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**Muslims and Christians:  
The Urgency of Dialogue and Collective Engagement**  
an anthropological approach

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**Introduction**

When starting the discussion on this topic, two remarks are relevant.

A first is that a slightly external framework of interpretation for our subject, i.e. an anthropological interpretation of the genesis of ethnicity and inter-ethnic antagonistic relations, as developed in Leman, 1998, has been opted for. Islam and Christianity are studied as "feindliche Brüder", neighbours in opposition, each other's very close and therefore disquieting difference (cfr. Khader, 1993: 10-11). In our case we look upon Christianity and Islam as exponents of supra-ethnicity (cfr. Leman, 1999), meaning that both, in the terms in which the topic is currently positioned, are dealing with a multitude "of Western" respectively "of Arab" nature. A same analysis can be applied to these supra-ethnicities or umbrella-ethnicities as to the antagonistic relations between neighbouring ethnicities.

Within these framework of interpretation we can distinguish four levels:

1. There is a strong "we" consciousness in both communities, in which the "we" is largely taken up with points of contrast with the neighbour-opponent. At the root of this opposition, or so current ethnic anthropology tells us, lie elements of a social nature, and only very moderately, if at all, of a cultural nature (cf. Barth, 1969).
2. Although the origin of the opposition is social in nature, the opposition itself is mostly experienced and worded in cultural terms. Obviously, this is detrimental to any points in common with the other, or the neighbour (cf. Brass, 1991).
3. To legitimise the overemphasised cultural difference, a creative and selective ethnocentric reading is made of the community's own history, and of that of the other community (cf. Ardener, 1989).
4. Though this appears to be an interest focused on the past, it is actually a mobilisation of values based on group interests in the present and in the near future (cf. Fischer, 1986).

A second preliminary comment reflects upon the place of Judaism in our account. In actual fact, the historic grounds for the interethnic relationship between Christians and Muslims, as "feindliche Brüder", are triangular. This implies that the exercise we are conducting today should also be conducted between Muslims and Jews, between Christians and Jews, and then again collectively.

**1. Fundamental differences in socio-economic status and the Islamo-Christian dialogue**

**1.1. Necessity of a choice for democracy and political equality**

On winning the Prix Goncourt, Amin Maalouf stated in an interview in 1994:

"Strip the discourse of Khomeini of its references to Islam, and that of Mao Zedong of its references to Marx, Engels and Lenin, and you will see that they say exactly the same thing. In any case they have a great deal in common. Just about everywhere in the world politics acquire a religious form of expression "(Maalouf, 1994).

Other authors too refer to the importance of socio-economic discrepancy in our subject, and, respectively, the socio-economic and political deficit in which many Muslims live (Al-Azm, 1995).

"Sous-développés sur le plan économique, social et culturel, les musulmans acceptent mal la grande rupture entre leur passé glorieux (l'islam classique des historiens) et leur cruel dénuement d'aujourd'hui" (Arkoun, 1994).

The interethnic oppositional discourse typically states that essentially socio-economic differences are not (or only extremely rarely) worded in socio-economic terms, and tend to be legitimised in cultural (or religious) terms (Barth, 1969).

In a logical extension to this conclusion, I again quote Amin Maalouf: "So-called militant Islamism is typical of development countries. First they package it in nationalist form, then in Marxist. It all comes to nothing. Now it is dressed up as religion. Since the fall of the Wall there has been little left for sale in the supermarket of ideologies. So they fall back on what I call 'ideology through lack of better one'." (Maalouf, 1994).

We should not confine our analysis to this, nor should we allow it to ignore Maalouf's conclusion. In real terms: if we, as Muslim and Christian intelligentsia, want to remove the fuse from the powder keg, or, to put it positively, encourage more mutual overtures, then it is in our interests to help resolve the socio-economic deficit experienced by a broad swathe of ordinary Muslims in the Islamic countries. *We can do this by requiring our government leaders and the leaders of the EU to forge alliances with democratically legitimised leaderships in the countries of the Islamic region, and by inducing them to reach a more balanced economic cooperation with these countries as a whole. This is the first level at which dialogue and collective effort are recommended.*

### ***1.2. Political and economic debate is fundamental, but does not render the religious debate superfluous***

The fact that this platform of Western Christian and Islamic inter-ethnicity can lead to a complex narrative of alternating ideological choices, can be seen from an interview with the Tunisian Ennahda Islamist, Rachid Ghannouchi (Le Vif/L'Express, 1993). Speaking of the period of June 1966, when he again converted to active Islam, he said: "Les conséquences politiques sont les dernières choses auxquelles j'ai pensé. L'année précédente, tout mon univers avait été ébranlé: l'idéal nassérien d'une nation arabe, forte, prenant modèle sur le monde occidental s'était brisé". And he went on: "Nous avons notre propre chemin vers une modernité qui ne cherche pas à imiter l'Occident". Ghannouchi concluded, albeit without much explanation: "L'islam possède une force interne." At the start of the interview he had said: "En fait, c'est comme un verre qui se remplit. Vous n'en prenez conscience qu'au moment où il déborde".

What Ghannouchi is doing here, independently of the socio-economic, or the nationalistic, is claiming an internal rationale for religion and its possible impact on the political.

For us, this means that we probably can't exclude the possibility that adequate, collective philosophical-theological reflection will benefit mutual political relations on the long term, although in my opinion this should not rest on the condition that the

two, i.e. theology and politics, can be mixed as areas of reflection and action. It is best that religion and politics retain, or, where necessary, are given their own autonomy (Charfi, 1998).

This brings us to the specificity of the religious discourse.

## **2. In oppositional interethnic relations the main focus is on differences**

### ***2.1. Major elements in common with each other's cultural (c.q. religious) history are pushed aside***

It is not at all my intention to down value any discussion of truth in religious matters, or to plead for a relativism of faiths. This concern should not blind us to a distorting, oppositional interethnic perspective, through which one's own and another's truth are transferred to one's own faithful. Emphasis is placed not so much on what binds the three Abrahamic religions, but on what differentiates them.

Nonetheless, there are plenty of elements in common to hand: There are the Names of God, ar-Rahman and ar-Rahim, divine mercy, as it exists in both religious communities.

There is the place of religious experience in the three Abrahamic religions. God's Light (Koran 24,35), present in the Thora (Koran 5,44), the Gospel (Koran 5,46) and the Koran itself (Koran 4,174), in respect of which the true believer acts as a servant. In this context we have the parable of foolish and wise virgins, servants of the Light in the Gospel.

There is the place of inter-confessional tolerance. There are plenty of instances in the Koran, in which it appears that all people are entitled to claim their own religion (Koran 9,1-6; 10,47), or where space is created for the truth evident in other monotheistic religions (Koran 2,62; 2,256; 22,17; 29,43.46) or even among non-believers (Koran 2,256; 9,1-6). And in the Gospel too divine mercy, God's Light, is illustrated in the religious community, but also in the actions of someone of another faith, i.e. the Samaritan. Here too there is openness towards people of other beliefs.

It is not abnormal for a community of believers to credit itself as the keeper of religious truth, but it is notable that even centuries ago – long before the period of the Enlightenment – both religions, by those who have revealed them, awoke their confessors to the real possibility that someone of another religion, a non-member of their own group, may be a holder of religious truth. The Enlightenment is not therefore an absolute precondition for tolerance.

Besides, a first series of themes in which the similarities are obvious, and in which part of the shared theological road can be travelled without problem, there are themes in which the differences are indeed more real, but need not necessarily lead to contrasts.

Let us consider the importance of time (and by way of extension, history) in both religions: Koranic time (waqt) and biblical gospel time (chronos and kairos). Time and space are human categories par excellence, with a strong cultural and anthropological anchoring. Here too we tend towards rash conclusions, in which we present one religion as timeless and a-historical, and the other – conversely – as entirely anchored in time and history. In both religions, viewed from the core of their own religious teachings, there may be a great deal of human historical contingency (Al-Azm, 1995; van de Broeck, 1995: 86) entwined with divine, supra-historical revelations.

Let us consider the place of the lowliest in both religions. Is the "I am close to the lowliest" from the Koran really so far removed from the "What you do unto the least of my people, you do unto Me" from the Gospel?

There are differences between Christianity and Islam, of course (the idea of salvation, sacramentology, etc.), but in Christianity there are major discrepancies between certain passages in the Pentateuch and those of the Gospel. This has never prevented the Church from reading passages from the Pentateuch almost every week during the Eucharist.

Yet almost never (only in the case of authors with an interest in the mystical) do we look into and promote among the mass of religious followers, that which we can use together to enrich or specify our own concepts.

It wasn't until Vatican II (1962-1965) that a text issued by the official Catholic Church (laying aside the Spanish authority on Ghazali, Asin Palacios and the French Catholic Orientalist, Louis Massignon), contained a quote of the following kind: "The Church regards the Muslims with esteem too. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and allmighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God." (Nostra Aetate, 1965)

In the 40 years that have followed, this esteemed regard has been reiterated at the official level several times, by John Paul II, for example, in 1985 in Casablanca and in 1986 in Assisi.

It's also important to refer to the many initiatives taken in the same circumstances (meetings and publications), on the Islamic side, by, among others, a number of Turkish universities, the Royal Academy in Jordan, authors such as Falaturi (1992), Talbi (1989, 1990), Arkoun (1982) and many others, on the Christian side, among others, by the IDEO of the Dominicans in Cairo, the Groupe de Recherches Islamo-Chrétiennes, authors such as Borrmans (1982), Platti (2002), Kerkhofs (1995), Nielsen (1992) and many others, not in the least too in the United Kingdom. Islamic and Christian intelligentsia have engaged annually in meeting days.

And for a long time the attention given to common elements was just that bit less than the attention given to the differences (- by way of illustration: Teissier, 1991), but a mutual interest was awoken, and gradually we are reaching the stage where one is able to picture himself in the shoes of the other (see Meddeb on Platti, in Meddeb, 2002: 204-205).

Several initiatives have been started which should give evidence of mutual interest. In Flanders, for example, the *Kerkwerk Multicultureel Samenleven*, or for Muslims in the Flemish Association for Development and Emancipation of Muslims.

However, forty years are not enough to undo centuries of negative imaging across communities, particularly since we also have to compete against the negative images propagated by the mass media, and against authors and academics, on opposite sides, who still feel the need to stigmatise.

On top of this, the will of Christians and Muslims to transfer this positive recognition of the other to the ordinary faithful has not been adequately catered for in the weekly preaching. And probably, not enough attempts have been made to enshrine that will in a satisfactory, scientific and popularised communal theology.

## **2.2. Need for a collective philosophical-theological project based on elements of communality**

We, academics from the Christian and Muslim worlds, must seriously ask ourselves whether we have too often invested in what separates us, rather than in what makes us Abrahamic brothers, and done so to the detriment of deepening our own community's faith and our mutual relations.

It is more than likely that we have conceded more to the oppositional, interethnic logic of the "feindliche Brüder" than to the internal logic of our own Faith.

Finally, that same oppositional ethnic logic has led, as with every similar cluster of relations, to the accentuation of a difference in essence, which is thought to cast a shadow over all other similarities and differences and to render them valueless. This difference in essence tends to be presented in its least subtle form. Thus, in the Christian world it tends to be emphasised that Mohamed could not have been a real prophet (and so must be a false prophet). After all, didn't he come after Jesus, who was the fulfilment of biblical history?

This has given many Muslims the basic feeling that Christians do not accept them. Whereas, conversely, in the Islamic world, Christians - even though they could be accommodated - could not be true believers, for, in one way or another, hadn't they degraded the divine to the human? This has led many Christians to the basic feeling that in theory Muslims never can or ever will accept or recognise them as equals, and certainly not in a society where Muslims make up the majority. Dhimma-status may be a fine mediaeval thought, but it is hardly a decent modern, or post-modern one. The fact that the people involved did not recognise themselves in such important issues - and quite rightly for that matter - was the least of our concerns.

*If only out of intellectual decency modern academics should try to check the extent to which elements in common with each others' story can bring us to a partial communal theology, without falling into religious relativism. At the same time, we should try to resolve the issue of equality for both religions and for the confessors of both religions.*

It may well be interesting to bear in mind Mohamed Arkoun's idea of organising a Vatican III, even if he himself called this utopian. In this Vatican III we could go even further than the Vatican II "in integrating both the positive acquisitions in the area of critical thought and the political lessons that people can draw from the way the world has developed since the sixties" (Arkoun, 1994b: 58).

However, critical thinking is not restricted to philosophy or theology. The other social sciences are a part of this too, such as, historiography, an area in which yet again there is a great deal to do. After all, the "myth and symbol" complex (Smith, 1986) – to return briefly to anthropological language - which has its place in the development of ethnicity, mostly involves an account of a supposed objective past. However, it is notable that the reconstruction of this narrative is almost always a selective and creative endeavour.

### **3. A selective and creative reading of the past to legitimate the situation in the present**

#### **3.1. *An ethnicised and de-contextualised approach to the past is often the rule***

If we follow both religions, Islam and Christianity, from the time that they existed side-by-side, we can differentiate a great many periods (Martinez Montavez and others, 1992). There is a diversity in the relationships there have been and, more fundamentally, a variety of Islams and Christianities have existed.

There is the period from 622-936, a period the Muslim world likes to look back on as the glory days (and there's nothing wrong with that). Most peoples have had their glory days and are happy to look back on them.

There is the period from 936-1099, in which the first crusades took place. The Muslims suffered a number of defeats, which they attributed to their lack of belief and mutual disharmony.

From a military point of view the period from 1099-1291 was much more favourable for the Muslims, particularly when it came to crusades. Their defeats in the crusades came to an end. The next period, from 1291-1453, was again rather more ambivalent. Are we talking about defeats or victories?

Was it a situation of conflict between Christians and Muslims, when the Mongols, the Mamlooks and the Turks - Muslims or Muslims in the making – took power?

For two to three centuries, a period lasting as long as what many Muslims today perceive as their glory days, we can rightly speak of glorious days in the relations between Christians and Muslims. True, there were tensions, as in the normal course of any history, but the gain on either side was enormous. This is the period of the large universities, of the great translation centres (Toledo), of the great culture of philosophical debate (Averroes, Maimonides, Thomas Aquinas), and a period in which there was not only a great communal father of faith (Abraham), but also a great communal father of philosophy (Aristotle).

After that followed the period from 1453-1683 (the Ottoman revival), with the battle of Lepanto in 1571, which represented a severe blow for the Ottoman version of the Muslim world, after which it never returned to its previous form. We can attribute this blow to what we could call "the Christian West". Elsewhere too, other peoples experienced similar, heavy historical setbacks, after which their communities never returned to their previous form. These setbacks were also experienced in the

Christian world. In itself this did not give rise to centuries of trauma. History is full of such twists.

Back to our history of Christianity and Islam. After this, "the West" (and to a much lesser extent, the "Christian" West) took advantage of the general debilitation of the countries in the Islamic area, and it went on to colonise a large number of these countries. However, "the West" did not do this with the Islamic countries alone, but also with North America, which itself went on to dominate "the West" after World War II, and with Africa, Australia, and part of Asia (1683-1923).

And finally, "the West" had to decolonise, first politically (ending in the sixties), and then gradually – though this is more relative – economically and culturally too. At the same time, from 1923 onwards, the Islamic side experienced a nationalistic and Islamic revival, which turned strongly against the "the West". Whereas, certainly after World War II, there arose a great amalgam of ideas about exactly what "the West" should be taken to stand for, it seems that people preferred to hang on to the period of colonisation, which, strictly speaking, goes back to the battle of Lepanto (1571), and hence the lingering identification of "the West" with "Christianity".

In the meantime, we should ask ourselves: What is reality? What are we to understand by "the West" in the year 2002? Not ethnic, not ideological (with all the shifts in meaning that characterise those ideological pseudo-concepts). Does it stand for the people who live there? The Christian believers? The sociological Christians? And people of other persuasions? The individual governments? The multinationals? Transnational capitalism?

What stands out, is that in many writings, even by eminent academics, the notion of "the West" is used very carelessly. They often ignore, unscientifically, the fact that in the year 2002 this "West", referred to as "the Christian West" for the sake or ease, is determined as much by financial groups from the Islamic top countries, as by government leaders from the smaller European countries, let alone ordinary citizens living in what is known as "the West". How scientific then is even the most logical dialectic, which makes no effort to de-ethnicise its concepts (as is done sometimes by Ramadan, 1998) ?

### **3.2. Need for a collective Islamo-Christian historiography**

There is a need for impartial, contextualised, historical research, particularly at a time of high potential for conflict. Research with the objective view of those who do not want to make themselves or others feel guilty. A view that seeks to avoid an interpretation in black and white. Research of this type is needed as an antidote to every ideologising and ethnicising historiography. It is also important that the fruits of this labour be made available to the public at large in accessible language.

*There is a need for historians with an Islamic and Christian background to work on joint projects more than ever before, in which history as a whole – and therefore its credibility – is dealt with, and not restricted to one-sided periods and unilateral interpretations. Historical projects of this type should also meet the rigorous standards of academic professionalism and thereafter be popularised and made available to the public at large.*

## **4. Cultivation of an inter-ethnic "myth - symbol" complex for "pure" and monolithic "new" moral values**

### **4.1. Political extreme right and political-religious integrism.**

There are two political flows with a direct interest in cultivating an inter-ethnic oppositional "myth - symbol" complex about Muslims and Christians: extreme right

political formations in Western Europe, and Islamic political movements in countries with a strong Islamic background. What these two movements have in common is that they need an extremely threatening 'Other', and thus – because of the absolute values that would be at stake – are able to mobilise extreme emotions. We know that both movements lead to a democratic social deficit, because they demand an unworldly social and moral "purity", an integrism, firstly from their adherents, and then, once they have obtained power, from the entire population.

The assessment of both political movements differs only in that the political context in which they operate is democratic in the case of the European extreme right, whereas this is much less so in the case of the Islamic countries. Does this mean that they would have to count on a higher level of acceptability in the Islamic case?

Whatever direction an assessment of political Islamism may take, there can be no doubt that the most interesting alternative lies in the argument developed under 1.1: greater cooperation with a view to creating democratic choices and political equality.

As an outsider, it is of course more difficult to work on the better alternative in a community to which one does not belong, but we can probably provide more active support from the outside for those who are conducting a difficult struggle against political-religious integrism in their own community. In this sense the support from the non-Islamic corner for Nasr Abou Zeid (Egypt) serves as an example, as does the moral support from the Islamic corner for the murdered Trappists in Algeria. In both cases people have taken a courageous position out of a mature, intellectual analysis and great sense of responsibility.

#### **4.2. Two concrete challenges to cooperation: the multicultural society and world peace**

##### **4.2.1. Effort towards the multicultural society**

In Western European countries where an actual compromise between Christianity, atheism and laicism has emerged and grown in the absence of Islam as an interlocutor, the need to take this debate seriously is evident from the current Muslim population (Kettani, 1996: 33-34), which will probably be doubled (to about 7%) in the coming 15 years.

*Here, dialogue means that all parties make an effort to bear in mind their own and each other's interests, together with those of the entire historically grown society. It is a quest for compromise between the "historical social West-European acquis" and "newer" communities that establish themselves permanently, whether Islamic or not.*

This may not be a debate between Christians and Muslims in the strictest sense, but indirectly it is. There are two reasons for this on the Christian side: (1) the acquisitions of the social acquis have become part of the Christian acquis in its Western variant; (2) whatever the case, most of the parties involved in the West, religious or not, have a sociological Christian background and so Christianity is involved in the debate and image forming. On the Muslim side too there are at least two reasons: (1) it is the proper right of a community, once it can consider itself as legitimately established, to want to contribute to the social acquis, (2) the discussion deals with contextual areas of application for their faith.

The fact that Islam is probably better prepared and equipped for such a debate than many in Western Europe will as yet concede, can be seen from articles such as that by W.A.R. Shadid and P.S. van Koningsveld (1996), in which the possible "guidelines in Islamic thought for the behaviour of Muslim minorities in a non-Muslim state" are explained by Soheib Bencheikh (Marseille), Kalim Siddiqui (London), the Malaysian scholar Doi, Shaikh Faysal Mawlawi (Beirut) and Ibn al-Siddiq (Tangiers).

A few themes for debate:

- How exactly should we describe laicism, which has, in slightly variable forms, determined Western European society as a criterion for organisation? (Bencheikh, 1994; Vaner, 1991)
- Retaining the principle of separating religion and state, to what extent should religions implement themselves their own internal pluralism among themselves, based on respect for pluralism as part of the social acquis? (cf. Leman, 2002)
- Were it indeed purely historical reasons, and not theological reasons, that led Christianity and Islam to a separation of religion from the three worldly powers to which Montesquieu refers? (cf. Al-Azm, 1995; Charfi, 1998)
- To what point (and thus under which sanctions), and within which of its areas of application can a religion claim that its religious, canonical (or legal) order, i.e. Roman canon law or the Islamic sharia, should have the upper hand in a legal order determined by some form of social pluralism? Is this even possible? This is not obvious at all in a laic, pluralist context. (cf. Meddeb, Charfi, both in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 2002, Al-Azm, 1995)
- What is the legitimate institutional and contextual place of religious education in the multicultural society? (cf. Charfi, 1998, 2002)

What is interesting about this approach is that it confronts Christianity and Islam with the same questions, and does not assume that the questions affect only one of the two religions (cf. Arkoun in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 2002).

The answers to these questions affect our Western multicultural society directly, but would be relevant to any multicultural society in the long term, and therefore to a multicultural society of the Islamic type. After all, the Muslims in Western Europe will be West Europeans, and what they experience as acquis will be a part of what they perceive as being true Islam, just as most Christians have integrated the results of previous centuries of social debate as part of the Christian acquis. The debate of the future, on living together, will not be a debate between Christians versus Muslims, but between Christians and Muslims (and others) on the one hand, and Christians and Muslims (and others) equally on the other.

This brings us to a last argument in the debate over the need for dialogue and cooperation.

#### 4.2.2. Effort for world peace

Without doubt we can raise plenty of question marks over Huntington's 'The Clash of Civilizations' (1996). However, the author is undoubtedly correct on two points, i.e. that the crystallisation of the political efforts made today run predominantly in the opposition line of Islam versus a West identified with Christianity (and only to a lesser extent with China) and that, if it ever comes to a serious conflict between both, both culture clusters will be the principal losers, for a very long time. For the Christian West, and for Islam too, in view of the destructive power of the weapons, this will be different yet again to the experience of the Ottoman Empire after the battle of Lepanto.

It is important that the representatives of both religions, lest they wish to serve world peace and the God of Mercy, recognise that their basic texts contain certain paragraphs which they would best permanently catalogue as less significant and utterly non-equivalent to those passages which call to peace. Likewise, they should make it crystal clear to their devotees that what is important is not to be the "best religion" or the "closest to the True religion", but to be a peace-loving and tolerant religion.

With the importance of world peace in mind, it is fitting to mention two authors who have been pleading for this inter-religious dialogue, with a view to nothing less than world peace for quite some time: Mohamed Talbi, who considers "a communal theology of brotherhood, justice and peace not only desirable, but achievable" (Talbi, 1995) and Hans Kung, who published his "Project Weltethos" in book form in 1990, and which we can summarise in three phrases: no survival without a world ethos, no world peace without religious peace, no religious peace without dialogue between religions (on this subject see also de Tavernier, 1995: 130).

Today, more than ever, their pleadings for large-scale collective projects are deserving of attention.

## **5. Conclusion**

At present, the dialogue between Christians and Muslims is no longer about desirability, but about necessity (cf. Michot, 1994, 2002), and for the very reasons covered in this introduction.

Already, in the very short term, it is all about world peace. This is not a purely academic debate. It is about spreading the great perceptions of Peace, Mercy and Tolerance widely in our communities.

The events that take place in the multicultural societies of Western Europe will not be insignificant. In time the results of this debate will be important not only to Western Europe, but also to the way multiculturalism is understood in Islamic societies.

In both of these life-and-death debates it is up to Islamic and Christian philosophers and theologians, and the Islamologists and historians, as worthy intellectuals, i.e. with no ideological and ethnocentric baggage, to help map out the framework and arguments, and, on reaching consensus, to help spread them among the public at large.

At the same time this can lead to nothing other than a deepening of our own heritage of faith.

In this, we cannot be blind to the struggle that some are already carrying on in their own countries of origin and communities, against the undemocratic extreme right, and against Islamo-political, undemocratic integrism. These people must be supported, not just from within but from the outside, from outside of their own community of faith.

This is our collective jihad, the jihad of Christians and Muslims. And it should be backed by a very real concern to popularise this body of thought.

Such an effort will bear fruit in time, or at least help break down a number of obstacles to the parallel political debate over the democratisation and political equality of parties on either side of what is still a dividing line.

At this point we should reiterate a comment made in the introduction. There are three Abrahamic religions, not two. Not two, but three pillars have made us into what we are (Meddeb in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 2002). It is not two, but three religions that have to work together to bring about world peace today.

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