Chrétien 15, 1965, 127-144; 18, 1968, 29-49.

And that once again the reference to the book is with « **Persian** » in its title, even though it's in French this time: Edmond Voordeckers, Les `Entretiens avec un **Perse**' de l'empereur Manuel II Paléologue, in: Byz (B) 36, 1966, 311-317;

And the question remains unanswered: "Why did the emperor Manuel II Paleologus, name his work: 'Twenty-six Dialogues with a Persian'? And not with a Turk? A Moor? An Arab? A Muslim (he probably did!)? Or even a Mahometan, as they used to call Muslims? Dazzling.

The only explanation lies in the original title and its translation, as explained above.

¹⁵ http://www.bautz.de/bbkl/m/manuel_pa.shtml

But one can leave aside this confusion and enrich the debate by providing another version of this story and let others decide about the real facts that occurred:

"...The emperor, who on the coins still bore the title King and Autokrator, was as a vassal of course subject to the sultan's orders on campaign -- the sultan who amused himself at banquets, while the emperor discussed Islam with the *Kadi*.¹⁶"

In this version, he discussed with the *Kadi*, and not with a mysterious Persian. Although the point is not really essential, it gives an idea about the choices of:

- The writer of the 'Twenty-six Dialogues with a Persian';
- The translator jumping from a Muslim (belief) to a Persian (nation)
- Our illustrious lecturer, concerning his references.

¹⁶ <http://www.roman-emperors.org/manuel2.htm>

DIALOGUE OR NOT DIALOGUE?

The essential question

Did you say a dialogue?

Yes, it was a dialogue, since there were presumably two interlocutors:

- The erudite Byzantine emperor Manuel II Paleologus, in one side; and
- The educated (super-silent) Persian in front of him.

But I have the impression that our Persian is nothing more than a *figurantes* in the comedy. Isn't he there just to provide legitimacy to the emperor?

In this case, our popular imagination has a nice saying about someone who speaks monologue and thinks he's having a dialogue. They say down here in public cafés: "The nightingale sings and its wings answer it".

Yes, because the explanation given by the Pope, is hardly convincing: "It was presumably the emperor himself who set down this dialogue...; and this would explain why his arguments are given in greater detail than those of his Persian interlocutor."

And to say it frankly, I find this other interpretation far more convincing and logical: "Apart from the emperor's writings there is no independent proof that the conversations ever took place. They must represent a mixture of fact and fiction. ¹⁷»

And starting from this statement, I let you imagine what the emperor may have written. Well, he's free if we consider that his is a literary creation.

But no one can pretend to present us this piece of imagination as a documented reasonable piece of thought. Not even the Pope. Mainly if he uses it a starting point of what's going to be a reflection on "Christianity and Islam, and their truths".

My God, if the Vatican Library is so poor, then I'll be tempted to disbelieve those who say that they have huge hidden treasures that have been collected all along centuries, and that have an inestimable value. Some even pretend that the Vatican is the wealthiest State on earth. My God! How can it be? A group of poor ecclesiastics who have dedicated their lives to God, and who live in austerity, with no silk, no gold, no excessive food or drinks, no luxurious palaces, no private airplanes... just worship and sincerity...

¹⁷ <http://www.roman-emperors.org/manuel2.htm>

The right to answer is granted in intellectual fairness. And as H. H. Pope Shenoda III, also said¹⁸, if the opinion of the “erudite emperor” was presented, then the counter-opinion of his Persian interlocutor had to be presented too. Otherwise there’s bias!

¹⁸ I heard on Al Jazeera TV news channel (September 17, 2006) during the main evening news, a report stating that the Pope Shenoda III, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark , said among other remarks about the Pope Benedict XVI lecture, that it lacked the necessary answer of the Persian interlocutor.

THE STARTING POINT OF THE MESS

An hypothesis as a starting point of a comparative religions theme?

I don't know to which extent the Pope likes physical sports. I don't know if he has any idea about sports rules and regulations. One is particularly interesting in this case. It's related to athletics in general, and particularly to racing.

The International Association of Athletics Federation states in its "Competition Rules 2006-2007"; Chapter 5 – Section III – Track Events – Rule 162 – The start (p.106) what follows:

1. The start of a race shall be denoted by a white line 5cm wide. In all races not run in lanes the start line shall be curved, so that all the athletes start the same distance from the finish. Stations in events at all distances shall be numbered from left to right, facing the direction of running.
2. All races shall be started by the report of the Starter's gun or approved starting apparatus fired upwards after he has ascertained that athletes are steady and in the correct starting position.

We can easily see that the IAAF gives a great importance to the start and the starting points and the starting blocks. It's very acceptable, since a good correct start determines the final result. A wrong start is immediately sanctioned, as stated by the IAAF in other paragraphs.

I quote from the Pope's lecture: "here I would like to discuss only one point - itself rather marginal to the dialogue as a whole - which, in the context of the issue of "faith and reason", I found interesting and which can serve as the starting-point for my reflections on this issue."

The starting point in this lecture is -in my point of view- even more important than the starting point on which the IAAF focuses. Because:

- Theirs may be sanctioned, and the race re-run. But can you imagine me asking the Pope to re-read his conference if the starting-point is wrong?
- Theirs deals with a physical activity, the Pope's is the starting-point of his reflections;
- Theirs does not have so much effect, except on the TV programs who present the events, but the Pope's is so important, because he has millions of followers who often follow in good faith.

Now, we can legitimately ask: is this starting point acceptable, or in sports term: is the starting point valid?

The Pope defines his starting point as: "only one point - itself rather marginal to the dialogue as a whole..."

And he explains the reasons of this choice, saying: "in the context of the issue of "faith and reason", I found interesting."

He states the place of this important point that will constitute the starting point of his reflections, saying: "In the seventh conversation". So it's really a choice.

Yes it wasn't in any of the other twenty-five dialogues; it has been found in the seventh. The audience of the conference as well as its readers are so curious to know about this theme.

And the answer drops: "theme of the holy war".

And here's again the complete introduction of this point on which the Pope will build his reflections: "...here I would like to discuss only one point - itself rather marginal to the dialogue as a whole - which, in the context of the issue of "faith and reason", I found interesting and which can serve as the starting-point for my reflections on this issue.

In the seventh conversation (*4V8,>4H - controversy) edited by Professor Khoury, the emperor touches on the theme of the holy war."

I know that as a lecturer, the Pope is free to enter to his ideas from any door he likes; but then as a listener, I may legitimately ask myself:

- Is the holy war, the appropriate gate?
- Why shall the Pope in September 2006, chose such a burning gate and open Hell's doors, as they say?
- What has the holy war to do with "faith and reason" in a European University debate in XXI Century?
- What has the holy war to do with "Christianity and Islam, and the truth of both"?
- Is the Pope talking about the holy war as it was understood in the XIV and XV C. or its new connotations as we hear in this very Century?

Here's what the eminent Prof. K. S. Ramakrishna Rao, Head of the Department of Philosophy, Government College for Women University of Mysore, Mandya, writes:

"Gibbon, a historian of world repute says, 'A pernicious tenet has been imputed to Mohammadans, the duty of extirpating all the religions by sword.' This charge based on ignorance and bigotry, says the eminent historian, is refuted by Quran, by history of Muslim conquerors and by their public and legal toleration of Christian worship."¹⁹

¹⁹ Full text available at the end of the book in the Appendix section.

LET'S ASK THE EXPERTS!

I quote from the lecture:

"The emperor must have known that sura 2, 256 reads: "There is no compulsion in religion". According to the experts, this is one of the suras of the early period, when Mohammed was still powerless and under threat."

I'm so sorry to see the Pope making this confusion! It's as if a tourist who comes to visit Germany, goes to Munich, but is convinced that he's visiting Köln. Although it's true that he's visiting Germany, Munich is not Köln!

The English translation of the sura 2, 256 reads fully as follows: "Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error: whoever rejects Evil and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold that never breaks. And Allah heareth and knoweth all things." (Quran)

It is in fact one of the early suras, revealed in Mecca.

- Many Islamic scholars (Sulayman Bin Moussa; Ibn Massud, Al-Kurtubi and others) say that it has abrogated (nasakhat = cancelled and substituted) another sura, that says: "O Prophet! Strive hard against the Unbelievers and the Hypocrites, and be firm against them. Their abode is Hell, an evil refuge indeed. » (9-73).

As you can see, according to those scholars: "No compulsion in religion" is the updated version, because it cancelled and substituted: "Strive hard against the Unbelievers and the Hypocrites".

But the other version has other interesting things to say too:

- Other Islamic scholars say that the referred sura wasn't abrogated; as is the case of other suras that were revealed in the early period, they state furthermore that the value of this sura is general and everlasting as an ethic rule.

As a scientific proof, just consider that other essential suras of the Quran were revealed in the early period and were never abrogated.

I'll give just three chapters (Mary – Ch. 19; and Yassine – Ch. 36; and Fidelity – Ch. 112). Altogether, they comprise 185 suras and were revealed in Mecca

The Fidelity in particular was revealed as the Pope said in: "the early period, when Mohammed was still powerless and under threat." It's considered as one of the most important of the Quran and its English translation reads: "[1] Say: He is Allah, the One and Only; [2] Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; [3] He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; [4] And there is none like unto Him."

As you can see, in both cases: whether the sura the Pope refers to, was or was not abrogated by another one, he used the wrong example, as if he wanted first to destabilize and destroy any possible antithesis to his thesis, before explaining his thought.

But it wasn't done in the appropriate way! And what was supposed to be an illustration of the hypothesis ended to be a strong proof of the weakness of the demonstration. In fact, "no compulsion in religion" is a general standing and everlasting truth in the Islamic faith. It's a proof of its tolerance; it's perhaps one of the first invitations, made some fourteen centuries ago, to the dialogue of civilizations.

Now, let's see why this sura was revealed to our Prophet. We have a science called: "the reasons of the revelation" (*Asbab al-nuzul*). I think that this very reason is really interesting because it deals with the early relationship between "Christianity and Islam", i.e. themes of the Pope's lecture.

There are different fonts, so to avoid much arguing, I have selected one widely accepted reason of its revelation among Islamic scholars.

*Ibn Kathir*²⁰ as well as *al-Kurtubi*²¹ report that this sura was revealed as an answer to a man called *al-Hussayny* who was a Muslim and who had two sons who were Christians. *Al-Hussayny* went to the Prophet and said that he wanted to oblige his sons to convert to Islam. The sura was revealed saying: "No compulsion in religion".

Did you see more tolerance than that? God forbade even to a father to forcefully convert his sons.

I'm really tempted to compare with the missionaries who oblige hungry poor people in Africa and Asia to wear the cross if they want food to survive. Or to the colonizing soldiers who entered our countries, followed by priests and crosses.

²⁰ One of the major specialists of the exegesis of the Quran, in Islamic history.

²¹ Ibid

WHEN A QUESTION IS ASKED, WE DO OUR BEST TO ANSWER

The Pope quoted this question said by the "erudite emperor": "Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new..."

I will do as if I didn't read the insults (i.e. the rest of the quotation).

Books and books have been written as an answer to this request. As I don't want to annoy you, I'll give just four new things that Muhammad brought: two of them concern Mary and Jesus-Christ; the third may have been the source of human rights declaration; and the fourth as the basis for the development of the scientific spirit that deals with experimentation and "reason", since it's mentioned later in the Pope's lecture.

1- Mary The Virgin. The holy woman, mother of Jesus-Christ was considered by the Jews as an unchaste woman. Here's how the Quran relates with dignity and divine refinement its genuine story:

[16] Relate in the Book (the story of) Maryam, when she withdrew from her family to a place in the East.

[17] She placed a screen (to screen herself) from them; then We sent to her Our angel, and he appeared before her as a man in all respects.

[18] She said: "I seek refuge from thee to (Allah) Most Gracious: (come not near) if thou dost fear Allah."

[19] He said: "Nay, I am only a Messenger from thy Lord, (to announce) to thee the gift of a holy son."

[20] She said: "How shall I have a son, seeing that no man has touched me, and I am not unchaste?"

[21] He said: "So (it will be): thy Lord saith, 'That is easy for Me: and (We wish) to appoint him as a Sign unto men and a Mercy from Us': it is matter (so) decreed."

[22] So she conceived him, and she retired with him to a remote place.

[23] And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm tree: she cried (in her anguish) "Ah! Would that I had died before this! Would that I had been a thing forgotten and out of sight!"

[24] But (a voice) cried to her from beneath the (palm-tree): "Grieve not! For thy Lord hath provided a rivulet beneath thee;

[25] "And shake towards thyself the trunk of the palm-tree; it will let fall fresh ripe dates upon thee.

[26] "So eat and drink and cool (thine) eye. And if thou dost see any man, say, 'I have vowed a fast to (Allah) Most Gracious, and this day will I enter into no talk with any human being'"

[27] At length she brought the (babe) to her people, carrying him (in her arms). They said: "O Maryam! Truly an amazing thing hast thou brought!

[28] "O sister of Harun! Thy father was not a man of evil, nor thy mother a woman unchaste!"

[29] But she pointed to the babe. They said: "How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle?"

[30] He said: "I am indeed a servant of Allah: He hath given me revelation and made me a prophet;

[31] "And He hath made me blessed wheresoever I be, and hath enjoined on me Prayer and Charity as long as I live:

[32] "(He) hath made me kind to my mother, and not overbearing or miserable;

[33] "So Peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life (again)!"

[34] Such (was) 'Isa the son of Maryam: (it is) a statement of truth, about which they (vainly) dispute.

[35] It is not befitting to (the majesty of) Allah that He should beget a son. Glory be to Him! when He determines a matter, He only says to it, "Be," and it is.

[36] Verily Allah is my Lord and your Lord: Him therefore serve ye: this is a way that is straight.

[37] But the sects differ among themselves: and woe to the Unbelievers because of the (coming) Judgment of a momentous Day!

(Quran; Chapter 19; 16 to 37).

Didn't Muhammad bring anything new???

2. Jesus-Christ: Muslims fulfil on a regular basis five regular prayers to worship God daily. One feature is interesting to know. Each time Muslims sit after their prayers, they say: *Salamun ala al-Mursaleen*, that I translated in English as: *Peace on the Messengers*, greeting and honoring thus Muhammad, Jesus (Isa in Arabic) and all the Messengers. It's also widely known that the pillar of the Islamic faith is the belief in all Prophets and Messengers that God sent – chronologically- to mankind, among which is Jesus-Christ. We do not exaggerate and give Jesus the divine feature that the Church has decided to give him in the First Council of Nicaea²² in 325 A.D. Let's see what our Merciful and Blessing God (not the human beings in the Church), says about that:

[110] Then will Allah say: "O 'Isa the son of Maryam! Recount My favour to thee and to thy mother. Behold! I strengthened thee with the holy spirit, so that thou didst speak to the people in childhood and in maturity. Behold! I taught thee the Book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel. And behold! Thou makest out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, by My leave, and thou breathest into it, and it becometh a bird by My leave, and thou healest those born blind, and the lepers, by My leave. And behold! Thou bringest forth the dead by My leave. And behold! I did restrain the Children of Israel from (violence to) thee when thou didst show them the Clear Signs, and the Unbelievers among them said: 'This is nothing but evident magic.'

[111] "And behold! I inspired the Disciples to have faith in Me and Mine Messenger; they said, 'We have faith, and do thou bear witness that we bow to Allah as Muslims.'"

[112] Behold! The Disciples said: "O 'Isa the son of Maryam! Can thy Lord send down to us a Table set (with viands) from heaven?" Said 'Isa: "Fear Allah, if ye have faith."

²² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Council_of_Nicaea

[113] They said: "We only wish to eat thereof and satisfy our hearts, and to know that thou has indeed told us the truth; and that we ourselves may be witnesses to the miracle."

[114] Said 'Isa the son of Maryam: "O Allah our Lord! Send us from heaven a Table set (with viands), that there may be for us - for the first and the last of us - a solemn festival and a Sign from Thee; and provide for our sustenance, for Thou art the best Sustainer (of our needs)."

[115] Allah said: "I will send it down unto you; but if any of you after that resisteth faith, I will punish him with a penalty such as I have not inflicted on any one among all the peoples."

[116] And behold! Allah will say: "O 'Isa the son of Maryam! Didst thou say unto men, 'Worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of Allah?'" He will say: "Glory to Thee! Never could I say what I had no right (to say). Had I said such a thing, Thou wouldst indeed have known it. Thou knowest what is in my heart, though I know not what is in Thine. For Thou knowest in full all that is hidden.

[117] "Never said I to them aught except what Thou didst command me to say, to wit, 'Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord'; and I was a witness over them whilst I dwelt amongst them; when thou didst take me up thou wast the Watcher over them, and Thou art a witness to all things.

[118] "If Thou dost punish them, they are Thy servants: if Thou dost forgive them, Thou art the Exalted in power, the Wise."

[119] Allah will say: "This is a day on which the truthful will profit from their truth: theirs are Gardens, with rivers flowing beneath, their eternal home: Allah well-pleased with them, and they with Allah: that is the great salvation, (The fulfilment of all desires).

(Quran; Chapter 5; 110 to 119).

Didn't Muhammad bring anything new???

Human rights: In a famous hadith, the Prophet reports: "God said: You all descend from Adam, and Adam is from dust". So, we all, -black, white, yellow and red; men and women are equal in front of God.

This statement dates from the time of the Prophet Muhammad, exactly from the beginning of the seventh Century A.D. It's quite different from the Church's statement centuries and centuries later that thought that blacks and women had no souls.

The Prophet says in another hadith: "You are all perfectly equal, as the teeth of a comb".

And he said also: "There's no difference between an Arab and a non-Arab except by *taqwa* (i.e. devotion and piety)".

One of his Companions said: "When did you put humans into slavery whereas their mothers gave birth to them, free?".

Is it so different from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights? It states in its Article 1:

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood"

Yes, the best among us, is not the one who has a given eyes colour, or a given passport. The best is the most righteous. God says in the message He revealed to Muhammad: "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not

that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you." (Quran 49; 13).
This sounds as perfect justice and equity between human beings.

Didn't Muhammad bring anything new???

Reason and science as reliable guides: I will not annoy you by saying for example that some of our scholars consider that Muhammad through his message has closed definitely the *mythos* and started the *logos* era for mankind. It's a theory that scholars defend rather well and that they illustrate abundantly. I will just rely on direct sources and historic facts that may be checked by your parties and mine.

Just to give you a quick idea of the rank that God gave to people of knowledge, think that he positioned them immediately after Him and His Angels. Well, you agree that the third rank in the absolute (all times and spaces) is really exceptional.

[18] There is no god but He: that is the witness of Allah, His angels, and those endowed with knowledge, standing firm on justice. There is no god but He the Exalted in Power, the Wise. (Quran; Chapter 3; 18).

I would add that it sounds really attractive to be endowed with knowledge and be listed in third position after God the Creator of the Universes and after His Angels!

That's what pushed the Muslims in all times to make any possible sacrifice to have the knowledge. That's how they considered knowledge in any place of the world, worth to be learned. That's how they dug in Greek Philosophy, Indian mathematics, Persian Poetry, Roman architecture, Latin literature... Aren't experimental sciences born in the hands of the Muslims in what you call Middle-Ages?? The Greek were splendid in theoretic investigations, but the Muslims brought sciences to the hands of all men, through experimental methodology.

Let me see the basements on which the material life in the Western culture is built. It seems to rely on rationality. The latter has been defined by the French Descartes in his "Règles de la Raison" (Tr: The Reason Rules). The latter says: "Le doute mène à la raison" (Tr: Doubt leads to Reason). But miracle; I've found the same saying –exactly the same word for word- in Abu Hamed al-Ghazali writings: "Doubt leads to Reason"²³. There were no copyrights in that period, but let's have a quick investigation!

René Descartes lived from 1596 until 1650 A.D.

Abu Hamed al-Ghazali lived from 1058 until 1112 A.D.

Oh my God! Is it possible that the Western technical (and philosophic) civilization relies on the Cartesianism that in fact is a copy –a paraphrase- and an inspiration of what we could call "al-Ghazalism"?

It even seems that in Descartes' house in France, there's an annotated manuscript where the French philosopher refers to the above-mentioned

²³ The original Arabic sentence reads : (الشك طريق إلى اليقين) a basic text in Muslim philosophy.

quotation of al-Ghazali²⁴ and says approximately that it should be added to his work. He probably forgot to add the source. As I told you, there were no copyrights in those times.

Didn't Muhammad bring anything new???

Let's now leave philosophy and philosophers and their headache, and let's have a thorough look at the original source of the Muslims: the Quran.

There are in the Quran at least 32 suras²⁵ that encourage the thought and the use of the reason, as well as the spread of knowledge and sciences. I'll avoid you statistics concerning the occurrence of scientific approaches to the universe, the man and his psychology.

In his "*Episteme of the birth of the scientific modern reason*"²⁶, talking about the experimental method and referring to God in the Coran, M. al-Jelidi says:

[This God is "very attentive" to the nature and shows a great interest to its smallest details and elements, with their various sizes, colours, tastes, odours, times and numbers. He is a natural God Who is very close to humans and Who uses instinctive sensible images to make the ideas understandable by common people, as He uses the hypothetic deductive methodology: "say if... then..." Furthermore, He suggests to humans to use this deductive methodology: deducing nature's peculiar smallest details, and educating their reasoning gift to get used to this methodology through the continuous enrichment of their visual and their symbolic memory. It's done through the conscious production of concepts more and more generalized about natural existences. The preliminary details are embraced into preliminary concepts, and the groups of concepts are embraced into larger concepts. This way the idea of God from this point of view is embraced in a theory where natural phenomena are embraced into universal systems that go larger and larger until arriving at that extreme extension that will never be reached. There's therefore no limit to the thought that is in fact God's extension "Allah is All-Embracing, and He knoweth all things" (this sura is repeated 6 times in the Quran²⁷).

So the God honoured in this last revelation is not like the lazy God of Aristotle²⁸, who pushed the world then "sat" to watch its movement. It's an active God who is involved in the universe's march "Of Him seeks (its need) every creature in the heavens and on earth: every day He hath occupations!" (Quran; 55-29); and He

²⁴ For an exhaustive comparison between the two philosophers, see: M. Bejou's edition (Damascus: 1992) with notes, introduction (mini study of the influence of al-Ghazali's methodical doubt on Descartes). In:

<http://www.ghazali.org/site/corpus.htm>.

²⁵ Quran : Encouraging thought and reason in Chapter 2 ; suras 2, 72, 170, 240, 268 – Chapter 3 ; suras 7, 190 – Chapter 5 ; suras 60, 105 ; Chapter 8 ; sura 22 ; Chapter 12 ; sura 111 ; Chapter 13 ; suras 4, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 ; Chapter 14 ; sura 54 ; Chapter 15 ; sura 75 ; Chapter 20 ; sura 126 ; Chapter 22 ; sura 44 ; Chapter 30 ; sura 23 ; Chapter 38 ; suras 28, 42 ; Chapter 39 ; suras 10, 16 ; Chapter 45 ; sura 4 ; Chapter 59 ; sura 14. Encouraging the spread of knowledge and sciences in Chapter 2 ; suras 145, 158, 173 ; Chapter 3 ; sura 187 ; Chapter 4 ; suras 37, 44 ; Chapter 7 ; sura 169.

²⁶ Original Arabic work : « *Khatm al-Noubuwah : Ebistemiati mawled al-akl al-ilmi al-hadith* » M'saddek al-Jelidi ; Tunis 2002 ; Matbaat al-khadamat al-saria.

²⁷ Note of the humble writer and not standing in the above-referenced al-Jelidi book: Quran : 2-247 ; 2-261 ; 2-268 ; 3-73 ; 5-54 ; 2-268.

²⁸ *Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis*; Philo of Alexandria. A Jewish philosopher (First Century A.D.) who tried to show complementarity between the Bible and Plato ideas. He influenced the Church's finding fathers.

continues to create new things so that humans do not rely on the illusion of knowing everything "and He has created (other) things of which ye have no knowledge" (Quran; 16-8). Those are images that The Revelation wanted us to have in mind about the universe's principles.]

Is it still legitimate (ethically and scientifically) to ask: "Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new...?"

We could have understood this kind of inquisitive thought in the XIV Century, but is it legitimate today?

IS GOD TRANSCENDENT AND NOT BOUND BY RATIONALITY IN ISLAM?

God has bound Himself with Mercy, He has forbidden to Himself injustice

Quoting Theodore Khoury, The Pope states: "But for Muslim teaching, God is absolutely transcendent. His will is not bound up with any of our categories, even that of rationality."

Now, how can T. Khoury lead the Pope into confusion?

When dealing with God in the Muslim teaching isn't the first healthy reaction to go and see His Ninety Nine Beautiful Names and Attributes (*asma Allah al-Husna*)? If Theodore is Theodore, can I call him Manuel? Am I allowed to call H. H. Pope Benedict XVI, the Pope John XV?

Let's see in the following selected names, among God's Ninety Nine Beautiful Names if it's true that's God is absolutely Transcendent and not bound by rationality.

"Not bound by rationality" is really a deep lack of respect. But let's take it from the philosophic point of view and let's see what is the relationship, –extrapolating from T. Khoury's statement- between God in the Muslim tradition and the famous film: "One flew over the cuckoo's nest"?

If by Transcendent, we understand for example those names compound by The All + attribute; then among ninety nine names, we find thirteen where God is named with all + attributes and they are: The All-Beneficent; The All-Compelling Subduer; The All-Knowing; The All-Hearing; The All-Seeing; The All-Aware; The All-Forgiving; The All-Embracing; The All-Glorious; The All-Praiseworthy; The All-Able; The All-Determiner; The All-Rich.

Before proceeding to try to answer the statement pretending that God in Islam is not bound with rationality, I would like as a prelude to remind the illustrious lecturer and T. Khoury that God in Islam has bound Himself with certain things.

For example He bound Himself with Mercy, and we can read: "He hath inscribed for Himself (the rule) of Mercy"

"Say: "To whom belongeth all that is in the heavens and on earth?" Say: "To Allah. He hath inscribed for Himself (the rule of) Mercy. That He will gather you together for the Day of Judgment, there is no doubt whatever. It is they who have lost their own souls who will not believe." (Quran; Chapter 6; 12).

Then we have these two attributes: God is The Truth (*al-Haqq*) and He is also The Utterly Just (*al 'Adl*). Can a healthy mind imagine that He who is The Truth and The Just, is not bound to avoid untruth and injustice?

God is explicit about injustice in the Quran, and how he has bound Himself to avoid in any/all ways injustice. He says:

"The Word changes not before Me, and I do not the least injustice to My Servants." (Quran Chapter 50; 29) Not the Least is binding between Gentlemen, how can it be when it comes from God?

And He says again :

« But Allah is never unjust towards His Servants » (Quran ; Chapter 40; 31).

Never that is the translation of the Arabic prefix "bi" is to emphasize the commitment of God, and this rule He has bound Himself with.

From the Tradition sources, among the most famous 40 hadiths selected by Imam *al-Nawawi*, we have this one where God states clearly: « O my Servants, I have forbidden to Myself injustice, and I have made it forbidden for you; so do not be unjust towards one another..."²⁹.

I don't really understand how one can bind himself with Mercy, Truth, and Justice while forbidding to Himself injustice without being bound by rationality. Will His Mercy be distributed in an irrational crazy way? But then God bound Himself with Justice, how can He distribute misery along with justice, and not be bound by rationality in the very same time?

T. Khoury states, and the Pope quotes:

"But for Muslim teaching, God is absolutely transcendent. His will is not bound up with any of our categories, even that of rationality."

- How can God be The Maker (*Al-Bari*) and not be bound by any of our categories, even that of rationality? He made our bodies and the universe in the most rational way. Ask Doctors and Physicians.
- How can God be The Fashioner of Forms (*Al-Musawwir*) and not be bound by any of our categories, even that of rationality? He fashioned us in the most beautiful way in our mother limbs, and so did He with the rest of the creation. Ask the specialists of the Greek arts (the cannons) and how they got inspired by the harmonious proportions of the bodies of the beautiful young men as God created them.
- How can God be The Expert (*Al-Khabeer*) and not be bound by any of our categories, even that of rationality? Ask the audience made of "the representatives of science" to whom the Pope's lecture was given. I cannot imagine it's an audience of people not bound by rationality; although *logos* and *mythos* are tricky and mix often in some *rationae*.
- How can God be The Nourisher (*Al-Muqit*) and not be bound by any of our categories, even that of rationality? Every day and every night, He gave, He gives and He will give food for you and me, for the birds in the skies, the fish in the sea and the ants in their dark holes. Food for the believer and the non-believer, for all his creatures.
- How can God be The Wise (*Al-Hakim*) and not be bound by any of our categories, even that of rationality? Isn't rationality one of many

²⁹ The original Arabic *hadith* states what follows :

(عن أبي ذر الغفاري رضي الله عنه، عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فيما يرويه عن ربه عز وجل أنه قال: "يا عبادي إني حرمت الظلم على نفسي، وجعلته بينكم محرماً فلا تظالموا... إلى آخر الحديث". رواه مسلم)

ingredients of wisdom? Even though some say that fools are also wise (The exception that confirms the rule). Ask the philosophers?

- How can God be The Guide (*Al-Hadi*) and not be bound by any of our categories, even that of rationality? Will you follow in a tourist trip a crazy guide, who may show you smoky, polluted landscapes instead of the museum you wanted to visit? Ask travel agents.
- How can God be The Patient (*Al-Sabur*) and not be bound by any of our categories, even that of rationality? Doesn't patience include a rational control of oneself to support this and that? Ask those who suffer in silence in this world?

May He give us the requested patience to argue with respect and clarity!

FAITH AND REASON

If the Pope had really had to quote a “literate” who studied such subject in those times, I could have advised to quote Averroes who studied so deeply this binomial, that he was translated and re-translated in Latin, and inspired even the Church. But even if one prefers to avoid quoting Muslims, there is the more authoritative and rather Aristotelian Thomas Aquinas that would have led anyhow to Averroes. And to introduce Averroes to any neophyte reader I’ll quote from Wikipedia in Averroes page:

[Averroes is most famous for his translations and commentaries of Aristotle’s works, which had been mostly forgotten in the West. Before 1150 only a few translated works of Aristotle existed in Latin Europe, and they were not studied much or given much credence by monastic scholars. It was through the Latin translations of Averroes’s work beginning in the 12th century that the legacy of Aristotle was recovered in the West.

Averroes’s work on Aristotle spans almost three decades, and he wrote commentaries on almost all of Aristotle’s work except for Aristotle’s *Politics*, to which he did not have access. Hebrew translations of his work also had a lasting impact on Jewish philosophy.]

Then the quote goes about Averroes influence on Christian scholars:

[His ideas were assimilated by Siger of Brabant and Thomas Aquinas and others (especially in the University of Paris) within the Christian scholastic tradition which valued Aristotelian logic.]

Now, I can quote from the published answer of Sheikh al-Qaradawi, Head of the International Union of Islamic Scholars, to the Pope’s lecture

[If we want to compare between the two religions, i.e. Islam and Christianity, we would find it is Christianity in reality that doesn’t take into account the reason in its beliefs. Its instructions say: believe and then learn. Believe blindly, close your eyes and follow me. Whereas, Knowledge comes before faith in Islam, faith is one of the fruits of knowledge, as God says in his Holy Book: “And that those on whom knowledge has been bestowed may learn that the (Qur-an) is the Truth from thy Lord, and that they may believe therein, and their hearts may be made humbly (open) to it” (Quran; Chapter 22; 54). Yes, this way: they know, then they believe then their hearts are made humble.]³⁰ That is the relationship

³⁰ Original ArabicText: : : } : : [54 :] {

between reason and faith in our religion, that's the work flow as they say in modern words!

I will also add after Sheikh al-Qaradawi, that the first word that started the Quran, that is the first word that the Archangel Gabriel brought from God's Font to His Prophet was the verb "read" in the imperative form. Allah says: "Read!" (Quran; Chapter 96; 1) and continues:

- [1] Read! In the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created,
- [2] Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood:
- [3] Read! And thy Lord The Most Bountiful,
- [4] He Who taught (the use of) the Pen,
- [5] Taught man that which he knew not. (Quran; Chapter 96; 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

As a conclusion about faith and rationality, I would like to introduce the point of view of a modern researcher that dedicated many years of his life to study the relationship between Islam and Christianity, through a humanistic approach.

Hicham Djait says in *L'Europe et L'Islam*³¹ :

["The West dominated and still dominates because of its power and its technology. And as long as the Western Man *Homo occidentalis* behaves according to his Promethean goals, he imposes his rhythm and his choice. The West did not only oblige the world to fight it with its own weapons, but furthermore it offers and imposes its foolish development patterns that are suffocating it today...

Therefore, we have to safeguard the sense of rationality and the sense of history. Abdallah Laroui³² rightly considers that: the wrong concept of "underdevelopment" in the absolute is somehow realistic when implemented to the Muslim World. But what does it mean exactly? One fine morning, the West cheated its colleagues in the queue, and started running exhausting itself and the others. But in this –somehow- athletic race, the abnormal game rules stated that who isolates himself will suffocate his competitors and will destroy the last ones. The underdevelopment of the others is nothing more than the reverse side of the turbulent race of a West that chose itself the rhythm, the track and the goal.

Since the "underdevelopment" exists and since modernity and westernization have many positive features, it is necessary to follow until the arrival. And considering that it's not possible to supersede it, it's important to safeguard other lines of value: identity, culture and civilization. Islam cannot compete today with the West in its technology, its science and its power. But we cannot say: let Islam get out of the race, but we say: "Islam should not lose itself in this race". It's better for it to safeguard, plow and refine its share of what is humane.

http://www.qaradawi.net/site/topics/article.aspx?cu_no=2&item_no=4393&version=1&template_id=116&parent_id=114 : “

³¹ Hichem Djait, *L'Europe et L'Islam*; Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1978.

هشام جعيط، أوروبا والإسلام: صدام الثقافة والحداثة، دار الطليعة للطباعة والنشر – بيروت، 2000: p.125 Arabic Translation

³² Abdallah Laroui, Original title: *L'idéologie arabe contemporaine*, Paris FM Fondation, 1982, 2^{ème} édition.

Translated in English by David Carmell : *The crisis of the Arab Intellectual*, University of California Press,

عبدالله العروي: أزمة المثقفين العرب – بيروت، المؤسسة العربية للدراسات والنشر، 1974 Arabic Translation:

و الكتاب هو فصول من كتاب العروي (العرب و الفكر التاريخي ، 1973).

The inner suffering of the West comes indeed from the fact that its modernity devoured its culture... The clash in the West between culture and modernity – from where God has been expelled-, has stripped the human being”.]

In our opinion, it’s not a clash between the West and the others, but rather a clash between the West and itself.

I would like to close this chapter related to faith and reason, by a thought about the implicit rationality in Islam as it was expressed more than a century ago by the French Edouard Montet and re-expressed by the British T. W. Arnold:

“Islam is a religion that is essentially rationalistic in the widest sense of this term considered etymologically and historically....the teachings of the Prophet, the Quran has invariably kept its place as the fundamental starting point, and the... unity of God has always been proclaimed therein with a grandeur a majesty, an invariable purity and with a note of sure conviction, which it is hard to find surpassed outside the pale of Islam....A creed so precise, so stripped of all theological complexities and consequently so accessible to the ordinary understanding might be expected to possess and does indeed possess a marvellous power of winning its way into the consciences of men.³³”

³³ Edward Montet, *La Propagande chrétienne et ses adversaires musulmans*, Paris 1890. And in English, see T. W. Arnold: *The Preaching of Islam*, London 1913.

IBN HAZM, ARNALDEZ, KHOURY AND THE POPE

Here's a full paragraph of the lecture. I don't want to be defined as "selective", even though I'm not as interested in the whole lecture (*mythos* and *ethos*-driven for my taste, and as you know tastes and colours are subjective) as I am in its passages concerning my religion and my civilization.

"The decisive statement in this argument against violent conversion is this: not to act in accordance with reason is contrary to God's nature. The editor, Theodore Khoury, observes: For the emperor, as a Byzantine shaped by Greek philosophy, this statement is self-evident. But for Muslim teaching, God is absolutely transcendent. His will is not bound up with any of our categories, even that of rationality. Here Khoury quotes a work of the noted French Islamist R. Arnaldez, who points out that Ibn Hazn went so far as to state that God is not bound even by his own word, and that nothing would oblige him to reveal the truth to us. Were it God's will, we would even have to practise idolatry."

I could just close my answer by a single quote of the verse in the Quran that deals directly with inviting others to Islam. Here's the way we have to follow: "Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance." (Quran; 16-125)

Where's violent conversion? Is it in wisdom and beautiful preaching? Or in arguing in the best and most gracious way?

Or is it in the forced conversion to Christianity of South Americans, Asians or Africans? Isn't it manifest in the soldiers who embed priests with them while invading our countries? Tunisia for instance was colonized by the French in 1881 A.D. and the Cathedral of Tunis was built the same year?

Regarding the Byzantine emperor shaped by Greek philosophy, please see my answer in the Chapter titled: Faith and Reason. Greek philosophy was seen by the Church as the Devil's production until Averroes explained it to the Christian scholars. Nevertheless, here we are six centuries later arguing in front of the Islamic civilization that Byzantines were shaped by Greek philosophy. When? How? Which way? By whom? Not a single word.

For an illustrious lecturer disserting about philosophy, there seems to be some missing ring in the chain. Its name is: the Muslim civilization³⁴. It's an ethical duty that still requires to be fulfilled.

This reminds me of the introduction written for *A Medieval Banquet in the Alhambra Palace* by Audrey Shabbas³⁵:

³⁴ For an approach to Muslim philosophy, see: www.Muslimphilosophy.com

³⁵ *A Medieval Banquet in the Alhambra Palace* by Audrey Shabbas, editor, AWAIS 1991

"When we study Europe's Middle Ages, we seldom include Spain (at least not until after the "reconquest"). Our libraries abound with books on the Middle Ages, but try to find in any of them a single word about daily life and customs in Spain. It is as if later historians, in order to justify a uniquely "European history", ignored the fact that a vibrant and brilliant civilization created by "Others"—by Arabs, by Muslims, by Jews—by brown and black people—not only existed in Europe, but without whose contributions the region could not have become what it did. When we talk about "Europe's" Renaissance, we never think of its beginnings in Spain several centuries before it reached Italy. It's as if we lopped off a good 1000 years of history—or at least amputated it from Europe. Nothing could be farther from the truth."

Let's go now to Ibn Hazm and how R. Arnaldez comments on him and how Khoury quotes him:

We have a very famous poetry in Arabic about ethics that says:

"The worst is he who focuses on people's defaults,
Like a fly concentrating on plagues locations"³⁶.

The clear message in ethics is not to concentrate on the weak side of people. Not to move a dagger in a plague as they say.

Among all Islamic scholars why should R. Arnaldez focus on Ibn Hazm? Furthermore, why should he concentrate on controversial pages of his works? If Arnaldez is this "noted Islamist" as the Pope has qualified him, isn't it decent and fair that he studies what is consensual in Islam, so that he understands the latter? Exception – I reckon – is very important to study, but cannot be the basics of a whole judgement on a religion such as Islam. It's precisely and exactly what the "noted Islamist" did.

Here's the integral text available today (September 18, 2006) on Wikipedia concerning Ibn Hazm. I personally found the synopsis excellent, because it gives in few words the main features of the famous Andalusian scholar:

Abu Muhammad 'Ali ibn Ahmad ibn Sa`id ibn Hazm (أحمد بن سعيد بن أبو محمد علي بن حزم) (November 7, 994 – August 15, 1069) was an Andalusian Muslim philosopher and theologian of Persian descent [1] born in Córdoba, present day Spain.

He was known for being very well versed, and able to converse with his tongue. It is stated that the way warriors would chop with the sword, he would chop with the tongue. He was born into a very affluent family, with his father being a minister in the government.

He served as a minister in the government multiple times, under different caliphs. He used to serve under the Umayyad Caliphs of Córdoba, and was known to have worked under Al-Mansur Ibn Abi Aamir, *Hajib* (Grand Vizier) to the last of the Umayyad caliphs, Hisham III.

³⁶ Original Arabic verse: شرّ البرية بمساوي الناس مشتغل، مثل الذباب يراعي موضع العلل

He became a scholar late in his life, but ended up becoming one of the most influential scholars. In fact, he wrote over 400 books, in many different fields.

He opposed the allegorical interpretation of religious texts, preferring instead a grammatical and syntactical interpretation of the Qur'an. He granted cognitive legitimacy only to revelation and sensation and considered deductive reasoning insufficient in legal and religious matters. He did much to revitalize the Zahiri madhhab, which denied the legitimacy of legal rulings based upon *qiyas* (analogy) and focused upon the literal meanings of legal injunctions in the Qur'an and hadith. Many of his rulings differed from those of his Zahiri predecessors, and consequently Ibn Hazm's followers are sometimes described as comprising a distinct madhhab.

Ibn Hazm was precisely a literate (his dissertations on love and friendship are famous) and a theologian. We'll focus on his second specialty for our purpose as our illustrious lecturer did.

Zahir in Arabic means apparent, manifest, visible. The *Zahiri* school of thought (a minor one, as compared to the five main schools) denied the legitimacy of legal rulings based upon *qiyas* (analogy), condemning thus the use of reason and reasoning in religion. We are very far from al-Ghazali for example who considers that reason is essential to faith and to religion. The *Zahiris* defended the literal meanings of legal injunctions in the Quran and *Hadith*. In simple words, and if we had to follow this school of thought, we would have to cut the hand of the thief, lapidate the fornicator, implement the retaliation law... So, why does Arnaldez discuss some aspects of Ibn Hazm thought and does not treat all those other aspects?

Ibn Hazm has produced excellent works in many branches of knowledge, and less good works in other branches. He says: "Whomsoever sees his weakness will forget those of others³⁷". He never spoke as an "infallible". Arnaldez should have read the numerous critics and he should have seen how many followers the *Zahirite* school of thought had. Realizing then that they constitute a very small minority, he should have been decent enough not to use their thoughts as a measuring unit, valid to gauge the entire Islamic nation from the XI C. until nowadays.

Can we say that extremist Christian sects represent Christianity?

Can we quote their thought and build upon it our vision of Christianity?

Is this scientific? Do the philosophic praxis and the history of ideas allow us to?

Do the scientific accuracy and the ethic rules allow saying that: "Ibn Hazn went so far as to state that God is not bound even by his own word, and that nothing would oblige him to reveal the truth to us. Were it God's will, we would even have to practise idolatry."?

Do the scientific accuracy and the ethic rules allow using the previous discussable statement as a basis to build the following paragraph that says:

"At this point, as far as understanding of God and thus the concrete practice of religion is concerned, we are faced with an unavoidable dilemma".

³⁷ <http://muslimheritage.com/topics/default.cfm?ArticleID=386>

Where the understanding of God is concerned?
Where the concrete practice of religion is concerned?
Which unavoidable dilemma you are going to face? Except conscience remorse when you build a whole idea on a weak wrong premise.

Do the scientific accuracy and the ethic rules allow using the previous discussable statement as a basis to further build another paragraph on it, or use it as an illustration as when it's said in the lecture:

"This gives rise to positions which clearly approach those of Ibn Hazm and might even lead to the image of a capricious God, who is not even bound to truth and goodness."

We're not really –intellectually speaking- very far from the wind mills of Don Quixote.

Does the exception in thought constitute a valid basement for the building of a whole castle?

I'm sure there isn't any intention to misguide. I'm sure on the other hand that there's confusion and some ignorance of Islamic matters.

Just to give you an idea about what other Islamic scholars think about Ibn Hazm here's what al-Dhahabi said about him:

"I have affection for Abu Muhammad [Ibn Hazm] because of his love for sound hadiths and his knowledge of them, even if I disagree with him in many things which he says concerning the scholars and the defects of hadith and hadith narrators. Nor do I agree with him on [his] disgraceful questions in the principles and branches of the Religion. I am absolutely certain that he was wrong on several matters, but I do not declare him a disbeliever, nor do I declare him misguided. I hope that he and all Muslims will be forgiven. I also defer to his great intelligence and vast knowledge.... [But] if I were to cite every matter in which he erred, it would take too long. End of al-Dhahabi's words.

It has been observed that Ibn Hazm's acrimonious way of making a case against opponents had endeared him to some contemporary Muslim students. In contrast, the scholars of the past used to forbid the reading of al-Fisal which they considered among the most evil of books because of its attacks on the Imams of Islam. Another reason for this affinity of some contemporary readers is the misperception of Ibn Hazm as the champion of the Qur'an and Sunna "as opposed to man-made schools of Law." This misperception leads to taunts such as "Are you following the Prophet -- Allah bless and greet him -- or your Imam?" which, as Shaykh Nur al-Din `Itr pointed out, constitutes disbelief (*kufri*) and shows that the difference between Dawud al-Zahiri's school and what he calls the "Neo-Literalists" (*al-zahiriyya al-jadida*) of today is that the excesses of the former were at least mitigated by true asceticism and fear of Allah."³⁸

And here's how al-Nawawi commented on one of Ibn Hazm *fatwas* about ablutions:

³⁸ http://www.sunnah.org/history/Innovators/ibn_hazm.htm

"All this which Ibn Hazm held is in contravention of the consensus of the scholars, and is the ugliest example of hardened literalism reported from him."³⁹

In addition, Ibn Hazm in his books violated Islamic etiquette in his revilement of past scholars with whom he disagreed.⁴⁰

We have no problems that a scholar is in contravention with the consensus, but how can today's Orientalists rely on exception to build a rule? The exception confirms the rule, but cannot make it.

Some Modern philosophers have another point of view concerning Ibn Hazm. Here's another key of understanding given by Moncef Chelli⁴¹:

"In the IX Century, during the times of Ibn Hazm, there were numerous deviations of Islam, and one would think to be a good Muslim when in fact he had nothing more of the Muslim behaviour. It was then necessary to say things to get back to the roots; although the words in which this would be said, will seem suspect. Getting back to roots needs a thought, but this thought risks to put the roots far away from us. It is for this reason that we cannot take literally what Ibn Hazm says for example. We must not have towards him that *zahirite* behaviour that he preaches himself, for a very simple reason: what he wants to say, he cannot say it, because saying it is already betraying it."

Yes, "We must not have towards him that *zahirite* behaviour that he preaches himself". But that's exactly what Théodore Khoury did.

Théodore Khoury by taking Ibn Hazm literally by his words fell in exactly what he's criticizing. Khoury thus, acted as a mid-way *zahiri*.

³⁹ See *al-mujalla* of Ibn Hazm in two volumes. ("The Brilliant Treatise"),

⁴⁰ See note 24.

⁴¹ Moncef Chelli, *La parole arabe; une théorie de la relativité des cultures*; Ed. Sindbad Paris, 1980, pp 312-13

IT'S THE HOLY PEACE NOT THE HOLY WAR, IF YOU READ WELL!

I quote from the lecture:

"But naturally the emperor also knew the instructions, developed later and recorded in the Qur'an, concerning holy war."

For a lecture, this is too much allusive to be reliable! It presupposes mountains and rivers, when it's perhaps a question of some water drops, or the contrary of course.

It's not clearly stated which proofs there are that the emperor knew those instructions.

An ordinary literary critic will read here, that the speaker is putting words in the mouth of the emperor. There's an allusion to an important matter without further explanations. Isn't this what's expressed by "opening hell's doors"?

Talking further about the Holy war, the illustrious lecturer states: "...without descending in details..."; but two lines later he adds when quoting Manuel II: "...his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached".

So here we are again in plain theory or "myth" of Islam and the sword.

One cannot pretend to avoid details, and then illustrate his thoughts with such biased details; because this idea of spreading Islam by the sword is an old illusion that the Church has developed since to Middle Ages to vilify Muslims.

Without descending into details, as you said, I'll give you some guidelines as food for thought:

- There is not a single passage in the Quran that says to start a war, any kind of war, with the only and exclusive exception that it's for DEFENCE.
- Peace in Islam is considered by God as The Victory. God says: "Verily We have granted thee a manifest Victory" (48-1) and in the same Chapter: "And that Allah may help thee with powerful help." This sura was revealed to the Prophet after the Peace Treaty of *al-Houdaybiya*. When his Companions asked him if that was a victory. He explained that peace was the real victory. Allah's powerful help is given to reach peace and not to wage war, unless to defend oneself from attackers.
- The early Muslims suffered for thirteen years from all kind of torture, humiliation and injustice from the Pagans. It's only then that God revealed to His Prophet: "Fighting is prescribed upon you, and ye dislike it" (2-216). The Muslims dislike indeed fighting and war. Islam is a word that has the same three-rooted consonants of *salaam* (peace in Arabic) they are: *s*, *l* and *m*.
- A quick (but fair) look to the map of the Islamic world lets no doubt that three fifth (3/5) of the Muslims live in countries whose inhabitants

converted to Islam without any fight or war. It was done spontaneously through merchants, men of knowledge and Sufi followers: in Indonesia and China, important regions in India and many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. If this has any significance, it shows that Islam doesn't need violence to spread.⁴²

- The battles that the Messenger of God fought to defend the very existence of Islam during its rise (Pagans were killing Muslims) were interpreted as attacks and conquests. The analogy was quickly drawn between what the prophet did, and what the Muslims did after him. Legitimacy was given to the latter that such conquests would have never been possible without that analogy. (Ibid)
- Soufyan al-Thawri⁴³, one of the five Great Imams that founded the main schools of thought⁴⁴ considered that "Fighting the infidels is not ordnance, unless they start. At that point fighting is a must". (Ibid)
- If you judge ALL Muslims, according to the ideas of SOME of nowadays *Jihadists*; then allow us to do the same with Christians. "What can the Pope tell us about what's related in the Old Testament, Book 5; Chapter 2: Moses and his followers have to kill all males with their spades in the lands where they enter... Concerning the Promised Land, their religion binds them to kill any living human being! We understand that this is the genocide that European Christians performed with Indians when they entered America and with the Aborigines when they entered Australia⁴⁵". There are no such genocide and ethnocide in Islamic history.
- And for the record, let us focus with an attentive eye on the rest of the suras that speak about war and Jihad in the Quran: "To those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight), because they are wronged; and verily, Allah is Most Powerful for their aid;" (22-39 and 40). It's DEFENCE! And "Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah loveth not transgressors." (2-190) It's DEFENCE Mr Pope! And "if they withdraw from you but fight you not, and (instead) send you (guarantees of) peace, then Allah hath opened no way for you (to war against them)." (4-90) it's DEFENCE!
- "The theory of Islam and Sword for instance is not heard now frequently in any quarter worth the name. The principle of Islam that there is no compulsion in religion is well known. Gibbon, a historian of world repute says, "A pernicious tenet has been imputed to Mohammadans, the duty of extirpating all the religions by sword." This charge based on ignorance and bigotry, says the eminent historian, is refuted by Quran, by history of Muslim conquerors and by their public and legal toleration of Christian worship. The great success of Mohammad's life had been affected by sheer moral force, without a stroke of sword."⁴⁶
- And to end it all, here's the way God orders us to follow in explaining our Faith: "Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path, and who

⁴² *Islam between the message and the history*; Abdemajid al-Charfi, Dar Taliâ Beirut, 2001 (pp. 115-116)

⁴³ Sufyan al-Thawri (d. in 778 A. D.) relies in his opinion on two suras of the Quran "but if they fight you, slay them." (2-191) and "and fight the Pagans all together as they fight you all together." (9-36).

⁴⁴ al-Shafi'i, Malik, abu-Hanifah, Ahmad ibn-Hanbal, and Sufyan al-Thawri in al-Ghazali; *Ihya Ulum al-Din – Book of Knowledge* Ch. 2, page 52. English Translation by Nabih Amin Fares. www.Muslimphilosophy.com

⁴⁵ Original Arabic text : www.qaradawi.net

⁴⁶ Full text available at the end of the book in the Appendix section.

receive guidance." (16-125)As you can see, God speaks about wisdom – beautiful preaching – arguing in best and most gracious ways. There is no violence in Islam, we wage no holy wars, we are peaceful believers in God, and we work to deserve His eternal rewards.

Of course there's a clear distinction to make between violence and the legitimate defence. And to make things more clear here's what the absolute majority of Muslims think: "Concerning the violence that some Muslims do, part of it is legitimate according to religions, legislations, laws and ethics, as the defence of the national resistance against occupation in Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq or in other places. To call it terrorism is a clear injustice and a misinterpretation of realities.

Another part of that violence has been condemned by all Muslims in all places, as the September 11 events. Most of the illegitimate violence main reasons are the injustice that Muslims suffer in every place, and about which Western religious men do not say a word, some of them may even bless it."⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Idem

TRANSLATION AS A MEANS OF REVELATION?

I quote from the lecture:

“Within the Old Testament, the process which started at the burning bush came to new maturity at the time of the Exile, when the God of Israel, an Israel now deprived of its land and worship, was proclaimed as the God of heaven and earth and described in a simple formula which echoes the words uttered at the burning bush: “I am”. This new understanding of God is accompanied by a kind of enlightenment, which finds stark expression in the mockery of gods who are merely the work of human hands (cf. *Ps* 115). Thus, despite the bitter conflict with those Hellenistic rulers who sought to accommodate it forcibly to the customs and idolatrous cult of the Greeks, biblical faith, in the Hellenistic period, encountered the best of Greek thought at a deep level, resulting in a mutual enrichment evident especially in the later wisdom literature. Today we know that the Greek translation of the Old Testament produced at Alexandria - the Septuagint - is more than a simple (and in that sense really less than satisfactory) translation of the Hebrew text: it is an independent textual witness and a distinct and important step in the history of revelation, one which brought about this encounter in a way that was decisive for the birth and spread of Christianity. A profound encounter of faith and reason is taking place here, an encounter between genuine enlightenment and religion. From the very heart of Christian faith and, at the same time, the heart of Greek thought now joined to faith, Manuel II was able to say: Not to act “with *logos*” is contrary to God’s nature.”

H. H. Pope Benedict XVI,

If this passage was dealing only with your faith, I would have no right to interfere. “You have your religion and I have mine” says the Quran.

But it deals with the reason too, a reason that’s universal, opened to any and all humans. I’m one of them. Because you paraphrase the emperor: “Not to act with *logos* is contrary to God’s nature”.

You say in the beginning of the demonstration that “this new understanding of God is accompanied by a kind of enlightenment, which finds stark expression in the mockery of gods who are merely the work of human hands” (I underlined to emphasize).

Then you say: “Today we know that the Greek translation of the Old Testament produced at Alexandria - the Septuagint - is more than a simple (and in that sense really less than satisfactory) translation of the Hebrew text: it is an independent textual witness and a distinct and important step in the history of revelation, one which brought about this encounter in a way that was decisive for the birth and spread of Christianity.” (My emphasis). I’m a translator H. H. Pope Benedict XVI.

So the Greek language and the Greek translation brought this encounter between faith (Christianity) and rationality (Greek thought) that was decisive for the birth and spread of Christianity.

I see a contradiction. In the start gods who are the work of human hands are mocked; but by magic at the end of the paragraph, we have the opposite. Those human hands (or thoughts) participate in at least 50 % (Greek translation) in the birth and spread of Christianity.

That's the question: how much human work is there in Christianity through history, and how much God's revelation there is in it?

The source as well as the target texts remains always distinct entities. The Quran is the original text revealed by God, and it witness among other things of the truth about Jesus Christ and Mary. In this sense, it's an original genuine proof for the very Christianity.

LOGOS OR MYTHOS

Once again from the lecture, we read:

"The encounter between the Biblical message and Greek thought did not happen by chance. The vision of Saint Paul, who saw the roads to Asia barred and in a dream saw a Macedonian man plead with him: "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" (cf. *Acts* 16:6-10) - this vision can be interpreted as a "distillation" of the intrinsic necessity of a rapprochement between Biblical faith and Greek inquiry."

Considering that the lecture studies the relationship between faith and rationality - the Pope talked often about *Logos* and *Mythos* - it would have been more appropriate to avoid using dreams –as respectful as they may be- to argue about a theme that treats: Biblical message and Greek thought.

And even if we convene that dreams and visions are part of the revelation process, is it appropriate to make this relationship between them in a lecture that incenses and perfumes the rationality? Furthermore, the lecturer supposes that it's the private property of a given civilization.

An answer to the philosophic question of faith and rationality has been given by Averroes in his works when he says: "He Who revealed The Message is The Same Who created the reason; and there's no contradiction between what He revealed and what He created"⁴⁸. Averroes is taking the Quran of course as his starting point.

At least, Averroes theories defend the harmony between the message and the creation.

⁴⁸ See *Averroes Commentary on Aristotle* re-brought from Latin to Arabic by Brahim al-Gharbi and published by Baitelhekma, Carthage, Tunisia 1997. <http://www.baitelhekma.nat.tn/arab/index.html>
شرح ابن رشد الكبير لكتاب النفس لأرسطو. أعاده إلى العربية من اللاتينية ابراهيم العربي 1997 بيت الحكمة، قرطاج.

TO BE OR NOT TO BE? THAT'S "REALLY" A BIG ARABIC QUESTION

I know how easy it is to use the verb "to be" and the pronoun "I". Nevertheless you can't imagine the problems we face in Arabic (and I've been told in Hebrew also) to conjugate that verb and to use that Pronoun. No, it's not difficult, grammatically speaking! That's so easy and children do it with great ease. It's uneasy philosophically, because to tell you the truth many of our Modern philosophers consider that the verb to be doesn't even exist in Arabic language. The pronoun "I" in Arabic is as tricky as a fox and as invisible as the Sahara mirage. In fact, when you say "I write" in Arabic you take away the "I" and just say "write", the pronoun is suggested to the interlocutor and clearly understood by him, through the verb shape and the tense; therefore there's no real need to write it. It's as if it hides with decency.

But if we want to use both the pronoun "I" and the "verb to be", we face huge problems. Because we use a verb for "to be" called "kana" (كان) and that our linguists have so rightfully named "an incomplete past verb"⁴⁹. If you ask a specialist of the Arabic language to translate Shakespeare's "to be or not to be"⁵⁰ he'll give you a kind of want-to-be translation, but he knows and feels deep inside him that he didn't carry the exact Western meaning. Because he knows that if he makes what's called a "back translation", he'll have "shall I be or shall I not?" in future rather than in present tense.

If you take again the verb "to be" in its "infinitive" form in Arabic, "it's expressed only in the past, it means the past."⁵¹

How can one fix the present "enough time" to say "I am"? Well, as soon as you say it, it's already passed and past.

Past and passed as all our human actions and thoughts, as soon as they're done and that the Angels register them in the just register.

I feel you're asking yourself: "What this language relativity has to do with the lecture?"

Moncef Chelli says: "We are really obliged to analyze the Arabic language because many affirmations considered as truth, distillate from immediate evidences proper to Western languages"⁵²

Well it's related to that passage in the lecture that says: "In point of fact, this rapprochement had been going on for some time. The mysterious name of God, revealed from the burning bush, a name which separates this God from all other

⁴⁹ Its grammatical status is indeed an "incomplete preterit verb" : فعل ماضي ناقص

⁵⁰ "اكون أو لا اكون" is the half solution that was founded. It's completely different from the English original infinitive form.

⁵¹ See Moncef Chelli; *La parole arabe, une théorie de la relativité des cultures*, p. 68, Chapter 3 : L' « être » n'est exprimé qu'au passé . Editions Sindbad, Paris, 1980.

⁵² Ibid p. 32. A Spanish translation reads: "Estamos realmente obligados a analizar la lengua árabe porque muchas de las afirmaciones que se aceptan como verdaderas destilan evidencias inmediatas propias de las lenguas occidentales"

<http://www.musulmanesandaluces.org/publicaciones/Minah/Entendimiento/entendimiento-07.htm>

divinities with their many names and simply declares "I am", already presents a challenge to the notion of myth, to which Socrates' attempt to vanquish and transcend myth stands in close analogy."

To avoid any linguistic confusion, I checked the original German version of your lecture, and it states *de facto* in Goethe's language: « Ich bin⁵³ ».

I selected from that passage the verb "I am" because it's a very controversial theme; some Arab Modern philosophers, as Moncef Chelli consider it as a pure illusion invented by some languages.

I will never go so far as to state that the verb "to be" and the pronoun "I" have developed such a collective conscious of the self, that it ended by creating a complete illusory world where the conscience is inside a Crystal Ball⁵⁴ and is trying at the same time to see itself.

I will never go so far as to pretend that the verb "to be" and the pronoun "I" have played such a malign trick to the Western conscience that it ended thinking that "I am" is the centre of the universe. And pushing a bit more, it decided one day, instead of climbing towards God, rather to humanize Him, giving Him even a humane shape, obliging Him – in a "conscience" illusion - to step down. When Goethe said that God is dead?

If I had to forcefully answer whether God is humane or transcendent, I'll immediately answer: He is transcendent. Nevertheless and as I explained in the Chapter titled: "IS GOD TRANSCENDENT...?" God has defined Himself with ninety-nine Attributes that speak clearly His infinite wisdom, His infinite knowledge, His infinite faith, His infinite justice, His infinite power, His infinite mercy...

All characteristics that sounds so humane in the humane ear, heart and reason. If they didn't sound humane, could you explain me please, how the average, humble and ordinary men and women would understand their Creator?

But I will never make that additional terrible path that will give a human shape or characteristics to the All-Creator. That would be a deluding illusion that would cost me my soul! And since I'll have to deal with the verb "to be" (*kana* in Arabic), here's one of its use in Arabic in the eloquent Quran that cannot be translated better than: "Verily, when He intends a thing, His Command is, "Be", and it is!" (Quran 36-82)

Finally to understand better the connexion between Islam and the Arabic language, I invite you to have a look at the very interesting lecture of Abderrahmán Mohamed Maanán, Doctor in Philosophy, titled: "*CONCEPTOS FUNDAMENTALES DEL PENSAMIENTO ISLÁMICO*"⁵⁵: *La conexión entre el Islam y la lengua árabe*". (Available for now only in Spanish)

⁵³ « I am » in German language.

⁵⁴ See the very interesting « Le Mythe de Cristal, ou le secret de la puissance de l'Occident » Moncef Chelli,

⁵⁵ <http://www.libreria-mundoarabe.com/Boletines/n%BA33%20Dic.05/ConceptosFundamentales.html>

THE CURRENT PAPAL RECORD IS NOT FRIENDLY UNTIL NOW!

Talking about your famous lecture, Sheikh al-Qaradawi says in his quality of Head of the International Association of Muslim Scholars:

[“This is not the first time that the present Pope shows a negative attitude towards Islam and Muslims, and that he shows negligence or apprehension, or even more.

In the first mass that he held after being elected in end April 2005 A.C, he didn't mention Muslims by a single word, whereas he treated “the dear brothers” – according to his words – from the Jewish people with dignifying words full of affection.

And later, during the International Youth days, end August, in the German town of Köln, he met with representatives of the Muslim Community in the Archbishop of the town, and he expressed his deep concern about the spread of terrorism. He focused during this meeting on the necessity that (Muslims clean away the hatred they have in their hearts, and that they oppose all kinds of extremisms and all what may result from them as violence!).

This rephending tone had a negative effect on Muslims hearts, due to its narrow-mindedness and its simplistic view of the sources and the origins of terrorism.

He received the Italian writer, residing in the USA, Oriana Fallacci who writes heated books and pamphlets that congregate people against Islam and Muslims. She doesn't see any difference between extremist or moderate Islam. All Islam is for her extremist and she considers that the difference between Christianity and Islam is a difference of essence.

Those positions were considered negative towards Muslims. But today the matter is related to Islam itself. We, as Muslims consider Christians as the nearest to our hearts, and the Prophet Muhammad PBUH says: “I'm the one who is worth among all people of Jesus son of Mary”.]⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Excerpt from Sheikh al-Qaradawi website:

http://www.qaradawi.net/site/topics/article.aspx?cu_no=2&item_no=4393&version=1&template_id=116&parent_id=114

AL-QARADAWI MESSAGE⁵⁷

“We invite to tolerance not to extremism, to softness and leniency not to violence, to dialogue not to clash, to peace and not to war.

But we do not accept that anyone attacks our faith or our legislation or our values; we do not accept that anyone hurts our Prophet Muhammad Peace be upon him, with a single evil word. Otherwise God allowed us to defend ourselves. God loveth not the unjust.”

Yusuf al-Qaradawi

Head of the International Union of Islamic Scholars

21 Chaabane 1427 H. / 14 September 2006 A.D.

⁵⁷ Original Arabic text is available at : www.qaradawi.net

CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM: the challenge and the offer

The challenge is:

"And if anyone should argue with thee about this [truth] after all the knowledge that has come unto thee, say: "Come! Let us summon our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, and ourselves and yourselves; and then let us pray [together] humbly and ardently, and let us invoke God's curse upon those [of us] who are telling a lie." (Quran: 3 - 61) This challenge was not taken by the Christian group visiting the Prophet Muhammad 1427 years ago.

And the offer drops just three suras later:

Say: "O followers of earlier revelation (Christians and Jews) ! Come unto that tenet which we and you hold in common: that we shall worship none but God, and that we shall not ascribe divinity to aught beside Him, and that we shall not take human beings for our lords beside God." And if they turn away, then say: "Bear witness that it is we who have surrendered ourselves unto Him." (Quran: 3 - 64)

AS A FAREWELL

This is nothing more than a humble essay to explain and to understand. If people accept it, I'd be rewarded; if they refuse it, I kindly ask them to write me and correct me. I accept critiques open-heartedly. My first and last intention is the search of the truth, He is The Truth.

The quotes cited in this book do not mean that I speak in the name of any entity, organization or institution or single individual. The title I chose for this book states that in fact. This is no more than:

AN ANSWER TO H. H. POPE BENEDICT XVI LECTURE at the Aula Magna of the University of Regensburg. Tuesday, 12 September 2006: *Faith, Reason and the University Memories and Reflections*

From an average Muslim to H. H. Pope of the Catholic Church

Note of the Author: For evident research and documentation needs, I would have preferred to publish the full text of the Pope Benedict XVI lecture; but I can publish just some excerpts, according to the fair use, because the entire lecture is protected by © Copyright 2006 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana, and the reader can find it on the Vatican website clicking the following link: [Vatican website](#).

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO MÜNCHEN, ALTÖTTING AND REGENSBURG
(SEPTEMBER 9-14, 2006)

MEETING WITH THE REPRESENTATIVES OF SCIENCE

LECTURE OF THE HOLY FATHER

*Aula Magna of the University of Regensburg
Tuesday, 12 September 2006*

Faith, Reason and the University Memories and Reflections

*Your Eminences, Your Magnificences, Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is a moving experience for me to be back again in the university and to be able once again to give a lecture at this podium. I think back to those years when, after a pleasant period at the Freisinger Hochschule, I began teaching at the University of Bonn.

...

It was clear that, by inquiring about the reasonableness of faith, they too carried out a work which is necessarily part of the "whole" of the *universitas scientiarum*, even if not everyone could share the faith which theologians seek to correlate with reason as a whole.

...

I was reminded of all this recently, when I read the edition by Professor Theodore Khoury (Münster) of part of the dialogue carried on - perhaps in 1391 in the winter barracks near Ankara - by the erudite Byzantine emperor Manuel II Paleologus and an educated Persian on the subject of Christianity and Islam, and the truth of both. It was presumably the emperor himself who set down this dialogue, during the siege of Constantinople between 1394 and 1402; and this would explain why his arguments are given in greater detail than those of his

Persian interlocutor. The dialogue ranges widely over the structures of faith contained in the Bible and in the Qur'an, and deals especially with the image of God and of man, while necessarily returning repeatedly to the relationship between - as they were called - three "Laws" or "rules of life": the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Qur'an. It is not my intention to discuss this question in the present lecture; here I would like to discuss only one point - itself rather marginal to the dialogue as a whole - which, in the context of the issue of "faith and reason", I found interesting and which can serve as the starting-point for my reflections on this issue.

In the seventh conversation (*4V8,>4H - controversy) edited by Professor Khoury, the emperor touches on the theme of the holy war. The emperor must have known that surah 2, 256 reads: "There is no compulsion in religion". According to the experts, this is one of the suras of the early period, when Mohammed was still powerless and under threat. But naturally the emperor also knew the instructions, developed later and recorded in the Qur'an, concerning holy war. Without descending to details, such as the difference in treatment accorded to those who have the "Book" and the "infidels", he addresses his interlocutor with a startling brusqueness on the central question about the relationship between religion and violence in general, saying: "Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached". The emperor, after having expressed himself so forcefully, goes on to explain in detail the reasons why spreading the faith through violence is something unreasonable. Violence is incompatible with the nature of God and the nature of the soul. "God", he says, "is not pleased by blood - and not acting reasonably (F× < 8` (T) is contrary to God's nature. Faith is born of the soul, not the body. Whoever would lead someone to faith needs the ability to speak well and to reason properly, without violence and threats... To convince a reasonable soul, one does not need a strong arm, or weapons of any kind, or any other means of threatening a person with death...".

The decisive statement in this argument against violent conversion is this: not to act in accordance with reason is contrary to God's nature. The editor, Theodore Khoury, observes: For the emperor, as a Byzantine shaped by Greek philosophy, this statement is self-evident. But for Muslim teaching, God is absolutely transcendent. His will is not bound up with any of our categories, even that of rationality. Here Khoury quotes a work of the noted French Islamist R. Arnaldez, who points out that Ibn Hazn went so far as to state that God is not bound even by his own word, and that nothing would oblige him to reveal the truth to us. Were it God's will, we would even have to practise idolatry.

At this point, as far as understanding of God and thus the concrete practice of religion is concerned, we are faced with an unavoidable dilemma. Is the conviction that acting unreasonably contradicts God's nature merely a Greek idea, or is it always and intrinsically true?

...

In point of fact, this rapprochement had been going on for some time. The mysterious name of God, revealed from the burning bush, a name which separates this God from all other divinities with their many names and simply

declares "I am", already presents a challenge to the notion of myth, to which Socrates' attempt to vanquish and transcend myth stands in close analogy. Within the Old Testament, the process which started at the burning bush came to new maturity at the time of the Exile, when the God of Israel, an Israel now deprived of its land and worship, was proclaimed as the God of heaven and earth and described in a simple formula which echoes the words uttered at the burning bush: "I am". This new understanding of God is accompanied by a kind of enlightenment, which finds stark expression in the mockery of gods who are merely the work of human hands (cf. *Ps 115*).

...

Today we know that the Greek translation of the Old Testament produced at Alexandria - the Septuagint - is more than a simple (and in that sense really less than satisfactory) translation of the Hebrew text: it is an independent textual witness and a distinct and important step in the history of revelation, one which brought about this encounter in a way that was decisive for the birth and spread of Christianity. A profound encounter of faith and reason is taking place here, an encounter between genuine enlightenment and religion. From the very heart of Christian faith and, at the same time, the heart of Greek thought now joined to faith, Manuel II was able to say: Not to act "with *logos*" is contrary to God's nature.

Only thus do we become capable of that genuine dialogue of cultures and religions so urgently needed today.

...

For philosophy and, albeit in a different way, for theology, listening to the great experiences and insights of the religious traditions of humanity, and those of the Christian faith in particular, is a source of knowledge, and to ignore it would be an unacceptable restriction of our listening and responding. Here I am reminded of something Socrates said to Phaedo. In their earlier conversations, many false philosophical opinions had been raised, and so Socrates says: "It would be easily understandable if someone became so annoyed at all these false notions that for the rest of his life he despised and mocked all talk about being - but in this way he would be deprived of the truth of existence and would suffer a great loss". The West has long been endangered by this aversion to the questions which underlie its rationality, and can only suffer great harm thereby. The courage to engage the whole breadth of reason, and not the denial of its grandeur - this is the programme with which a theology grounded in Biblical faith enters into the debates of our time. "Not to act reasonably, not to act with *logos*, is contrary to the nature of God", said Manuel II, according to his Christian understanding of God, in response to his Persian interlocutor. It is to this great *logos*, to this breadth of reason, that we invite our partners in the dialogue of cultures. To rediscover it constantly is the great task of the university.

APPENDIX

Mohamed Talbi is a Tunisian historian and a modern Islamic thinker. He has been classified by *Jeune Afrique L'intelligent*, among the 100 most authoritarian Africans of the XX century.

Here's an excerpt of an article he originally published in French on [Jeune Afrique magazine](#):

"Since the Council of 680 AD threw the anathema on Islam, the image of Mohammed in the Christian conscience remains unchanged. It is pointed out to us, from time to time, by very serious theologians. It is that of the Antichrist, luxurious, sexually depraved and assassin.

The terrorist term did not exist yet to indicate it, but it was introduced into the current Catechism of the Catholic Church (§ 2297), with an allusion almost unveiled to Islam.

Therefore and according to that, the malignant Spirit appeared one day to this declared terrorist, in the shape of a vulture and persuaded him to be prophet. He invented sensual Quran for uncultivated Bedouins. He made gleam in their eyes a paradise full with beautiful houris and young beautiful young men, of which he used and misused himself without respite. For some, his faithful killed him by attaching him to the tail of a drunken she-camel. Others make him die of natural death. Having a presentiment of his death, he predicts that he will resuscitate the third day. Watching near his corpse, but, not seeing the miracle coming, they gave it up. Dogs, or pigs, devoured it. They decreed his death, buried his body and issued that each year, to commemorate his death, they would make a great massacre of dogs.

Freedom of expression, and the novelist and artistic creativity, started thus very early. The modern artists can find in these topics what to produce literary masterpieces, and what to nourish all their aesthetically creative phantasms."

Prof. K. S. Ramakrishna Rao, is Head of the Department of Philosophy, Government College for Women University of Mysore, Mandya-571401 (Karnataka). He is a non-Muslim.

The following article is re-printed from "Islam and Modern age", Hyderabad, March 1978 and published on the internet: <http://www.islamfortoday.com/prophet.htm>

In the desert of Arabia was Mohammad born, according to Muslim historians, on April 20, 571. The name means highly praised. He is to me the greatest mind among all the sons of Arabia. He means so much more than all the poets and kings that preceded him in that impenetrable desert of red sand.

When he appeared Arabia was a desert -- a nothing. Out of nothing a new world was fashioned by the mighty spirit of Mohammad -- a new life, a new culture, a new civilization, a new kingdom which extended from Morocco to Indies and influenced the thought and life of three continents -- Asia, Africa and Europe.

When I thought of writing on Mohammad the prophet, I was a bit hesitant because it was to write about a religion I do not profess and it is a delicate matter to do so for there are many persons professing various religions and belonging to diverse school of thought and denominations even in same religion. Though it is sometimes, claimed that religion is entirely personal yet it can not be gain-said that it has a tendency to envelop the whole universe seen as well unseen. It somehow permeates something or other our hearts, our souls, our minds their conscious as well as subconscious and unconscious levels too. The problem assumes overwhelming importance when there is a deep conviction that our past, present and future all hang by the soft delicate, tender silked cord. If we further happen to be highly sensitive, the center of gravity is very likely to be always in a state of extreme tension. Looked at from this point of view, the less said about other religion the better. Let our religions be deeply hidden and embedded in the resistance of our innermost hearts fortified by unbroken seals on our lips.

But there is another aspect of this problem. Man lives in society. Our lives are bound with the lives of others willingly or unwillingly, directly or indirectly. We eat the food grown in the same soil, drink water, from the same the same spring and breathe the same air. Even while staunchly holding our own views, it would be helpful, if we try to adjust ourselves to our surroundings, if we also know to some extent, how the mind our neighbor moves and what the main springs of his actions are. From this angle of vision it is highly desirable that one should try to know all religions of the world, in the proper spirit, to promote mutual understanding and better appreciation of our neighborhood, immediate and remote.

Further, our thoughts are not scattered as appear to be on the surface. They have got themselves crystallized around a few nuclei in the form of great world religions and living faiths that guide and motivate the lives of millions that inhabit this earth of ours. It is our duty, in one sense if we have the ideal of ever becoming a citizen of the world before us, to make a little attempt to know the great religions and system of philosophy that have ruled mankind.

In spite of these preliminary remarks, the ground in these field of religion, where there is often a conflict between intellect and emotion is so slippery that one is constantly reminded of fools that rush in where angels fear to tread. It is also not so complex from another point of view. The subject of my writing is about the tenets of a religion which is historic and its prophet who is also a historic personality. Even a hostile critic like Sir William Muir speaking about the holy Quran says that. "There is probably in the world no other book which has remained twelve centuries with so pure text." I may also add Prophet Mohammad is also a historic personality, every event of whose life has been most carefully recorded and even the minutest details preserved intact for the posterity. His life and works are not wrapped in mystery.

My work today is further lightened because those days are fast disappearing when Islam was highly misrepresented by some of its critics for reasons political and otherwise. Prof. Bevan writes in Cambridge Medieval History, "Those account of Mohammad and Islam which were published in Europe before the beginning of 19th century are now to be regarded as literary curiosities." My problem is to write this monograph is easier because we are now generally not fed on this kind of history and much time need be spent on pointing out our misrepresentation of Islam.

The theory of Islam and Sword for instance is not heard now frequently in any quarter worth the name. The principle of Islam that there is no compulsion in religion is well known. Gibbon, a historian of world repute says, "A pernicious tenet has been imputed to Mohammadans, the duty of extirpating all the religions by sword." This charge based on ignorance and bigotry, says the eminent historian, is refuted by Quran, by history of Musalman conquerors and by their public and legal toleration of Christian worship. The great success of Mohammad's life had been effected by sheer moral force, without a stroke of sword.

But in pure self-defense, after repeated efforts of conciliation had utterly failed, circumstances dragged him into the battlefield. But the prophet of Islam changed the whole strategy of the battlefield. The total number of casualties in all the wars that took place during his lifetime when the whole Arabian Peninsula came under his banner, does not exceed a few hundreds in all. But even on the battlefield he taught the Arab barbarians to pray, to pray not individually, but in congregation to God the Almighty. During the dust and storm of warfare whenever the time for prayer came, and it comes five times a every day, the congregation prayer had not to be postponed even on the battlefield. A party had to be engaged in bowing their heads before God while other was engaged with the enemy. After finishing the prayers, the two parties had to exchange their positions. To the Arabs, who would fight for forty years on the slight provocation that a camel belonging to the guest of one tribe had strayed into the grazing land belonging to other tribe and both sides had fought till they lost 70,000 lives in all; threatening the extinction of both the tribes to such furious Arabs, the Prophet of Islam taught self-control and discipline to the extent of praying even on the battlefield. In an aged of barbarism, the Battlefield itself was humanized and strict instructions were issued not to cheat, not to break trust, not to mutilate, not to kill a child or woman or an old man, not to hew down date palm nor burn it, not to cut a fruit tree, not to molest any person engaged in worship. His own treatment with his bitterest enemies is the noblest example for his

followers. At the conquest of Mecca, he stood at the zenith of his power. The city which had refused to listen to his mission, which had tortured him and his followers, which had driven him and his people into exile and which had unrelentingly persecuted and boycotted him even when he had taken refuge in a place more than 200 miles away, that city now lay at his feet. By the laws of war he could have justly avenged all the cruelties inflicted on him and his people. But what treatment did he accord to them? Mohammad's heart flowed with affection and he declared, "This day, there is no REPROOF against you and you are all free." "This day" he proclaimed, "I trample under my feet all distinctions between man and man, all hatred between man and man."

This was one of the chief objects why he permitted war in self defense, that is to unite human beings. And when once this object was achieved, even his worst enemies were pardoned. Even those who killed his beloved uncle, Hamazah, mangled his body, ripped it open, even chewed a piece of his liver.

The principles of universal brotherhood and doctrine of the equality of mankind which he proclaimed represents one very great contribution of Mohammad to the social uplift of humanity. All great religions have preached the same doctrine but the prophet of Islam had put this theory into actual practice and its value will be fully recognized, perhaps centuries hence, when international consciousness being awakened, racial prejudices may disappear and greater brotherhood of humanity come into existence.

Miss. Sarojini Naidu speaking about this aspect of Islam says, "It was the first religion that preached and practiced democracy; for in the mosque, when the minaret is sounded and the worshipers are gathered together, the democracy of Islam is embodied five times a day when the peasant and the king kneel side by side and proclaim, God alone is great." The great poetess of India continues, "I have been struck over and over again by this indivisible unity of Islam that makes a man instinctively a brother. When you meet an Egyptian, an Algerian and Indian and a Turk in London, it matters not that Egypt is the motherland of one and India is the motherland of another."

Mahatma Gandhi, in his inimitable style, says "Some one has said that Europeans in South Africa dread the advent Islam -- Islam that civilized Spain, Islam that took the torch light to Morocco and preached to the world the Gospel of brotherhood. The Europeans of South Africa dread the Advent of Islam. They may claim equality with the white races. They may well dread it, if brotherhood is a sin. If it is equality of colored races then their dread is well founded."

Every year, during the Haj, the world witnesses the wonderful spectacle of this international Exhibition of Islam in leveling all distinctions of race, color and rank. Not only the Europeans, the African, the Arabian, the Persian, the Indians, the Chinese all meet together in Medina as members of one divine family, but they are clad in one dress every person in two simple pieces of white seamless cloth, one piece round the loin the other piece over the shoulders, bare head without pomp or ceremony, repeating "Here am I O God; at thy command; thou art one and alone; Here am I." Thus there remains nothing to differentiate the high from the low and every pilgrim carries home the impression of the international significance of Islam.

In the opinion of Prof. Hurgronje "the league of nations founded by prophet of Islam put the principle of international unity of human brotherhood on such Universal foundations as to show candle to other nations." In the words of same Professor "the fact is that no nation of the world can show a parallel to what Islam has done the realization of the idea of the League of Nations."

The prophet of Islam brought the reign of democracy in its best form. The Caliph Caliph Ali and the son in-law of the prophet, the Caliph Mansur, Abbas, the son of Caliph Mamun and many other caliphs and kings had to appear before the judge as ordinary men in Islamic courts. Even today we all know how the black Negroes were treated by the civilized white races. Consider the state of BILAL, a Negro Slave, in the days of the prophet of Islam nearly 14 centuries ago. The office of calling Muslims to prayer was considered to be of status in the early days of Islam and it was offered to this Negro slave. After the conquest of Mecca, the Prophet ordered him to call for prayer and the Negro slave, with his black color and his thick lips, stood over the roof of the holy mosque at Mecca called the Ka'ba the most historic and the holiest mosque in the Islamic world, when some proud Arabs painfully cried loud, "Oh, this black Negro Slave, woe be to him. He stands on the roof of holy Ka'ba to call for prayer." At that moment, the prophet announced to the world, this verse of the holy QURAN for the first time.

"O mankind, surely we have created you, families and tribes, so you may know one another.
Surely, the most honorable of you with God is MOST RIGHTEOUS AMONG you.
Surely, God is Knowing, Aware."

And these words of the holy Quran created such a mighty transformation that the Caliph of Islam, the purest of Arabs by birth, offered their daughter in marriage to this Negro Slave, and whenever, the second Caliph of Islam, known to history as Umar the great, the commander of faithful, saw this Negro slave, he immediately stood in reverence and welcomed him by "Here come our master; Here come our lord." What a tremendous change was brought by Quran in the Arabs, the proudest people at that time on the earth. This is the reason why Goethe, the greatest of German poets, speaking about the Holy Quran declared that, "This book will go on exercising through all ages a most potent influence." This is also the reason why George Bernard Shaw says, "If any religion has a chance or ruling over England, say, Europe, within the next 100 years, it is Islam".

It is this same democratic spirit of Islam that emancipated women from the bondage of man. Sir Charles Edward Archibald Hamilton says "Islam teaches the inherent sinlessness of man. It teaches that man and woman and woman have come from the same essence, posses the same soul and have been equipped with equal capabilities for intellectual, spiritual and moral attainments."

The Arabs had a very strong tradition that one who can smite with the spear and can wield the sword would inherit. But Islam came as the defender of the weaker sex and entitled women to share the inheritance of their parents. It gave women, centuries ago right of owning property, yet it was only 12 centuries later , in 1881, that England, supposed to be the cradle of democracy adopted this institution of Islam and the act was called "the married woman act", but

centuries earlier, the Prophet of Islam had proclaimed that "Woman are twin halves of men. The rights of women are sacred. See that women maintained rights granted to them."

Islam is not directly concerned with political and economic systems, but indirectly and in so far as political and economic affairs influence man's conduct, it does lay down some very important principles to govern economic life. According to Prof. Massignon, it maintains the balance between exaggerated opposites and has always in view the building of character which is the basis of civilization. This is secured by its law of inheritance, by an organized system of charity known as Zakat, and by regarding as illegal all anti-social practices in the economic field like monopoly, usury, securing of predetermined unearned income and increments, cornering markets, creating monopolies, creating an artificial scarcity of any commodity in order to force the prices to rise. Gambling is illegal. Contribution to schools, to places of worship, hospitals, digging of wells, opening of orphanages are highest acts of virtue. Orphanages have sprung for the first time, it is said, under the teaching of the prophet of Islam. The world owes its orphanages to this prophet born an orphan. "Good all this" says Carlyle about Mohammad. "The natural voice of humanity, of pity and equity, dwelling in the heart of this wild son of nature, speaks."

A historian once said a great man should be judged by three tests: Was he found to be of true metal by his contemporaries? Was he great enough to raise above the standards of his age? Did he leave anything as permanent legacy to the world at large? This list may be further extended but all these three tests of greatness are eminently satisfied to the highest degree in case of prophet Mohammad. Some illustrations of the last two have already been mentioned.

The first is: Was the Prophet of Islam found to be of true metal by his contemporaries?

Historical records show that all the contemporaries of Mohammad both friends and foes, acknowledged the sterling qualities, the spotless honesty, the noble virtues, the absolute sincerity and every trustworthiness of the apostle of Islam in all walks of life and in every sphere of human activity. Even the Jews and those who did not believe in his message, adopted him as the arbiter in their personal disputes by virtue of his perfect impartiality. Even those who did not believe in his message were forced to say "O Mohammad, we do not call you a liar, but we deny him who has given you a book and inspired you with a message." They thought he was one possessed. They tried violence to cure him. But the best of them saw that a new light had dawned on him and they hastened him to seek the enlightenment. It is a notable feature in the history of prophet of Islam that his nearest relation, his beloved cousin and his bosom friends, who know him most intimately, were not thoroughly imbued with the truth of his mission and were convinced of the genuineness of his divine inspiration. If these men and women, noble, intelligent, educated and intimately acquainted with his private life had perceived the slightest signs of deception, fraud, earthliness, or lack of faith in him, Mohammad's moral hope of regeneration, spiritual awakening, and social reform would all have been foredoomed to a failure and whole edifice would have crumbled to pieces in a moment. On the contrary, we find that devotion of his followers was such that he was voluntarily acknowledged as dictator of their lives. They braved for him persecutions and danger; they

trusted, obeyed and honored him even in the most excruciating torture and severest mental agony caused by excommunication even unto death. Would this have been so, had they noticed the slightest backsliding in their master?

Read the history of the early converts to Islam, and every heart would melt at the sight of the brutal treatment of innocent Muslim men and women.

Sumayya, an innocent women, is cruelly torn into pieces with spears. An example is made of "Yassir whose legs are tied to two camels and the beast were are driven in opposite directions", Khabbab bin Arth is made lie down on the bed of burning coal with the brutal legs of their merciless tyrant on his breast so that he may not move and this makes even the fat beneath his skin melt. "Khabban bin Adi is put to death in a cruel manner by mutilation and cutting off his flesh piece-meal." In the midst of his tortures, being asked weather he did not wish Mohammad in his place while he was in his house with his family, the sufferer cried out that he was gladly prepared to sacrifice himself his family and children. And why was it that these sons and daughters of Islam not only surrendered to their prophet their allegiance but also made a gift of their hearts and souls to their master? Is not the intense faith and conviction on part of immediate followers of Mohammad, the noblest testimony to his sincerity and to his utter self-absorption in his appointed task?

And these men were not of low station or inferior mental caliber. Around him in quite early days, gathered what was best and noblest in Mecca, its flower and cream, men of position, rank, wealth and culture, and from his own kith and kin, those who knew all about his life. All the first four Caliphs, with their towering personalities, were converts of this period.

The Encyclopedia Brittanica says that "Mohammad is the most successful of all Prophets and religious personalities".

But the success was not the result of mere accident. It was not a hit of fortune. It was recognition of fact that he was found to be true metal by his contemporaries. It was the result of his admirable and all compelling personality.

The personality of Mohammad! It is most difficult to get into the truth of it. Only a glimpse of it I can catch. What a dramatic succession of picturesque scenes. There is Mohammad the Prophet, there is Mohammad the General; Mohammad the King; Mohammad the Warrior; Mohammad the Businessman; Mohammad the Preacher; Mohammad the Philosopher; Mohammad the Statesman; Mohammad the Orator; Mohammad the reformer; Mohammad the Refuge of orphans; Mohammad the Protector of slaves; Mohammad the Emancipator of women; Mohammad the Law-giver; Mohammad the Judge; Mohammad the Saint.

And in all these magnificent roles, in all these departments of human activities, he is like, a hero..

Orphanhood is extreme of helplessness and his life upon this earth began with it; Kingship is the height of the material power and it ended with it. From an orphan boy to a persecuted refugee and then to an overlord, spiritual as well as temporal, of a whole nation and Arbiter of its destinies, with all its trials and

temptations, with all its vicissitudes and changes, its lights and shades, its up and downs, its terror and splendor, he has stood the fire of the world and came out unscathed to serve as a model in every face of life. His achievements are not limited to one aspect of life, but cover the whole field of human conditions.

If for instance, greatness consists in the purification of a nation, steeped in barbarism and immersed in absolute moral darkness, that dynamic personality who has transformed, refined and uplifted an entire nation, sunk low as the Arabs were, and made them the torch-bearer of civilization and learning, has every claim to greatness. If greatness lies in unifying the discordant elements of society by ties of brotherhood and charity, the prophet of the desert has got every title to this distinction. If greatness consists in reforming those warped in degrading and blind superstition and pernicious practices of every kind, the prophet of Islam has wiped out superstitions and irrational fear from the hearts of millions. If it lies in displaying high morals, Mohammad has been admitted by friend and foe as Al Amin, or the faithful. If a conqueror is a great man, here is a person who rose from helpless orphan and a humble creature to be the ruler of Arabia, the equal to Chosroes and Caesars, one who founded great empire that has survived all these 14 centuries. If the devotion that a leader commands is the criterion of greatness, the prophet's name even today exerts a magic charm over millions of souls, spread all over the world.

He had not studied philosophy in the school of Athens or Rome, Persia, India, or China. Yet, He could proclaim the highest truths of eternal value to mankind. Illiterate himself, he could yet speak with an eloquence and fervor which moved men to tears, to tears of ecstasy. Born an orphan blessed with no worldly goods, he was loved by all. He had studied at no military academy; yet he could organize his forces against tremendous odds and gained victories through the moral forces which he marshaled. Gifted men with genius for preaching are rare. Descartes included the perfect preacher among the rarest kind in the world. Hitler in his Mein Kampf has expressed a similar view. He says "A great theorist is seldom a great leader. An Agitator is more likely to possess these qualities. He will always be a great leader. For leadership means ability to move masses of men. The talent to produce ideas has nothing in common with capacity for leadership." "But", he says, "The Union of theorists, organizer and leader in one man, is the rarest phenomenon on this earth; Therein consists greatness."

In the person of the Prophet of Islam the world has seen this rarest phenomenon walking on the earth, walking in flesh and blood.

And more wonderful still is what the reverend Bosworth Smith remarks, "Head of the state as well as the Church, he was Caesar and Pope in one; but, he was pope without the pope's claims, and Caesar without the legions of Caesar, without an standing army, without a bodyguard, without a palace, without a fixed revenue. If ever any man had the right to say that he ruled by a right divine It was Mohammad, for he had all the power without instruments and without its support. He cared not for dressing of power. The simplicity of his private life was in keeping with his public life."

After the fall of Mecca, more than one million square miles of land lay at his feet, Lord of Arabia, he mended his own shoes and coarse woolen garments, milked the goats, swept the hearth, kindled the fire and attended the other menial

offices of the family. The entire town of Medina where he lived grew wealthy in the later days of his life. Everywhere there was gold and silver in plenty and yet in those days of prosperity many weeks would elapse without a fire being kindled in the hearth of the king of Arabia, His food being dates and water. His family would go hungry many nights successively because they could not get anything to eat in the evening. He slept on no soften bed but on a palm mat, after a long busy day to spend most of his night in prayer, often bursting with tears before his creator to grant him strength to discharge his duties. As the reports go, his voice would get choked with weeping and it would appear as if a cooking pot was on fire and boiling had commenced. On the very day of his death his only assets were few coins a part of which went to satisfy a debt and rest was given to a needy person who came to his house for charity. The clothes in which he breathed his last had many patches. The house from where light had spread to the world was in darkness because there was no oil in the lamp.

Circumstances changed, but the prophet of God did not. In victory or in defeat, in power or in adversity, in affluence or in indigence, he is the same man, disclosed the same character. Like all the ways and laws of God, Prophets of God are unchangeable.

An honest man, as the saying goes, is the noblest work of God, Mohammad was more than honest. He was human to the marrow of his bones. Human sympathy, human love was the music of his soul. To serve man, to elevate man, to purify man, to educate man, in a word to humanize man-this was the object of his mission, the be-all and end all of his life. In thought, in word, in action he had the good of humanity as his sole inspiration, his sole guiding principle.

He was most unostentatious and selfless to the core. What were the titles he assumed? Only true servant of God and His Messenger. Servant first, and then a messenger. A Messenger and prophet like many other prophets in every part of the world, some known to you, many not known you. If one does not believe in any of these truths one ceases to be a Muslim. It is an article of faith.

"Looking at the circumstances of the time and unbounded reverence of his followers" says a western writer "the most miraculous thing about Mohammad is, that he never claimed the power of working miracles." Miracles were performed but not to propagate his faith and were attributed entirely to God and his inscrutable ways. He would plainly say that he was a man like others. He had no treasures of earth or heaven. Nor did he claim to know the secrets of that lie in womb of future. All this was in an age when miracles were supposed to be ordinary occurrences, at the back and call of the commonest saint, when the whole atmosphere was surcharged with supernaturalism in Arabia and outside Arabia.

He turned the attention of his followers towards the study of nature and its laws, to understand them and appreciate the Glory of God. The Quran says,

"God did not create the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in play. He did not create them all but with the truth. But most men do not know."

The world is not illusion, nor without purpose. It has been created with the truth. The number of verses inviting close observation of nature are several times more

than those that relate to prayer, fasting, pilgrimage etc. all put together. The Muslim under its influence began to observe nature closely and this gave birth to the scientific spirit of the observation and experiment which was unknown to the Greeks. While the Muslim Botanist Ibn Baitar wrote on Botany after collecting plants from all parts of the world, described by Myer in his *Gesch. der Botanik*, a monument of industry, while Al Byruni traveled for forty years to collect mineralogical specimens, and Muslim Astronomers made some observations extending even over twelve years. Aristotle wrote on Physics without performing a single experiment, wrote on natural history, carelessly stating without taking the trouble to ascertain the most verifiable fact that men have more teeth than animal. Galen, the greatest authority on classical anatomy informed that the lower jaw consists of two bones, a statement which is accepted unchallenged for centuries till Abdul Lateef takes the trouble to examine a human skeleton. After enumerating several such instances, Robert Priffault concludes in his well known book *The making of humanity*, "The debt of our science to the Arabs does not consist in starting discovers or revolutionary theories. Science owes a great more to Arabs culture; it owes its existence." The same writer says "The Greeks systematized, generalized and theorized but patient ways of investigation, the accumulation of positive knowledge, the minute methods of science, detailed and prolonged observation, experimental inquiry, were altogether alien to Greek temperament. What we call science arose in Europe as result of new methods of investigation, of the method of experiment, observation, measurement, of the development of Mathematics in form unknown to the Greeks. That spirit and these methods, concludes the same author, were introduced into the European world by Arabs."

It is the same practical character of the teaching of Prophet Mohammad that gave birth to the scientific spirit that has also sanctified the daily labors and the so called mundane affairs. The Quran says that God has created man to worship him but the word worship has a connotation of its own. Gods worship is not confined to prayer alone, but every act that is done with the purpose of winning approval of God and is for the benefit of the humanity comes under its purview. Islam sanctifies life and all its pursuits provided they are performed with honesty, justice and pure intents. It obliterates the age-long distinction between the sacred and profane. The Quran says if you eat clean things and thank God for it, it is an act of worship. It is saying of the prophet of Islam that Morsel of food that one places in the mouth of his wife is an act of virtue to be rewarded by God. Another tradition of the Prophet says "He who is satisfying the desire of his heart will be rewarded by God provided the methods adopted are permissible." A person was listening to him exclaimed 'O Prophet of God, he is answering the calls of passions, is only satisfying the craving of his heart. Forthwith came the reply, "Had he adopted an awful method for the satisfaction of his urge, he would have been punished; then why should he not be rewarded for following the right course."

This new conception of religion that it should also devote itself to the betterment of this life rather than concern itself exclusively with super mundane affairs, has led to a new orientation of moral values. Its abiding influence on the common relations of mankind in the affairs of every day life, its deep power over the masses, its regulation of their conception of rights and duty, its suitability and adaptability to the ignorant savage and the wise philosopher are characteristic features of the teaching of the Prophet of Islam.

But it should be most carefully born in mind this stress on good actions is not the sacrifice correctness of faith. While there are various school of thought, one praising faith at the expense of deeds, another exhausting various acts to the detriment of correct belief, Islam is based on correct faith and righteous actions. Means are important as the end and ends are as important as the means. It is an organic Unity. Together they live and thrive. Separate them and both decay and die. In Islam faith can not be divorced from the action. Right knowledge should be transferred into right action to produce the right results. How often the words came in Quran -- Those who believe and do good thing, they alone shall enter paradise. Again and again, not less than fifty times these words are repeated as if too much stress can not be laid on them. Contemplation is encouraged but mere contemplation is not the goal. Those who believe and do nothing can not exist in Islam. These who believe and do wrong are inconceivable. Divine law is the law of effort and not of ideals. It chalks out for the men the path of eternal progress from knowledge to action and from action to satisfaction.

But what is the correct faith from which right action spontaneously proceeds resulting in complete satisfaction. Here the central doctrine of Islam is the Unity of God. There is no God but God is the pivot from which hangs the whole teaching and practice of Islam. He is unique not only as regards his divine being but also as regards his divine attributes.

As regards the attributes of God, Islam adopts here as in other things too, the law of golden mean. It avoids on the one hand, the view of God which divests the divine being of every attribute and rejects, on the other, the view which likens him to things material. The Quran says, On the one hand, there is nothing which is like him, on the other , it affirms that he is Seeing, Hearing, Knowing. He is the King who is without a stain of fault or deficiency, the mighty ship of His power floats upon the ocean of justice and equity. He is the Beneficent, the Merciful. He is the Guardian over all. Islam does not stop with this positive statement. It adds further which is its most special characteristic, the negative aspects of problem. There is also no one else who is guardian over everything. He is the meander of every breakage, and no one else is the meander of any breakage. He is the restorer of every loss and no one else is the restorer of any loss what-so-ever. There is no God but one God, above any need, the maker of bodies, creator of souls, the Lord of the Day of Judgment, and in short, in the words of Quran, to him belong all excellent qualities.

Regarding the position of man in relation to the Universe, the Quran says:

"God has made subservient to you whatever is on the earth or in universe. You are destined to rule over the Universe."

But in relation to God, the Quran says:

"O man God has bestowed on you excellent faculties and has created life and death to put you to test in order to see whose actions are good and who has deviated from the right path."

In spite of free will which he enjoys, to some extent, every man is born under certain circumstances and continues to live under certain circumstances beyond his control. With regard to this God says, according to Islam, it is my will to

create any man under condition that seem best to me. Cosmic plans finite mortals can not fully comprehend. But I will certainly test you in prosperity as well in adversity, in health as well as in sickness, in heights as well as in depths. My ways of testing differ from man to man, from hour to hour. In adversity do not despair and do resort to unlawful means. It is but a passing phase. In prosperity do not forget God. God-gifts are given only as trusts. You are always on trial, every moment on test. In this sphere of life there is not to reason why, there is but to do and die. If you live in accordance with God; and if you die, die in the path of God. You may call it fatalism. But this type of fatalism is a condition of vigorous increasing effort, keeping you ever on the alert. Do not consider this temporal life on earth as the end of human existence. There is a life after death and it is eternal. Life after death is only a connection link, a door that opens up hidden reality of life. Every action in life however insignificant, produces a lasting effect. It is correctly recorded somehow. Some of the ways of God are known to you, but many of his ways are hidden from you. What is hidden in you and from you in this world will be unrolled and laid open before you in the next. The virtuous will enjoy the blessing of God which the eye has not seen, nor has the ear heard, nor has it entered into the hearts of men to conceive of they will march onward reaching higher and higher stages of evolution. Those who have wasted opportunity in this life shall under the inevitable law, which makes every man taste of what he has done, be subjugated to a course of treatment of the spiritual diseases which they have brought about with their own hands. Beware, it is terrible ordeal. Bodily pain is torture, you can bear somehow. Spiritual pain is hell, you will find it almost unbearable. Fight in this life itself the tendencies of the spirit prone to evil, tempting to lead you into iniquities ways. Reach the next stage when the self-accusing spirit in your conscience is awakened and the soul is anxious to attain moral excellence and revolt against disobedience. This will lead you to the final stage of the soul at rest, contented with God, finding its happiness and delight in him alone. The soul no more stumbles. The stage of struggle passes away. Truth is victorious and falsehood lays down its arms. All complexes will then be resolved. Your house will not be divided against itself. Your personality will get integrated round the central core of submission to the will of God and complete surrender to his divine purpose. All hidden energies will then be released. The soul then will have peace. God will then address you:

"O thou soul that art at rest, and restest fully contented with thy Lord return to thy Lord. He pleased with thee and thou pleased with him; So enter among my servants and enter into my paradise."

This is the final goal for man; to become, on the, one hand, the master of the universe and on the other, to see that his soul finds rest in his Lord, that not only his Lord will be pleased with him but that he is also pleased with his Lord. Contentment, complete contentment, satisfaction, complete satisfaction, peace, complete peace. The love of God is his food at this stage and he drinks deep at the fountain of life. Sorrow and defeat do not overwhelm him and success does not find him in vain and exulting.

The western nations are only trying to become the master of the Universe. But their souls have not found peace and rest.

Thomas Carlyle, struck by this philosophy of life writes "and then also Islam-that we must submit to God; that our whole strength lies in resigned submission to Him, whatsoever he does to us, the thing he sends to us, even if death and worse than death, shall be good, shall be best; we resign ourselves to God." The same author continues "If this be Islam, says Goethe, do we not all live in Islam?" Carlyle himself answers this question of Goethe and says "Yes, all of us that have any moral life, we all live so. This is yet the highest wisdom that heaven has revealed to our earth."

EMPERORS OF THE PALEOLOGUS DYNASTY, a historic perspective. Excerpt from EDWARD GIBBON; *The History of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire* (Vol. 11; 1776)

Thirty years after the return of Palæologus, his son and successor, Manuel, from a similar motive, but on a larger scale, again visited the countries of the West. In a preceding chapter, I have related his treaty with Bajazet, the violation of that treaty, the siege or blockade of Constantinople, and the French succour under the command of the gallant Boucicault. By his ambassadors, Manuel had solicited the Latin powers; but it was thought that the presence of a distressed monarch would draw tears and supplies from the hardest Barbarians; and the marshal who advised the journey, prepared the reception, of the Byzantine prince. The land was occupied by the Turks; but the navigation of Venice was safe and open; Italy received him as the first, or at least as the second, of the Christian princes; Manuel was pitied as the champion and confessor of the faith; and the dignity of his behaviour prevented that pity from sinking into contempt. From Venice he proceeded to Padua and Pavia; and even the duke of Milan, a secret ally of Bajazet, gave him safe and honourable conduct to the verge of his dominions. On the confines of France, the royal officers undertook the care of his person, journey, and expenses; and two thousand of the richest citizens, in arms and on horseback, came forth to meet him as far as Charenton, in the neighbourhood of the capital. At the gates of Paris, he was saluted by the chancellor and the parliament; and Charles the Sixth, attended by his princes and nobles, welcomed his brother with a cordial embrace. The successor of Constantine was clothed in a robe of white silk and mounted on a milkwhite steed — a circumstance, in the French ceremonial, of singular importance. The white colour is considered as the symbol of sovereignty; and, in a late visit, the German emperor, after an haughty demand and a peevish refusal, had been reduced to content himself with a black courser. Manuel was lodged in the Louvre; a succession of feasts and balls, the pleasures of the banquet and the chase, were ingeniously varied by the politeness of the French, to display their magnificence and amuse his grief. He was indulged in the liberty of his chapel; and the doctors of the Sorbonne were astonished, and possibly scandalised, by the language, the rites, and the vestments of his Greek clergy. But the slightest glance on the state of the kingdom must teach him to despair of any effectual assistance. The unfortunate Charles, though he enjoyed some lucid intervals, continually relapsed into furious or stupid insanity; the reins of government were alternately seized by his brother and uncle, the dukes of Orleans and Burgundy, whose factious competition prepared the miseries of civil war. The former was a gay youth, dissolved in luxury and love; the latter was the father of John, count of Nevers, who had so lately been ransomed from Turkish captivity; and, if the fearless son was ardent to revenge his defeat, the more prudent Burgundy was content with the cost and peril of the first experiment. When Manuel had satiated the curiosity, and perhaps fatigued the patience, of the French, he resolved on a visit to the adjacent island. In his progress from Dover, he was entertained at Canterbury with due reverence by the prior and monks of St. Austin; and, on Blackheath, King Henry the Fourth, with the English court, saluted the Greek hero (I copy our old historian), who, during many days, was lodged and treated in London as Emperor of the East. But the state of England was still more adverse to the design of the holy war. In the same year, the hereditary sovereign had been deposed and murdered; the reigning prince was a successful

usurper, whose ambition was punished by jealousy and remorse; nor could Henry of Lancaster withdraw his person or forces from the defence of a throne incessantly shaken by conspiracy and rebellion. He pitied, he praised, he feasted, the emperor of Constantinople; but, if the English monarch assumed the cross, it was only to appease his people, and perhaps his conscience, by the merit or semblance of this pious intention. Satisfied, however, with gifts and honours, Manuel returned to Paris; and, after a residence of two years in the West, shaped his course through Germany and Italy, embarked at Venice, and patiently expected, in the Morea, the moment of his ruin or deliverance. Yet he had escaped the ignominious necessity of offering his religion to public or private sale. The Latin church was distracted by the great schism; the kings, the nations, the universities, of Europe were divided in their obedience between the popes of Rome and Avignon; and the emperor, anxious to conciliate the friendship of both parties, abstained from any correspondence with the indigent and unpopular rivals. His journey coincided with the year of the jubilee; but he passed through Italy without desiring or deserving the plenary indulgence which abolished the guilt or penance of the sins of the faithful. The Roman pope was offended by this neglect; accused him of irreverence to an image of Christ; and exhorted the princes of Italy to reject and abandon the obstinate schismatic.

During the period of the crusades, the Greeks beheld, with astonishment and terror, the perpetual stream of emigration that flowed, and continued to flow, from the unknown climates of the West. The visits of their last emperors removed the veil of separation, and they disclosed to their eyes the powerful nations of Europe, whom they no longer presumed to brand with the name of Barbarians. The observations of Manuel and his more inquisitive followers have been preserved by a Byzantine historian of the times; his scattered ideas I shall collect and abridge; and it may be amusing enough, perhaps instructive, to contemplate the rude pictures of Germany, France, and England, whose ancient and modern state are so familiar to *our* minds. I. GERMANY (says the Greek Chalcondyles) is of ample latitude from Vienna to the Ocean; and it stretches (a strange geography!) from Prague in Bohemia to the river Tartessus and the Pyrenæan Mountains. The soil, except in figs and olives, is sufficiently fruitful; the air is salubrious; the bodies of the natives are robust and healthy; and these cold regions are seldom visited with the calamities of pestilence or earthquakes. After the Scythians or Tartars, the Germans are the most numerous of nations; they are brave and patient, and, were they united under a single head, their force would be irresistible. By the gift of the pope, they have acquired the privilege of choosing the Roman emperor; nor is any people more devoutly attached to the faith and obedience of the Latin patriarch. The greatest part of the country is divided among the princes and prelates; but Strasburg, Cologne, Hamburg, and more than two hundred free cities are governed by sage and equal laws, according to the will, and for the advantage, of the whole community. The use of duels, or single combats on foot, prevails among them in peace and war; their industry excels in all the mechanic arts; and the Germans may boast of the invention of gunpowder and cannon, which is now diffused over the greatest part of the world. II. The kingdom of FRANCE is spread above fifteen or twenty days' journey from Germany to Spain, and from the Alps to the British Ocean, containing many flourishing cities, and among these Paris, the seat of the king, which surpasses the rest in riches and luxury. Many princes and lords alternately wait in his palace and acknowledge him as their sovereign; the most powerful are the dukes of Bretagne and Burgundy, of whom the latter possesses the wealthy province of Flanders, whose harbours are frequented by the ships

and merchants of our own and the more remote seas. The French are an ancient and opulent people; and their language and manners, though somewhat different, are not dissimilar from those of the Italians. Vain of the Imperial dignity of Charlemagne, of their victories over the Saracens, and of the exploits of their heroes, Oliver and Rowland, they esteem themselves the first of the Western nations; but this foolish arrogance has been recently humbled by the unfortunate events of their wars against the English, the inhabitants of the British Island. III. Britain, in the ocean and opposite to the shores of Flanders, may be considered either as one or as three islands; but the whole is united by a common interest, by the same manners, and by a similar government. The measure of its circumference is five thousand stadia: the land is overspread with towns and villages; though destitute of wine, and not abounding in fruit-trees, it is fertile in wheat and barley, in honey and wool; and much cloth is manufactured by the inhabitants. In populousness and power, in riches and luxury, London, the metropolis of the isle, may claim a pre-eminence over all the cities of the West. It is situate on the Thames, a broad and rapid river, which, at the distance of thirty miles, falls into the Gallic Sea; and the daily flow and ebb of the tide affords a safe entrance and departure to the vessels of commerce. The king is the head of a powerful and turbulent aristocracy: his principal vassals hold their estates by a free and unalterable tenure; and the laws define the limits of his authority and their obedience. The kingdom has been often afflicted by foreign conquest and domestic sedition; but the natives are bold and hardy, renowned in arms and victorious in war. The form of their shields or targets is derived from the Italians, that of their swords from the Greeks; the use of the long bow is the peculiar and decisive advantage of the English. Their language bears no affinity to the idioms of the continent; in the habits of domestic life, they are not easily distinguished from their neighbours of France; but the most singular circumstance of their manners is their disregard of conjugal honour and of female chastity. In their mutual visits, as the first act of hospitality, the guest is welcomed in the embraces of their wives and daughters; among friends, they are lent and borrowed without shame; nor are the islanders offended at this strange commerce and its inevitable consequences. Informed as we are of the customs of old England, and assured of the virtue of our mothers, we may smile at the credulity, or resent the injustice, of the Greek, who must have confounded a modest salute with a criminal embrace. But his credulity and injustice may teach an important lesson: to distrust the accounts of foreign and remote nations, and to suspend our belief of every tale that deviates from the laws of nature and the character of man.

After his return, and the victory of Timour, Manuel reigned many years in prosperity and peace. As long as the sons of Bajazet solicited his friendship and spared his dominions, he was satisfied with the national religion; and his leisure was employed in composing twenty theological dialogues for its defence. The appearance of the Byzantine ambassadors at the council of Constance announces the restoration of the Turkish power, as well as of the Latin church; the conquest of the sultans, Mahomet and Amurath, reconciled the emperor to the Vatican; and the siege of Constantinople almost tempted him to acquiesce in the double procession of the Holy Ghost. When Martin the Fifth ascended, without a rival, the chair of St. Peter, a friendly intercourse of letters and embassies was revived between the East and West. Ambition on one side and distress on the other dictated the same decent language of charity and peace. The artful Greek expressed a desire of marrying his six sons to Italian princesses; and the Roman, not less artful, despatched the daughter of the marquis of Montferrat, with a

company of noble virgins, to soften, by their charms, the obstinacy of the schismatics. Yet, under this mask of zeal, a discerning eye will perceive that all was hollow and insincere in the court and church of Constantinople. According to the vicissitudes of danger and repose, the emperor advanced or retreated; alternately instructed and disavowed his ministers; and escaped from an importunate pressure by urging the duty of inquiry, the obligation of collecting the sense of his patriarchs and bishops, and the impossibility of convening them at a time when the Turkish arms were at the gates of his capital. From a review of the public transactions, it will appear that the Greeks insisted on three successive measures, a succour, a council, and a final reunion, while the Latins eluded the second, and only promised the first as a consequential and voluntary reward of the third. But we have an opportunity of unfolding the most secret intentions of Manuel, as he explained them in a private conversation without artifice or disguise. In his declining age the emperor had associated John Palæologus, the second of the name and the eldest of his sons, on whom he devolved the greatest part of the authority and weight of government. One day, in the presence only of the historian Phranza, his favourite chamberlain, he opened to his colleague and successor the true principle of his negotiations with the pope. "Our last resource," said Manuel, "against the Turks is their fear of our union with the Latins, of the warlike nations of the West, who may arm for our relief, and for their destruction. As often as you are threatened by the miscreants, present this danger before their eyes. Propose a council; consult on the means; but ever delay and avoid the convocation of an assembly, which cannot tend either to our spiritual or temporal emolument. The Latins are proud; the Greeks are obstinate: neither party will recede or retract; and the attempt of a perfect union will confirm the schism, alienate the churches, and leave us, without hope or defence, at the mercy of the Barbarians." Impatient of this salutary lesson, the royal youth arose from his seat and departed in silence; and the wise monarch (continues Phranza) casting his eyes on me, thus resumed his discourse: "My son deems himself a great and heroic prince; but alas! our miserable age does not afford scope for heroism or greatness. His daring spirit might have suited the happier times of our ancestors; but the present state requires not an emperor, but a cautious steward of the last relics of our fortunes. Well do I remember the lofty expectations which he built on our alliance with Mustapha; and much do I fear that his rash courage will urge the ruin of our house, and that even religion may precipitate our downfall." Yet the inexperience and authority of Manuel preserved the peace and eluded the council; till, in the seventy-eighth year of his age, and in the habit of a monk, he terminated his career, dividing his precious moveables among his children and the poor, his physicians, and his favourite servants. Of his six sons, Andronicus the Second was invested with the principality of Thessalonica, and died of a leprosy soon after the sale of that city to the Venetians and its final conquest by the Turks. Some fortunate incidents had restored Peloponnesus, or the Morea, to the empire; and in his more prosperous days Manuel had fortified the narrow isthmus of six miles with a stone wall and one hundred and fifty-three towers. The wall was overthrown by the first blast of the Ottomans; the fertile peninsula might have been sufficient for the four younger brothers, Theodore and Constantine, Demetrius and Thomas; but they wasted, in domestic contests, the remains of their strength; and the least successful of the rivals were reduced to a life of dependence in the Byzantine palace.

The eldest of the sons of Manuel, John Palæologus the Second, was acknowledged, after his father's death, as the sole emperor of the Greeks. He immediately proceeded to repudiate his wife and to contract a new marriage with the princess of Trebizond; beauty was in his eye the first qualification of an empress; and the clergy had yielded to his firm assurance that, unless he might be indulged in a divorce, he would retire to a cloister and leave the throne to his brother Constantine. The first, and in truth the only, victory of Palæologus was over a Jew, whom, after a long and learned dispute, he converted to the Christian faith; and this momentous conquest is carefully recorded in the history of the times. But he soon resumed the design of uniting the East and West; and, regardless of his father's advice, listened, as it should seem, with sincerity to the proposal of meeting the pope in a general council beyond the Adriatic. This dangerous project was encouraged by Martin the Fifth, and coldly entertained by his successor Eugenius, till, after a tedious negotiation, the emperor received a summons from a Latin assembly of a new character, the independent prelates of Basil, who styled themselves the representatives and judges of the Catholic church.

The Roman pontiff had fought and conquered in the cause of ecclesiastical freedom; but the victorious clergy were soon exposed to the tyranny of their deliverer; and his sacred character was invulnerable to those arms which they found so keen and effectual against the civil magistrate. Their great charter, the right of election, was annihilated by appeals, evaded by trusts or commendams, disappointed by reversionary grants, and superseded by previous and arbitrary reservations. A public auction was instituted in the court of Rome: the cardinals and favourites were enriched with the spoils of nations; and every country might complain that the most important and valuable benefices were accumulated on the heads of aliens and absentees. During their residence at Avignon, the ambition of the popes subsided in the meaner passions of avarice and luxury: they rigorously imposed on the clergy the tributes of first-fruits and tenths; but they freely tolerated the impunity of vice, disorder, and corruption. These manifold scandals were aggravated by the great schism of the West, which continued above fifty years. In the furious conflicts of Rome and Avignon, the vices of the rivals were mutually exposed; and their precarious situation degraded their authority, relaxed their discipline, and multiplied their wants and exactions. To heal the wounds, and restore the monarchy, of the church, the synods of Pisa and Constance were successively convened; but these great assemblies, conscious of their strength, resolved to vindicate the privileges of the Christian aristocracy. From a personal sentence against two pontiffs, whom they rejected, and a third, their acknowledged sovereign, whom they deposed, the fathers of Constance proceeded to examine the nature and limits of the Roman supremacy; nor did they separate till they had established the authority, above the pope, of a general council. It was enacted that, for the government and reformation of the church, such assemblies should be held at regular intervals; and that each synod, before its dissolution, should appoint the time and place of the subsequent meeting. By the influence of the court of Rome, the next convocation at Sienna was easily eluded; but the bold and vigorous proceedings of the council of Basil had almost been fatal to the reigning pontiff, Eugenius the Fourth. A just suspicion of his design prompted the fathers to hasten the promulgation of their first decree, that the representatives of the church-militant on earth were invested with a divine and spiritual jurisdiction over all Christians, without excepting the pope; and that a general council could not be dissolved,

prorogued, or transferred, unless by their free deliberation and consent. On the notice that Eugenius had fulminated a bull for that purpose, they ventured to summon, to admonish, to threaten, to censure, the contumacious successor of St. Peter. After many delays, to allow time for repentance, they finally declared that, unless he submitted within the term of sixty days, he was suspended from the exercise of all temporal and ecclesiastical authority. And to mark their jurisdiction over the prince as well as the priest, they assumed the government of Avignon, annulled the alienation of the sacred patrimony, and protected Rome from the imposition of new taxes. Their boldness was justified, not only by the general opinion of the clergy, but by the support and power of the first monarchs of Christendom: the emperor Sigismund declared himself the servant and protector of the synod; Germany and France adhered to their cause; the duke of Milan was the enemy of Eugenius; and he was driven from the Vatican by an insurrection of the Roman people. Rejected at the same time by his temporal and spiritual subjects, submission was his only choice; by a most humiliating bull, the pope repealed his own acts and ratified those of the council; incorporated his legates and cardinals with that venerable body; and *seemed* to resign himself to the decrees of the supreme legislature. Their fame pervaded the countries of the East; and it was in their presence that Sigismund received the ambassadors of the Turkish sultan, who laid at his feet twelve large vases, filled with robes of silk and pieces of gold. The fathers of Basil aspired to the glory of reducing the Greeks, as well as the Bohemians, within the pale of the church; and their deputies invited the emperor and patriarchs of Constantinople to unite with an assembly which possessed the confidence of the Western nations. Palæologus was not averse to the proposal; and his ambassadors were introduced with due honours into the Catholic senate. But the choice of the place appeared to be an insuperable obstacle, since he refused to pass the Alps or the sea of Sicily, and positively required that the synod should be adjourned to some convenient city in Italy, or at least on the Danube. The other articles of this treaty were more readily stipulated: it was agreed to defray the travelling expenses of the emperor, with a train of seven hundred persons, to remit an immediate sum of eight thousand ducats for the accommodation of the Greek clergy; and in his absence to grant a supply of ten thousand ducats, with three hundred archers, and some galleys for the protection of Constantinople. The city of Avignon advanced the funds for the preliminary expenses; and the embarkation was prepared at Marseilles with some difficulty and delay.

In his distress, the friendship of Palæologus was disputed by the ecclesiastical powers of the West; but the dexterous activity of a monarch prevailed over the slow debates and inflexible temper of a republic. The decrees of Basil continually tended to circumscribe the despotism of the pope and to erect a supreme and perpetual tribunal in the church. Eugenius was impatient of the yoke; and the union of the Greeks might afford a decent pretence for translating a rebellious synod from the Rhine to the Po. The independence of the fathers was lost if they passed the Alps; Savoy or Avignon, to which they acceded with reluctance, were described at Constantinople as situate far beyond the Pillars of Hercules; the emperor and his clergy were apprehensive of the dangers of a long navigation; they were offended by an haughty declaration that, after suppressing the *new* heresy of the Bohemians, the council would soon eradicate the *old* heresy of the Greeks. On the side of Eugenius, all was smooth and yielding and respectful; and he invited the Byzantine monarch to heal, by his presence, the schism of the Latin, as well as of the Eastern, church. Ferrara, near the coast of the Adriatic, was proposed for their amicable interview; and with some indulgence of forgery

and theft a surreptitious decree was procured, which transferred the synod, with its own consent, to that Italian city. Nine galleys were equipped for this service at Venice and in the isle of Candia; their diligence anticipated the slower vessels of Basil. The Roman admiral was commissioned to burn, sink, and destroy; and these priestly squadrons might have encountered each other in the same seas where Athens and Sparta had formerly contended for the pre-eminence of glory. Assaulted by the importunity of the factions, who were ready to fight for the possession of his person, Palæologus hesitated before he left his palace and country on a perilous experiment. His father's advice still dwelt on his memory; and reason must suggest that, since the Latins were divided among themselves, they could never unite in a foreign cause. Sigismund dissuaded the unseasonable adventure; his advice was impartial, since he adhered to the council; and it was enforced by the strange belief that the German Cæsar would nominate a Greek his heir and successor in the empire of the West. Even the Turkish sultan was a counsellor whom it might be unsafe to trust, but whom it was dangerous to offend. Amurath was unskilled in the disputes, but he was apprehensive of the union, of the Christians. From his own treasures, he offered to relieve the wants of the Byzantine court; yet he declared, with seeming magnanimity, that Constantinople should be secure and inviolate in the absence of her sovereign. The resolution of Palæologus was decided by the most splendid gifts and the most specious promises. He wished to escape, for a while, from a scene of danger and distress; and, after dismissing, with an ambiguous answer, the messengers of the council, he declared his intention of embarking in the Roman galleys. The age of the patriarch Joseph was more susceptible of fear than of hope; he trembled at the perils of the sea, and expressed his apprehension that his feeble voice, with thirty, perhaps, of his orthodox brethren, would be oppressed in a foreign land by the power and numbers of a Latin synod. He yielded to the royal mandate, to the flattering assurance that he would be heard as the oracle of nations, and to the secret wish of learning from his brother of the West to deliver the church from the yoke of kings. The five *cross-bearers*, or dignitaries of St. Sophia, were bound to attend his person; and one of these, the great ecclesiarch or preacher, Sylvester Syropulus, has composed a free and curious history of the *false* union. Of the clergy that reluctantly obeyed the summons of the emperor and the patriarch, submission was the first duty, and patience the most useful virtue. In a chosen list of twenty bishops, we discover the metropolitan titles of Heraclea and Cyzicus, Nice and Nicomedia, Ephesus and Trebizond, and the personal merit of Mark and Bessarion, who, in the confidence of their learning and eloquence, were promoted to the episcopal rank. Some monks and philosophers were named to display the science and sanctity of the Greek church; and the service of the choir was performed by a select band of singers and musicians. The patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem appeared by their genuine or fictitious deputies, the primate of Russia represented a national church, and the Greeks might contend with the Latins in the extent of their spiritual empire. The precious vases of St. Sophia were exposed to the winds and waves, that the patriarch might officiate with becoming splendour; whatever gold the emperor could procure was expended in the massy ornaments of his bed and chariot; and, while they affected to maintain the prosperity of their ancient fortune, they quarrelled for the division of fifteen thousand ducats, the first alms of the Roman pontiff. After the necessary preparations, John Palæologus, with a numerous train, accompanied by his brother Demetrius, and the most respectable persons of the church and state,

embarked in eight vessels with sails and oars, which steered through the Turkish straits of Gallipoli to the Archipelago, the Morea and the Adriatic Gulf.

After a tedious and troublesome navigation of seventy-seven days, this religious squadron cast anchor before Venice; and their reception proclaimed the joy and magnificence of that powerful republic. In the command of the world, the modest Augustus had never claimed such honours from his subjects as were paid to his feeble successor by an independent state. Seated on the poop, on a lofty throne, he received the visit, or, in the Greek style, the *adoration*, of the Doge and senators. They sailed in the Bucentaur, which was accompanied by twelve stately galleys; the sea was overspread with innumerable gondolas of pomp and pleasure; the air resounded with music and acclamations; the mariners, and even the vessels, were dressed in silk and gold; and in all the emblems and pageants the Roman eagles were blended with the lions of St. Mark. The triumphal procession, ascending the great canal, passed under the bridge of the Rialto; and the Eastern strangers gazed with admiration on the palaces, the churches, and the populousness of a city that seems to float on the bosom of the waves. They sighed to behold the spoils and trophies with which it had been decorated after the sack of Constantinople. After an hospitable entertainment of fifteen days, Palæologus pursued his journey by land and water, from Venice to Ferrara; and on this occasion the pride of the Vatican was tempered by policy to indulge the ancient dignity of the emperor of the East. He made his entry on a *black* horse; but a milk-white steed, whose trappings were embroidered with golden eagles, was led before him; and the canopy was borne over his head by the princes of Este, the sons or kinsmen of Nicholas, marquis of the city, and a sovereign more powerful than himself. Palæologus did not alight till he reached the bottom of the staircase; the pope advanced to the door of the apartment; refused his proffered genuflexion; and, after a paternal embrace, conducted the emperor to a seat on his left hand. Nor would the patriarch descend from his galley, till a ceremony, almost equal, had been stipulated between the bishops of Rome and Constantinople. The latter was saluted by his brother with a kiss of union and charity; nor would any of the Greek ecclesiastics submit to kiss the feet of the Western primate. On the opening of the synod, the place of honour in the centre was claimed by the temporal and ecclesiastical chiefs; and it was only by alleging that his predecessors had not assisted in person at Nice or Chalcedon that Eugenius could evade the ancient precedents of Constantine and Marcian. After much debate, it was agreed that the right and left sides of the church should be occupied by the two nations; that the solitary chair of St. Peter should be raised the first of the Latin line; and that the throne of the Greek emperor, at the head of his clergy, should be equal and opposite to the second place, the vacant seat of the emperor of the West.

But, as soon as festivity and form had given place to a more serious treaty, the Greeks were dissatisfied with their journey, with themselves, and with the pope. The artful pencil of his emissaries had painted him in a prosperous state; at the head of the princes and prelates of Europe, obedient, at his voice, to believe and to arm. The thin appearance of the universal synod of Ferrara betrayed his weakness; and the Latins opened the first session with only five archbishops, eighteen bishops, and ten abbots, the greatest part of whom were the subjects or countrymen of the Italian pontiff. Except the duke of Burgundy, none of the potentates of the West condescended to appear in person or by their ambassadors; nor was it possible to suppress the judicial acts of Basil against the dignity and person of Eugenius, which were finally concluded by a new election. Under these circumstances, a truce or delay was asked and granted, till

Palæologus could expect from the consent of the Latins some temporal reward for an unpopular union; and, after the first session, the public proceedings were adjourned above six months. The emperor, with a chosen band of his favourites and *Janizaries*, fixed his summer residence at a pleasant spacious monastery, six miles from Ferrara; forgot, in the pleasures of the chase, the distress of the church and state; and persisted in destroying the game, without listening to the just complaints of the marquis or the husbandman. In the meanwhile, his unfortunate Greeks were exposed to all the miseries of exile and poverty; for the support of each stranger, a monthly allowance was assigned of three or four gold florins; and, although the entire sum did not amount to seven hundred florins, a long arrear was repeatedly incurred by the indigence or policy of the Roman court. They sighed for a speedy deliverance, but their escape was prevented by a triple chain: a passport from their superiors was required at the gates of Ferrara; the government of Venice had engaged to arrest and send back the fugitives; and inevitable punishment awaited them at Constantinople: excommunication, fines, and a sentence which did not respect the sacerdotal dignity, that they should be stripped naked and publicly whipped. It was only by the alternative of hunger or dispute that the Greeks could be persuaded to open the first conference; and they yielded with extreme reluctance to attend, from Ferrara to Florence, the rear of a flying synod. This new translation was urged by inevitable necessity: the city was visited by the plague; the fidelity of the marquis might be suspected; the mercenary troops of the duke of Milan were at the gates; and, as they occupied Romagna, it was not without difficulty and danger that the pope, the emperor, and the bishops explored their way through the unfrequented paths of the Apennine.

Yet all these obstacles were surmounted by time and policy. The violence of the fathers of Basil rather promoted than injured the cause of Eugenius: the nations of Europe abhorred the schism, and disowned the election, of Felix the Fifth, who was successively a duke of Savoy, an hermit, and a pope; and the great princes were gradually reclaimed by his competitor to a favourable neutrality and a firm attachment. The legates, with some respectable members, deserted to the Roman army, which insensibly rose in numbers and reputation: the council of Basil was reduced to thirty-nine bishops and three hundred of the inferior clergy; while the Latins of Florence could produce the subscriptions of the pope himself, eight cardinals, two patriarchs, eight archbishops, fifty-two bishops, and forty-five abbots, or chiefs of religious orders. After the labour of nine months, and the debates of twenty-five sessions, they attained the advantage and glory of the reunion of the Greeks. Four principal questions had been agitated between the two churches: 1. The use of unleavened bread in the communion of Christ's body; 2. The nature of purgatory; 3. The supremacy of the pope; and 4. The single or double procession of the Holy Ghost. The cause of either nation was managed by ten theological champions: the Latins were supported by the inexhaustible eloquence of Cardinal Julian; and Mark of Ephesus and Bessarion of Nice were the bold and able leaders of the Greek forces. We may bestow some praise on the progress of human reason by observing that the first of these questions was *now* treated as an immaterial rite, which might innocently vary with the fashion of the age and country. With regard to the second, both parties were agreed in the belief of an intermediate state of purgation for the venial sins of the faithful; and, whether their souls were purified by elemental fire was a doubtful point, which in a few years might be conveniently settled on the spot by the disputants. The claims of supremacy appeared of a more weighty and substantial kind; yet, by the Orientals, the Roman bishop had ever been

respected as the first of the five patriarchs; nor did they scruple to admit that his jurisdiction should be exercised agreeable to the holy canons: a vague allowance which might be defined or eluded by occasional convenience. The procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father alone, or from the Father and the Son, was an article of faith which had sunk much deeper into the minds of men; and in the sessions of Ferrara and Florence the Latin addition of *filioque* was subdivided into two questions, whether it were legal, and whether it were orthodox. Perhaps it may not be necessary to boast on this subject of my own impartial indifference; but I must think that the Greeks were strongly supported by the prohibition of the council of Chalcedon against adding any article whatsoever to the creed of Nice or rather of Constantinople. In earthly affairs, it is not easy to conceive how an assembly of legislators can bind their successors invested with powers equal to their own. But the dictates of inspiration must be true and unchangeable; nor should a private bishop, or a provincial synod, have presumed to innovate against the judgment of the Catholic church. On the substance of the doctrine, the controversy was equal and endless: reason is confounded by the procession of a deity; the gospel, which lay on the altar, was silent; the various texts of the fathers might be corrupted by fraud or entangled by sophistry; and the Greeks were ignorant of the characters and writings of the Latin saints. Of this, at least, we may be sure, that neither side could be convinced by the arguments of their opponents. Prejudice may be enlightened by reason, and a superficial glance may be rectified by a clear and more perfect view of an object adapted to our faculties. But the bishops and monks had been taught from their infancy to repeat a form of mysterious words; their national and personal honour depended on the repetition of the same sounds; and their narrow minds were hardened and inflamed by the acrimony of a public dispute.

While they were lost in a cloud of dust and darkness, the pope and emperor were desirous of a seeming union, which could alone accomplish the purposes of their interview; and the obstinacy of public dispute was softened by the arts of private and personal negotiation. The patriarch Joseph had sunk under the weight of age and infirmities; his dying voice breathed the counsels of charity and concord, and his vacant beneficence might tempt the hopes of the ambitious clergy. The ready and active obedience of the archbishops of Russia and Nice, of Isidore and Bessarion, was prompted and recompensed by their speedy promotion to the dignity of cardinals. Bessarion, in the first debates, had stood forth the most strenuous and eloquent champion of the Greek church; and, if the apostate, the bastard, was reprobated by his country, he appears in ecclesiastical story a rare example of a patriot who was recommended to court favour by loud opposition and well-timed compliance. With the aid of his two spiritual coadjutors, the emperor applied his arguments to the general situation and personal characters of the bishops, and each was successively moved by authority and example. Their revenues were in the hands of the Turks, their persons in those of the Latins; an episcopal treasure, three robes and forty ducats, were soon exhausted; the hopes of their return still depended on the ships of Venice and the alms of Rome; and such was their indigence that their arrears, the payment of a debt, would be accepted as a favour and might operate as a bribe. The danger and relief of Constantinople might excuse some prudent and pious dissimulation; and it was insinuated that the obstinate heretics who should resist the consent of the East and West would be abandoned in a hostile land to the revenge or justice of the Roman pontiff. In the first private assembly of the Greeks, the formulary of union was approved by twenty-four, and rejected by twelve, members; but the five *cross-bearers* of St. Sophia, who aspired to

represent the patriarch, were disqualified by ancient discipline; and their right of voting was transferred to an obsequious train of monks, grammarians, and profane laymen. The will of the monarch produced a false and servile unanimity, and no more than two patriots had courage to speak their own sentiments, and those of their country. Demetrius, the emperor's brother, retired to Venice, that he might not be witness of the union; and Mark of Ephesus, mistaking perhaps his pride for his conscience, disclaimed all communion with the Latin heretics, and avowed himself the champion and confessor of the orthodox creed. In the treaty between the two nations several forms of consent were proposed, such as might satisfy the Latins without dishonouring the Greeks; and they weighed the scruples of words and syllables, till the theological balance trembled with a slight preponderance in favour of the Vatican. It was agreed (I must entreat the attention of the reader), that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father *and* the Son, as from one principle and one substance; that he proceeds *by* the Son, being of the same nature and substance; and that he proceeds from the Father *and* the Son, by one *spiration* and production. It is less difficult to understand the articles of the preliminary treaty: that the pope should defray all the expenses of the Greeks in their return home; that he should annually maintain two galleys and three hundred soldiers for the defence of Constantinople; that all the ships which transported pilgrims to Jerusalem should be obliged to touch at that port; that, as often as they were required, the pope should furnish ten galleys for a year, or twenty-six months; and that he should powerfully solicit the princes of Europe, if the emperor had occasion for landforces.

The same year, and almost the same day, were marked by the deposition of Eugenius at Basil, and, at Florence, by his reunion of the Greeks and Latins. In the former synod (which he styled indeed an assembly of demons), the pope was branded with the guilt of simony, perjury, tyranny, heresy, and schism; and declared to be incorrigible in his vices, unworthy of any title, and incapable of holding any ecclesiastical office. In the latter, he was revered as the true and holy vicar of Christ, who, after a separation of six hundred years, had reconciled the Catholics of the East and West, in one fold and under one shepherd. The act of union was subscribed by the pope, the emperor, and the principal members of both churches; even by those who, like Syropulus, had been deprived of the right of voting. Two copies might have sufficed for the East and West; but Eugenius was not satisfied, unless four authentic and similar transcripts were signed and attested as the monuments of his victory. On a memorable day, the sixth of July, the successors of St. Peter and Constantine ascended their thrones; the two nations assembled in the cathedral of Florence; their representatives, Cardinal Julian, and Bessarion, Archbishop of Nice, appeared in the pulpit, and, after reading, in their respective tongues, the act of union, they mutually embraced, in the name and the presence of their applauding brethren. The pope and his ministers then officiated according to the Roman liturgy; the creed was chanted with the addition of *filioque*; the acquiescence of the Greeks was poorly excused by their ignorance of the harmonious, but inarticulate, sounds; and the more scrupulous Latins refused any public celebration of the Byzantine rite. Yet the emperor and his clergy were not totally unmindful of national honour. The treaty was ratified by their consent: it was tacitly agreed that no innovation should be attempted in their creed or ceremonies; they spared, and secretly respected, the generous firmness of Mark of Ephesus; and, on the decease of the patriarch, they refused to elect his successor, except in the cathedral of St. Sophia. In the distribution of public and private rewards, the liberal pontiff exceeded their hopes and his promises; the Greeks, with less pomp and pride,

returned by the same road of Ferrara and Venice; and their reception at Constantinople was such as will be described in the following chapter. The success of the first trial encouraged Eugenius to repeat the same edifying scenes; and the deputies of the Armenians, the Maronites, the Jacobites of Syria and Egypt, the Nestorians, and the Ethiopians were successively introduced, to kiss the feet of the Roman pontiff, and to announce the obedience and the orthodoxy of the East. These Oriental embassies, unknown in the countries which they presumed to represent, diffused over the West the fame of Eugenius; and a clamour was artfully propagated against the remnant of a schism in Switzerland and Savoy, which alone impeded the harmony of the Christian world. The vigour of opposition was succeeded by the lassitude of despair: the council of Basil was silently dissolved; and Felix, renouncing the tiara, again withdrew to the devout or delicious hermitage of Ripaille. A general peace was secured by mutual acts of oblivion and indemnity; all ideas of reformation subsided; the popes continued to exercise and abuse their ecclesiastical despotism; nor has Rome been since disturbed by the mischiefs of a contested election.

The journeys of three emperors were unavailing for their temporal, or perhaps their spiritual, salvation; but they were productive of a beneficial consequence, the revival of the Greek learning in Italy, from whence it was propagated to the last nations of the West and North. In their lowest servitude and depression, the subjects of the Byzantine throne were still possessed of a golden key that could unlock the treasures of antiquity; of a musical and prolific language, that gives a soul to the objects of sense and a body to the abstractions of philosophy. Since the barriers of the monarchy, and even of the capital, had been trampled under foot, the various Barbarians had doubtless corrupted the form and substance of the national dialect; and ample glossaries have been composed, to interpret a multitude of words of Arabic, Turkish, Sclavonian, Latin, or French origin. But a purer idiom was spoken in the court and taught in the college; and the flourishing state of the language is described, and perhaps embellished, by a learned Italian, who, by a long residence and noble marriage, was naturalised at Constantinople about thirty years before the Turkish conquest. "The vulgar speech," says Philelphus, "has been depraved by the people, and infected by the multitude of strangers and merchants, who every day flock to the city and mingle with the inhabitants. It is from the disciples of such a school that the Latin language received the versions of Aristotle and Plato, so obscure in sense, and in spirit so poor. But the Greeks who have escaped the contagion are those whom we follow; and they alone are worthy of our imitation. In familiar discourse, they still speak the tongue of Aristophanes and Euripides, of the historians and philosophers of Athens; and the style of their writings are still more elaborate and correct. The persons who, by their birth and offices, are attached to the Byzantine court are those who maintain, with the least alloy, the ancient standard of elegance and purity; and the native graces of language most conspicuously shine among the noble matrons, who are excluded from all intercourse with foreigners. With foreigners do I say? They live retired and sequestered from the eyes of their fellow-citizens. Seldom are they seen in the streets; and, when they leave their houses, it is in the dusk of evening, on visits to the churches and their nearest kindred. On these occasions, they are on horseback, covered with a veil, and encompassed by their parents, their husbands, or their servants."

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