



Boston Catholic Journal

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The Pope and the Prophet:



Islam and the Violent Repudiation of Violence

Part I.

Pope Benedict the XVI, attempting to emphasize the incompatibility between violence and religion, triggered the spring for a trap long set. Quoting an obscure text from an equally obscure 14th century Byzantine Emperor --- "Show me just what Muhammad 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." --- was the long awaited and carefully set trigger.

Not surprisingly, the Pope's detractors carefully and selectively *quote* the Pope *quoting* the Emperor who was *quoting* the Q'uran --- so we provide the citation in its entirety below, but for the moment focus on the deliberately distorted quotation --- in the context in which it was stated:

"In the seventh conversation [text unclear] edited by Professor Khoury, the emperor touches on the theme of the holy war. 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. 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 ... 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 [according to Pope Benedict] 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."

So --- according to Islamicists --- Pope Benedict, in **quoting** Paleologus, *was in agreement with him*. Since he *also* invokes Plato (who ascribed to the transmigration of the soul), Descartes (and his discredited, "Discourse on Method") and the French Biologist and Nobel Laureate Jacques Monod --- then by this reasoning the Holy Father presumably agrees with them as well. What is more, since he also quotes from the Q'uran, he must, *eo ipso*, be a Muslim, too. In philosophy we call this a *Reductio ad Absurdum*.

To prove, to demonstrate, really, just how wrong the Pope was, in *their* interpreting the *intent* of his citation of an ancient text, Muslims have gone on a general rampage, pillaging and burning Churches and threatening violence if the Pope does not retract ***their*** misinterpretation --- in which he is held to have denounced Islam as a religion of violence and intolerance --- ***and they do so by acts of violence and intolerance.***

Right ...

"How dare you say that we are violent and intolerant! We will have your head for that!"

Muslim reaction worldwide served to validate, even instantiate, what it claimed to repudiate: by threatening ... and subsequently enacting, widespread violence ... Muslims denounced that Islam is fraught with violence ...

Islam, in its "two and seventy jarring sects", is not and never has been a religion of reason. Indeed, it is far more forthright and consistent in repudiating reason than *violence*.

It worked over a thousand years ago --- in the tens of thousands --- against the Hindus and then the Buddhists; it even worked less than a hundred years ago in the murder of more than a million Christians in the notoriously ignored Armenian Genocide by Muslim Turks in 1915, the same year in which it proved equally effective with the 100,000 Maronite Christians methodically starved in Lebanon and Syria: ***violence***. It is, after all, one of the defining articles of Islam:

- **"Kill, kill the unbelievers wherever you find them." (Q'uran 9.29.)**
- **"Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah. Those who follow him are merciful to one another, but ruthless to unbelievers." (Sura 48.29)**

The question in the anger is always the same: *The Prophet or the Sword? Choose!*

We can trivialize Western correctitude, and the factitious Muslim denunciation of the violence inherent in Islam, but we cannot ignore history. Actions, frightfully violent actions, speak louder than words ... even frightfully violent words. In fact the former ineluctably follows from the latter. It always has. It always will.

Is Islam violent?

Yes and no (how dear such evasiveness is to our effete and cherished correctitude). Let us then agree:

Yes if it is ***allowed to*** be --- that is to say, if it is permitted to enforce the injunctions in the Q'uran.

No --- but ***only if it is prevented*** from doing so.

This is not our opinion. It is Muhammad's. Look into the Q'uran ... and then ***open tomorrow's paper***.

Part II.

We just did: see: <http://www.upi.com/NewsTrack/view.php?StoryID=20060917-111439-3197r>

The Christian Response ... and Example



"I forgive ... I forgive ..."
The last words of a dying Nun

NewsTrack - Top News

Nun killed in Somalia may be tied to pope

MOGADISHU, Somalia, Sept. 17 (UPI) -- Gunmen killed an elderly Italian nun outside a children's hospital in Mogadishu, Somalia Sunday, police said.

The attack raised immediate speculation it was tied to Pope Benedict XVI's recent remarks about Islam, which drew strong criticism in Somalia from a radical Muslim cleric, the BBC reported.

Sister Leonella Sgorbati of the Missionaries of the Consolation order, based in Nepi, Italy, near Rome, died in an operating room after being hit with three or four bullets in the chest, stomach and back, doctors said.

Her bodyguard was also killed in the attack.

A Vatican spokesman called the killing "a horrible act," which he hoped would remain isolated, the BBC reported.

Police said two people had been arrested.

Hardline Somali cleric Sheikh Abubakar Hassan Malin told worshippers at his mosque Friday to hunt down and kill whoever offended the Prophet Mohammed, founder of Islam.

The Italian government said the nun had been repeatedly advised to leave Somalia, which was once ruled by Italy.

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- *Sister Leonella died as Jesus died --- forgiving her killers.*

Part 3.

A Religion of Tolerance and Brotherly Love ...

"MP Hussein Al-Mutairi said "Islam's greatness lies in the fact that it respects other Prophets and religions. **Islam is all about love, forgiveness, respect and coexisting in harmony.**" 19 September 2006

<http://www.arabtimesonline.com/arabtimes/kuwait/Viewdet.asp?ID=8836&cat=a>



Pope being burned in effigy

"Whoever offends our Prophet Muhammad should be killed on the spot by the nearest Muslim,"

Muslim Cleric Sheikh Abubakar Hassan Malin
16 September 2006

"You [the Pope] and the West are doomed ... We will break up the Cross, spill the liquor, and impose the 'jizya tax [on the Christian Infidel], then the only thing acceptable is a conversion (to Islam) or (being Killed by the sword." You infidels and despots, we will continue our jihad and never stop until God avails us to chop your necks, and raise the fluttering banner of monotheism, when God's rule is established, governing all people

and nations. God will [help] Muslims to conquer Rome, [may] God enable us to slit their throats, and make their money and descendants the bounty of the mujahideen."

Mujahedeen Shura Council
18 September 2006

Despite their Western apologists --- the nominally Christian, the "correctly" Christian, and those who abhor Christianity because it infringes on their moral license --- the hallmark of the classical bully remains indelibly stamped on the collective consciousness of Islam, especially radical Islam (if, indeed, the two are distinguishable ... a question that becomes increasingly attenuate): "If I cannot beat you up, I will beat up your little brother." If I cannot kill the Pope, I will kill his little sister, an elderly Italian Nun."

It is, ultimately, criminal mentality, the mentality of the Mafia, the mentality of the Gang, the mentality, apparently, of the Mullah.

And no one wants to say it, for the same reason that people avoid offending Gangs --- offend them, and you will pay for it with your life, and if they cannot reach you, they will reach for your children. So you stay quiet, say nothing --- *out of fear, fear of violence*. Islam understands this. It has learned the effectiveness of not simply the threat of violence, but carrying it out for the least provocation ... real, fabricated, or imagined. It is the opportunity to flex the arm of Islam, and the sword wielded at the end of it. Violence and vengeance, vengeance through violence is, with every passing day, the growing evangel of Islam.

All our "correctitude" will not amend history, nor expunge the obits of the offenders --- and the children of the offenders --- that grow with each passing day in the very newspapers which decry our insensitivity toward the sword of the Prophet --- which hangs over our heads by the proverbial horse's hair, even as we refuse to look up at it.

Islam's calculated misinterpretation of the Pope did not reveal the "real" Pope --- it revealed the "real" Islam.

Recommended on-line reading: **The Spirit of Islam** by By Dr. Labib Mikhail:
<http://www.thespiritofislam.com/nyattack01.html>

FULL TEXT OF THE POPE'S REAL PRESENTATION

September 12, 2006, University of Regensburg

"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.

That was in 1959, in the days of the old university made up of ordinary professors. The various chairs had neither assistants nor secretaries, but in recompense there was much direct contact with students and in particular among the professors themselves.

We would meet before and after lessons in the rooms of the teaching staff. There was a lively exchange with historians, philosophers, philologists and, naturally, between the two theological faculties.

Once a semester there was a *dies academicus*, when professors from every faculty appeared before the students of the entire university, making possible a genuine experience of *universitas* - something that you too, Magnificent Rector, just mentioned - the experience, in other words, of the fact that despite our specializations which at times make it difficult to communicate with each other, we made up a whole, working in everything on the basis of a single rationality with its various aspects and sharing responsibility for the right use of reason - this reality became a lived experience.

The university was also very proud of its two theological faculties. 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.

This profound sense of coherence within the universe of reason was not troubled, even when it was once reported that a colleague had said there was something odd about our university: it had two faculties devoted to something that did not exist: God.

That even in the face of such radical skepticism it is still necessary and reasonable to raise the question of God through the use of reason, and to do so in the context of the tradition of the Christian faith: this, within the university as a whole, was accepted without question.

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 [text unclear] 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 ... 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 practice 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?

I believe that here we can see the profound harmony between what is Greek in the best sense of the word and the biblical understanding of faith in God. Modifying the first verse of the Book of Genesis, the first verse of the whole Bible, John began the prologue of his Gospel with the words: "In the beginning was the Word".

This is the very word used by the emperor: God acts, [text unclear] with logos. Logos means both reason and word - a reason which is creative and capable of self-communication, precisely as reason. John thus spoke the final word on the biblical concept of God, and in this word all the often toilsome and tortuous threads of biblical faith find their culmination and synthesis.

In the beginning was the logos, and the logos is God, says the Evangelist. The encounter between the Biblical message and Greek thought did not happen by chance. The vision of St. 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.

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). 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.

In all honesty, one must observe that in the late Middle Ages we find trends in theology which would sunder this synthesis between the Greek spirit and the Christian spirit. In contrast with the so-called intellectualism of Augustine and Thomas, there arose with Duns Scotus a voluntarism which, in its later developments, led to the claim that we can only know God's *voluntas ordinata*. Beyond this is the realm of God's freedom, in virtue of which he could have done the opposite of everything he has actually done.

This gives rise to positions which clearly approach those of Ibn Hazn and might even lead to the image of a capricious God, who is not even bound to truth and goodness. God's transcendence and otherness are so exalted that our reason, our sense of the true and good, are no longer an authentic mirror of God, whose deepest possibilities remain eternally unattainable and hidden behind his actual decisions.

As opposed to this, the faith of the Church has always insisted that between God and us, between his eternal Creator Spirit and our created reason there exists a real analogy, in which - as the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 stated - unlikeness remains infinitely greater than likeness, yet not to the point of abolishing analogy and its language.

God does not become more divine when we push him away from us in a sheer, impenetrable voluntarism; rather, the truly divine God is the God who has revealed himself as logos and, as logos, has acted and continues to act lovingly on our behalf. Certainly, love, as St. Paul says, "transcends" knowledge and is thereby capable of perceiving more than thought alone (cf. Eph 3:19); nonetheless it continues to be love of the God who is Logos. Consequently, Christian worship is, again to quote Paul [text unclear] worship in harmony with the eternal Word and with our reason (cf. Rom 12:1).

This inner rapprochement between Biblical faith and Greek philosophical inquiry was an event of decisive importance not only from the standpoint of the history of religions, but also from that of world history - it is an event which concerns us even today. Given this convergence, it is not surprising that Christianity, despite its origins and some significant developments in the East, finally took on its historically decisive character in Europe. We can also express this the other way around: this convergence, with the subsequent addition of the Roman heritage, created Europe and remains the foundation of what can rightly be called Europe.

The thesis that the critically purified Greek heritage forms an integral part of Christian faith has been countered by the call for a de-Hellenization of Christianity - a call which has more and more dominated theological discussions since the beginning of the modern age. Viewed more closely, three stages can be observed in the programme of de-Hellenization: although interconnected, they are clearly distinct from one another in their motivations and objectives.

De-Hellenization first emerges in connection with the postulates of the Reformation in the sixteenth century. Looking at the tradition of scholastic theology, the Reformers thought they were confronted with a faith system totally conditioned by philosophy, that is to say an articulation of the faith based on an alien system of thought. As a result, faith no longer appeared as a living historical Word but as one element of an overarching philosophical system.

The principle of sola scriptura, on the other hand, sought faith in its pure, primordial form, as originally found in the biblical Word. Metaphysics appeared as a premise derived from another source, from which faith had to be liberated in order to become once more fully itself. When Kant stated that he needed to set thinking aside in order to make room for faith, he carried this programme forward with a radicalism that the Reformers could never have foreseen. He thus anchored faith exclusively in practical reason, denying it access to reality as a whole.

The liberal theology of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries ushered in a second stage in the process of De-Hellenization, with Adolf von Harnack as its outstanding representative. When I was a student, and in the early years of my teaching, this programme was highly influential in Catholic theology too. It took as its point of departure Pascal's distinction between the God of the philosophers and the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

In my inaugural lecture at Bonn in 1959, I tried to address the issue, and I do not intend to repeat here what I said on that occasion, but I would like to describe at least briefly what was new about this second stage of de-Hellenization.

Harnack's central idea was to return simply to the man Jesus and to his simple message, underneath the accretions of theology and indeed of hellenization: this simple message was seen as the culmination of the religious development of humanity. Jesus was said to have put an end to worship in favour of morality. In the end he was presented as the father of a humanitarian moral message.

Fundamentally, Harnack's goal was to bring Christianity back into harmony with modern reason, liberating it, that is to say, from seemingly philosophical and theological elements, such as faith in Christ's divinity and the triune God. In this sense, historical-critical exegesis of the New Testament, as he saw it, restored to theology its place within the university: theology, for Harnack, is something essentially historical and therefore strictly scientific.

What it is able to say critically about Jesus is, so to speak, an expression of practical reason and consequently it can take its rightful place within the university. Behind this thinking lies the modern self-limitation of reason, classically expressed in Kant's "Critiques", but in the meantime further radicalized by the impact of the natural sciences.

This modern concept of reason is based, to put it briefly, on a synthesis between Platonism (Cartesianism) and empiricism, a synthesis confirmed by the success of technology.

On the one hand it presupposes the mathematical structure of matter, its intrinsic rationality, which makes it possible to understand how matter works and use it efficiently: this basic premise is, so to speak, the Platonic element in the modern understanding of nature.

On the other hand, there is nature's capacity to be exploited for our purposes, and here only the possibility of verification or falsification through experimentation can yield ultimate certainty. The weight between the two poles can, depending on the circumstances, shift from one side to the other. As strongly positivistic a thinker as J Monod has declared himself a convinced Platonist/Cartesian.

This gives rise to two principles which are crucial for the issue we have raised. First, only the kind of certainty resulting from the interplay of mathematical and empirical elements can be considered scientific. Anything that would claim to be science must be measured against this criterion. Hence the human sciences, such as history, psychology, sociology and philosophy, attempt to conform themselves to this canon of scientificity.

A second point, which is important for our reflections, is that by its very nature this method excludes the question of God, making it appear an unscientific or pre-scientific question. Consequently, we are faced with a reduction of the radius of science and reason, one which needs to be questioned.

I will return to this problem later. In the meantime, it must be observed that from this standpoint any attempt to maintain theology's claim to be "scientific" would end up reducing Christianity to a mere fragment of its former self.

But we must say more: if science as a whole is this and this alone, then it is man himself who ends up being reduced, for the specifically human questions about our origin and destiny, the questions raised by religion and ethics, then have no place within the purview of collective reason as defined by "science", so understood, and must thus be relegated to the realm of the subjective. The subject then decides, on the basis of his experiences, what he considers tenable in matters of religion, and the subjective "conscience" becomes the sole arbiter of what is ethical.

In this way, though, ethics and religion lose their power to create a community and become a completely personal matter. This is a dangerous state of affairs for humanity, as we see from the disturbing pathologies of religion and reason which necessarily erupt when reason is so reduced that questions of religion and ethics no longer concern it.

Attempts to construct an ethic from the rules of evolution or from psychology and sociology, end up being simply inadequate.

Before I draw the conclusions to which all this has been leading, I must briefly refer to the third stage of de-Hellenization, which is now in progress. In the light of our experience with cultural pluralism, it is often said nowadays that the synthesis with Hellenism achieved in the early Church was a preliminary inculturation which ought not to be binding on other cultures.

The latter are said to have the right to return to the simple message of the New Testament prior to that inculturation, in order to inculturate it anew in their own particular milieu. This thesis is not only false; it is coarse and lacking in precision. The New Testament was written in Greek and bears the imprint of the Greek spirit, which had already come to maturity as the Old Testament developed. True, there are elements in the evolution of the early Church which do not have to be integrated into all cultures. Nonetheless, the fundamental decisions made about the relationship between faith and the use of human reason are part of the faith itself; they are developments consonant with the nature of faith itself.

And so I come to my conclusion. This attempt, painted with broad strokes, at a critique of modern reason from within has nothing to do with putting the clock back to the time before the Enlightenment and rejecting the insights of the modern age.

The positive aspects of modernity are to be acknowledged unreservedly: we are all grateful for the marvelous possibilities that it has opened up for mankind and for the progress in humanity that has been granted to us.

The scientific ethos, moreover, is - as you yourself mentioned, Magnificent Rector - the will to be obedient to the truth, and, as such, it embodies an attitude which belongs to the essential decisions of the Christian spirit.

The intention here is not one of retrenchment or negative criticism, but of broadening our concept of reason and its application. While we rejoice in the new possibilities open to humanity, we also see the dangers arising from these possibilities and we must ask ourselves how we can overcome them. We will succeed in doing so only if reason and faith come together in a new way, if we overcome the self-imposed limitation of reason to the empirically verifiable, and if we once more disclose its vast horizons.

In this sense theology rightly belongs in the university and within the wide-ranging dialogue of sciences, not merely as a historical discipline and one of the human sciences, but precisely as theology, as inquiry into the rationality of faith.

Only thus do we become capable of that genuine dialogue of cultures and religions so urgently needed today. In the Western world it is widely held that only positivistic reason and the forms of philosophy based on it are universally valid. Yet the world's profoundly religious cultures see this exclusion of the divine from the universality of reason as an attack on their most profound convictions.

A reason which is deaf to the divine and which relegates religion into the realm of subcultures is incapable of entering into the dialogue of cultures. At the same time, as I have attempted to show, modern scientific reason with its intrinsically Platonic element bears within itself a question which points beyond itself and beyond the possibilities of its methodology.

Modern scientific reason quite simply has to accept the rational structure of matter and the correspondence between our spirit and the prevailing rational structures of nature as a given, on which its methodology has to be based. Yet the question why this has to be so is a real question, and one which has to be remanded by the natural sciences to other modes and planes of thought - to philosophy and theology.

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."

