

## **Instrument of Mobilization or a Bridge towards Understanding? Religion and Values in the Reform Process of the European Union**

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### **Abstract**

The self-understanding of the Europeans has been profoundly put into question since 1989, and during the EU reform process, ‘Europe’ was confronted by the task of describing itself anew. In this context, the debate about the significance of the religious patrimony took on a key position in the discourse. The broad public discussions of the preambles to the European Charter of Fundamental Rights and the Treaty establishing a Constitution for the European Union (ECT) indicate that the relationship between religion and politics remains a controversial issue. The article argues that the ‘preamble disputes’ are part and parcel of the European Union’s quest for a political identity and that the outcome of the identity debate—the self-description as a ‘community of values’—deals in a specific way with this fundamental question.

### **Keywords**

Europe, religion, values, European Union, politics, constitution, law, identity

It is not only because of Muslim immigration that many aspects of religion have once again found a place on the agenda of public debates. This is true not only of the individual European societies, but of the European level itself, and it concerns not only individual themes of political structures, but also the fundamental question of the basic secular understanding of the political community. For some considerable time now, the central significance of the paradigm of secularization as a description of the religious

dynamic in Europe has been called into question.<sup>1</sup> The broad public discussions of the preambles to the European Charter of Fundamental Rights and the Treaty establishing a Constitution for the European Union (ECT) are one indicator that the relationship between religion and political remains an open question. Indeed, this question can become virulent when understandings of the relationship between religion and politics which were taken to be self-evident are called into question in changed political constellations, and their inherent plurality becomes evident. This was precisely the situation in which the process of the institutional reform of the European Union—the ‘constitutional process’—took place. The self-understanding of the Europeans has become profoundly questionable since 1989: it is not obvious what ‘being European’ consists of, nor how far ‘Europe’ extends, nor what meaning European national states and national identities will have in the future. In the constitutional process, ‘Europe’ was confronted by the task of describing itself anew. In this context, the debate about the significance of the religious patrimony took on a key position in the discourse. Its outcome (perhaps only temporary) was the self-description of the European Union as a “community of values.”

In the present essay, the debates about a reference to religion and values in the preamble to the ECT will be investigated and assessed in four steps. The underlying theme here is the discussion in this context of the connection between religion, values, and European political identity.<sup>2</sup> After an historical introduction (1), I shall analyze what occurred during the two European conventions, the debates, their lines of conflict, and the main actors (2). I shall then reflect on the concept of political identity which was employed (3), before attempting in the final section to link this to the overarching themes of the mobilization of religion in Europe and its theoretical framework (4).

## 1. Historical Introduction

It is instructive to see when political identity becomes an explicit theme in the process of European integration. To begin with, the fact that European

<sup>1</sup> José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Grace Davie, *The Sociology of Religion* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2007), 44–66.

<sup>2</sup> In what follows, I summarize some of the results of my own investigations; see Christof Mandry, *Europa als Wertegemeinschaft: Eine theologisch-ethische Untersuchung zum politischen Selbstverständnis der Europäischen Union* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2009) (in press).

integration after 1945 had its first success as an economic project was decisively important. The three European communities, ECSC, Euratom, and EEC, had the character of narrow international economic co-operations which defined themselves functionally in terms of the establishing of common markets—and soon, of *one* common market. In this context, it was not necessary to get involved on the political level with European identity or values; on the contrary, a functional and technocratic approach to the systemic integration was predominant.<sup>3</sup> This began to change only at the beginning of the 1970's. At that period, the EC underwent a large-scale expansion, both spatially through the speedy admission of a large number of new states, and politically when—initially in the field of foreign politics—the first steps towards a *political* coordination were taken.<sup>4</sup> It was in this context that the theme of identity came onto the political agenda. In December, 1973, the foreign ministers of the nine EC member states issued the “Document on The European Identity” in Copenhagen.<sup>5</sup> This document deals above all with the relationships to other countries and with the role of the EC in external or world politics. The understanding of the “European identity” is not really set out in the document itself, but it is linked to the dynamic of the European integration process and is oriented towards the goal of a European “Union” which at that time still lay in the distant future.

In the same period, the lengthy and tenacious process, promoted by the European Parliament itself, whereby the parliament in Strasbourg was directly elected by the citizens took account of the increasingly political character of the EC. The direct election to the European Parliament was agreed in 1976, and the first election took place in 1979. In addition, we should not underestimate the importance of the judgments pronounced by the European Court of Justice in awakening the consciousness that European integration had not merely an economic, but also a political character. The Court began with issues of equal treatment and the

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<sup>3</sup>) See Christof Mandry, “Die Frage nach der Identität der EU und der Religion(en),” in: Jamal Malik & Jürgen Manemann (eds.), *Markierungen im religiösen Feld* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2009) (in press).

<sup>4</sup>) See Gerhard Brunn, *Die Europäische Einigung von 1945 bis heute* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2002), 191–197; Curt Gasteyger, *Europa von der Spaltung zur Einigung: Darstellung und Dokumentation, 1945–2000*, completely revised new edition (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, 2001), 278–280.

<sup>5</sup>) *Bulletin of the European Communities*, December 1973, No 12, 118–122.

fundamental principles of the liberal (market) freedom, and increasingly elaborated the cornerstones of the fundamental European legal protection through recourse to the general basic principles of European legal systems and to common constitutional traditions.

With the founding of the European Union in 1992 and the economic and monetary union which found its most visible expression in the introduction of the euro, a new stage in the political integration of Europe was reached. However, the identification of the citizens with the Union proved to be shaky and not particularly resilient; for various reasons, it decreased steadily from the end of the 1990's onwards.<sup>6</sup> Since at the same time the economic and political Europeanization in the sense of the extension of EU competence was progressing, and the circle of member states was considerably expanded, now going beyond the circle of 'old acquaintances' in western Europe, those who bore political responsibility began to pay a new attention to the theme of identity. In view of the expansion and the deepening of the EU, the democratic deficit in the EU, which had long been a cause for complaint, and the doubtful degree of popular support became a problem. As early as 1992, Jacques Delors changed direction with the slogan "Giving Europe a soul," when he officially acknowledged the need to make the identification with the Union a political theme.<sup>7</sup> In this context, the Commission sought a dialogue especially with churches and philosophical and non-confessional organizations.<sup>8</sup> The admission of states in central and eastern Europe with their different historical experiences and their own cultural and religious traditions made it seem both more urgent to reach a common understanding about 'being European' and about

<sup>6</sup> Jan Delhey, "Transnationales Vertrauen in der erweiterten EU," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* B38 (2004), 6–13.

<sup>7</sup> The interest in empirical research into European values must also be seen in this context: see Paul Zulehner & Hermann Denz, *Wie Europa lebt und glaubt: Europäische Wertestudie*, 2nd edition (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1994); Hermann Denz (ed.), *Die europäische Seele: Leben und Glauben in Europa* (Vienna: Czernin Verlag, 2002); Loek Halman, Ruud Luijckx & Marga van Zundert (eds.), *Atlas of European Values* (European Values Studies) (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> See Rostane Mehdi, "L'Union européenne et le fait religieux: Éléments du débat constitutionnel," *Revue française de droit constitutionnel* 54 (2003), 227–248, 230; Wojtek Kalinowski, "Les institutions communautaires et 'l'âme' de l'Europe: La mémoire religieuse en jeu dans la construction européenne," in: Commissariat Général du Plan (ed.), *Croyances religieuses, morales et éthiques dans le processus de construction européenne* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 2002), 41–52.

cohesion in Europe, and also more difficult to identify what it was that united the Europeans. A discourse about identity developed in the European Union and in relation to the European Union; since then, there is an observable dynamic in this discourse which has led more and more to a semantic identification of ‘Europe’ with the European Union. The consequence of the attractiveness of the project of ‘Europe’ and the dynamic of the debates about identity and culture which have taken place in the slipstream of this project mean that it is no longer possible to detach a discourse about ‘Europe’ from the European Union.

The “Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union” is situated in the context of the need for institutional reform in the Union, of its questionable political legitimation, and of the discourse about identity. Apart from its direct goal of strengthening the basic rights of the citizens, the proclamation of a fundamental legal protection in the EU was also explicitly intended to consolidate the identity of the EU. It was expected that the outcome would be a document which would serve as a point of reference for a European political identity.

## **2. The Two Controversies about the Preambles and Their Actors**

The controversy about a “reference to God” and the mention of Christianity in the preamble to the EU Constitution Treaty cannot be understood unless we also take into account the similarly structured debates in the preceding convention about the European Charter of Fundamental Rights. Both have their place in the constitutional process of the EU, since the need for an institutional reform of the EU already determined the planning of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, and the idea of a ‘constitution’ for the Union was already in the air.

### *2.1. The Convention for the Charter of Fundamental Rights*

The European Convention which drafted the Charter of Fundamental Rights (1999–2000) was chronologically the forerunner and methodologically the model for the Convention on the Future of the European Union which produced the draft ECT.<sup>9</sup> Unlike the usual procedure in

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<sup>9</sup> See Karl A. Schachtschneider, “Eine Charta der Grundrechte für die Europäische Union” *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* B 52–53 (2000), 13–21; Norbert Bernsdorff & Martin

inter-governmental negotiations, the convention was to draw up the Charter of Fundamental Rights by means of a transparent process oriented to the democratic ideal of deliberation.<sup>10</sup> Both the charter and the convention method were viewed as an essential contribution to the legitimation of the European Union. Accordingly, the convention debates served as a platform for a discussion of Europe and of the bases and foundations of the common European bonds. To the great surprise of many observers, the question of the significance of religion—and above all, of Christianity—emerged as the object where the various opinions clashed with particular vehemence. Do religious convictions and traditions also belong to the foundations of the European values, of the European cultural and political consciousness? There is a fundamental tension here, not limited to the religious theme alone, between the unifying factor of shared universal values and the plurality of the national cultures and traditions which are declared to be deserving of protection (see art. 6 section 3 of the ECT).

The controversy was sparked by the word “religious,” which was included in a draft of the preamble at an advanced stage of the discussions: “Taking inspiration from its cultural, humanist and religious patrimony, the Union is founded on [...]”<sup>11</sup> It was above all the French representatives and some Italian socialists who objected vehemently to every occurrence of the semantic field “religious.” France went so far as to threaten to refuse to uphold the entire charter if the word “religious” was used in its preamble. The compromise which was ultimately reached avoids the problem by substituting

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Borowsky, “Grundrechte in Europa: Von der Grundrechtecharta zur Europäischen Verfassung,” *Deutsche Richterzeitung* 83/6 (2005), 188–194.

<sup>10</sup> On the convention method, see Justus Schönlaue, *Drafting the EU Charter: Rights, Legitimacy, and Process* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); on the evaluation of the convention method in the case of the constitutional convention, see, e.g., Daniel Göler, *Deliberation—ein Zukunftsmodell europäischer Entscheidungsfindung?: Analyse der Beratungen des Verfassungskonvents 2002–2003* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2006). In both conventions, the ideal of deliberation is judged to have been basically attained, but in the concluding phase, this ideal was overlaid each time by the traditional ‘bargaining’ and by governmental pressure from outside.

<sup>11</sup> On this, see Justus Schönlaue, “New Values for Europe?: Deliberation, Compromise, and Coercion in Drafting the Preamble to the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights,” in: Erik O. Eriksen, John E. Fossum & Agustín J. Menéndez (eds.), *The Chartering of Europe: The European Charter of Fundamental Rights and Its Constitutional Implications* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2003), 112–132, pp.125–128.

*spirituel* for *religieux* (and *culturel* for *moral*).<sup>12</sup> In the version which was adopted, the passage in question in the preamble to the charter runs as follows, in a literal translation of the German text: “Conscious of its *spiritual-religious* and moral heritage, the Union is founded on the indivisible, and universal values of human dignity, [...]” (my italics). The phrase “spiritual-religious” (*geistig-religiös*) is however found only in the German text; the other textual versions speak only of the “spiritual and moral heritage,” as in the French *patrimoine spirituel et moral*. The adjective *spirituel* is semantically ambiguous, and its meaning neither explicitly includes nor implicitly excludes “religious.” The interpretative translation which is religion-friendly is found only in the German version.<sup>13</sup> We must also draw attention to the context of this formulation. Already in the charter of fundamental rights, the spiritual-moral(-religious) heritage of Europe is not itself the immediate point of reference of the Union: this is constituted by “the indivisible and universal values,” which are then specifically listed. The relationship between the European values and the cultural inheritance was to play an even greater role in the 2004 Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (ECT).

## 2.2. *The EU Reform Convention and the Preamble to the Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe*

In the light of this foregoing history, it was not surprising that the debate went through a new round during the European Convention in 2002–2003. Besides this, the designation of the work of reform at which the convention aimed as a “constitution” entailed a considerable symbolic enhancement. The discussions about the self-understanding of the Union, which finally (though not exclusively) focused on the preamble, took place even more clearly against the background of a search for a European narrative that could both assist integration and provide a fundamental program. This is why increased attention was paid to the values of the Union, and this question was given a systematically higher rank: the label “community of values” became a central self-definition of the Union.

<sup>12</sup> Here, the Charter of Fundamental Rights follows the statute of the Council of Europe, which likewise contains the phrase “spiritual and moral.”

<sup>13</sup> See Martin Borowsky, “Wertegemeinschaft Europa: Die Charta der Grundrechte der Europäischen Union zwischen politischer Proklamation und rechtlicher Verbindlichkeit. Ziele, Inhalte, Konfliktlinien,” *Deutsche Richterzeitung* 79 (2001), 275–287, pp. 285–286.

The debate about the relationship to religion had several different starting points and followed varying lines of conflict. First of all, “the Union’s values” were to be defined in title I of the Constitution, and in this context it was necessary to discuss the traditions in which these values could be seen. Secondly, there was the question whether the constitution should be prefaced in its preamble with a “reference to God,” perhaps like that in the German constitution: “In responsibility before God and human beings [...]” Thirdly, there was once again the question whether Christianity (and perhaps other religious traditions) should be mentioned as a component of the European cultural patrimony.

For strategic reasons, the convention presidency moved the delicate discussion of the preamble to the rear and brought forward the deliberations about the text of the constitution. This meant that the first topic of debate was the values of the Union. The two themes of values and religion thus appeared in a close discursive connection on the agenda, since the deliberations about the values soon involved the traditions in which these values stood. Agreement was however reached to treat the two themes separately, in order to keep the text of the constitution free from fundamental affirmations about history and about the relationships between values and religion: these were to be dealt with in the preamble. The following “values” of the Union were finally agreed upon: “The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights; these values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, tolerance, justice, solidarity, and non-discrimination prevail” (Draft Constitution Treaty, art. I-2).<sup>14</sup>

Let us take at least a brief look at the values of the Union. The first point that strikes one in the list of values is that the first sentence proclaims the commitment to essential foundations of a modern democracy according to the Western understanding, and thereby to values which at least make the claim to count as universal values.<sup>15</sup> In the second sentence, in a somewhat contorted formulation, we find above all values that can be understood

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<sup>14</sup> This formulation was modified only slightly in the final version of the constitutional treaty: the rights of minorities and the equality between men and women were explicitly inserted (see *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 310, Volume 47, 16.12.2004).

<sup>15</sup> The self-commitment of the Union to specific values has a forerunner in art. 6 (1) of the Treaty on European Union (EUT), which affirms: “The Union is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law, principles which are common to the Member States.” In addition to the expansion in



as “values of difference,” in that they not only presuppose the experience of a societal pluralism and a pluralism of worldviews, but acknowledge pluralism as a value. In other words, values of difference such as tolerance, the acknowledgment of pluralism, and non-discrimination assume that there will be conflicts over convictions with regard to values, and they formulate the decisive value-attitudes which will permit society to cope with these conflicts and bring them to a positive outcome. This means that they can also be called “meta-values,” i.e. values for dealing with value-differences.<sup>16</sup>

A first draft of the preamble envisaged the positive appeal to reason, humanism, and the Enlightenment, but no reference of any kind to a religious patrimony, still less to specific religions. It soon became clear that no consensus could be achieved for a reference to God in any form in the preamble, such as is found in many European constitutions.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, the discussion concentrated on whether or not to mention Christianity or several religions among the traditions in which the values of the Union can be seen. The debate was conducted with relative vehemence by both sides, since one group felt provoked by the fact that the preliminary draft explicitly mentioned various traditions while passing over every religion in silence, and the other group found the demand for the mention of one specific religion (i.e. Christianity) intolerable.

The proposals which were put forward ranged from a mention of Christianity (but not of any other religions) as a cultural root, via a listing of religious traditions which gave a prominent place to Christianity, to a reference to the “Jewish-Christian” patrimony. The supporters wished to see the acknowledgement of historical reality; they also wished to affirm that religious convictions not only belong to the past, but are active in the present too. The principal argument of the opponents was the problem entailed by the exclusive mention of Christianity or by the emphasis on

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contents, it is above all the transition from “principles” to “values” that is striking. On this, see Mandry, *Europa als Wertegemeinschaft*, ch. 3.

<sup>16</sup> See also Hans Joas & Christof Mandry, “Europa als Werte- und Kulturgemeinschaft,” in: Gunnar F. Schuppert, Ingolf Pernice & Ulrich Haltern (eds.), *Europawissenschaft* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2005), 541–572.

<sup>17</sup> See Joseph H. Weiler, *Ein christliches Europa: Erkundungsgänge*, translated by Franz Reimer (Salzburg: Pustet, 2004), 43–44; Joël-Benoît d’Onorio, “Religions et constitutions en Europe: À propos d’un préambule contesté,” *Revue de droit public et de la science politique en France et à l’étranger* 122/3 (2006), 715–736.

its role. Jews and Muslims must inevitably feel themselves downgraded and marginalized. Besides this, any reference to Christian or even Jewish-Christian roots could be seen as a hindrance to the admission of Turkey to the EU. It took a long time for mediatory formulations to win a consensus between the supporters and the opponents of the reference to religion. Not even an explicitly pluralistic proposal modeled on the new Polish constitution, which was suggested by the EPP fraction and by other supporters, won a consensus: “Believing that united Europe will ever base on fundamental values, [...] which are values of those who believe in God as the source of truth, justice, good, and beauty, and of those who do not share such a belief, but respect these universal values arising from other sources [...]”<sup>18</sup> The stubbornness displayed by both sides in this confrontation shows clearly that the preamble to the Constitutional Treaty was not regarded as pure rhetoric or as a mere decorative element devoid of any further significance. Rather, the seriousness with which the struggle to formulate the preamble as a whole (and not only the theme of religion) was conducted shows that they were debating “the entrance to the constitution,” i.e. the passage which would indicate how the constitution as a whole was to be read and in which the essential reference points of the European self-understanding, including the cornerstones of the identity of EU as a political community, were to be included in a symbolic condensation.<sup>19</sup> This was not primarily a matter of a fitting juridical formula, but of a self-interpretation, and hence of the articulation of the cultural, political, and ethical factors which *have marked* Europe up to now and which, even more importantly—in the minds of the convention members—*ought to mark* Europe in the future. In the situation of the convention, however, the pluralism in the question of religion and political community society

<sup>18</sup> Elmar Brok, Jozsef Szájer & Erwin Teufel, “Suggestion for Amendement of Art. I-2 on Behalf of the EPP Group,” online at <http://european-convention.europa.eu/Docs/Treaty/pdf/2/Art%202%20EPP.pdf> (2003) (retrieved 23 March 2009); cf. Christine Normann, *Polens Rolle in der EU-Verfassungsdebatte* (Münster: Lit, 2005), 68.

<sup>19</sup> Peter Häberle distinguishes legal, cultural, and identificatory levels of affirmation and function in the preambles to the constitution; see Peter Häberle, “Präambeln im Text und Kontext von Verfassungen,” in: Joseph Listl & Herbert Schambeck (eds.), *Demokratie in Anfechtung und Bewährung: Festschrift für Johannes Broermann* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2002), 211–249. Cf. also Herbert Schambeck, “Die Bedeutung der Präambel und des Gottesbezuges im Entwurf des Europäischen Verfassungsvertrages,” in: Jörg Ennuschat et al. (eds.), *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft im Staat der Gegenwart: Gedächtnisschrift für Peter J. Tettinger* (Cologne: Heymanns, 2007), 627–643, p. 633.

proved too demanding. The reference to “religion” was a controversial point: many believed that the secular understanding of the political community was fundamentally at stake here and that a consensus was virtually impossible. The only solution that could be chosen was the elimination of every concrete mention from the preamble, including “the Enlightenment” and “Greek and Roman civilization,” although agreement was reached to describe the European traditions not only as elements belonging to the past, but as living realities. The compromise formula which was finally attained states merely: “Drawing inspiration from the cultural, religious, and humanist inheritance of Europe, the values of which, still present in its heritage, have embedded within the life of society the central role of the human person and his or her inviolable and inalienable rights, and respect for law.”<sup>20</sup>

### 2.3. *The Actors in the Controversy in and around the Convention*

Two groups can be identified among the actors in the convention debates. In terms of party politics, the supporters at the convention belonged primarily though not exclusively to the EPP, while the opponents were to be found above all in the ranks of the socialists. A reference to religion was supported chiefly by the representatives of Germany, Italy, Malta, and Poland; and it was primarily France, Belgium, and Denmark that decisively rejected this. Naturally, we must not overlook the fact that the lines of division did not run smoothly. On individual points, support and objection were organized differently, depending on whether the proposal spoke of a reference to “religion” or to “God.” For example, Turkey was not opposed in principle to a “reference to God” in the preamble, but it was clearly against a mention of the “Jewish-Christian patrimony.”<sup>21</sup> Besides this, the motives and arguments of both the supporters and the opponents

<sup>20</sup> CONV 850/03, Preamble, second deliberation. In the end, the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe signed in Rome on 29 October 2004 revised this formulation in the preamble even further: “Drawing inspiration from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe, from which have developed the universal values of the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law.”

<sup>21</sup> See Peter Altmeier, “Unterwegs zu einem europäischen Verfassungsvertrag: Der Entwurf des Europäischen Konvents,” in: Walter Fürst, Joachim Drumm & Wolfgang M. Schröder (eds.), *Ideen für Europa: Christliche Perspektiven der Europapolitik* (Münster: Lit, 2004), 95–120, p. 106.

varied, reflecting the various collective national historical experiences. This is particularly obvious in the arguments of convention members from central and eastern European states, who see Europe as more than merely a political “project.” For them, Europe itself far transcends the political sphere as an idea which is the bearer of values, an idea which is inseparably linked to the religious-spiritual element; they attribute the attractiveness of this idea and the inspiration it gives to the very origin of the idea of Europe itself. The newly admitted countries from Central and Eastern Europe saw this as something essential, something that was their goal in the “return to Europe,” viz. to have access once again to a “common European patrimony” and thus to be able to live anew the religion which had been ostracized under Communism.<sup>22</sup> For them, the ability to speak openly about religious convictions and the public acknowledgment of the contribution made to the European values by religious traditions is a form of political-societal freedom which they see as itself a realization of the European values.

From the other side, few alternative proposals about the “sources” of the European values were made. In general, these met with little resonance at the convention, doubtless because they claimed one-sidedly that the values of the Union were to be found in one particular tradition, viz. the “anti-fascist” and “anti-totalitarian” struggle.<sup>23</sup> This however makes it clear that there are *other narratives*—in this case, of course, polemically exaggerated narratives—of “how Europe became what it is.”

Although the convention debates took place in an autonomous discursive context, they were not isolated from the much broader societal debate. On the contrary, it was in fact a merit of both conventions that their “preamble controversies” ignited one of the most extensive European debates about the values and the essence of the Union. Outside the convention, there were many organizations and groups that took part in the debate by stating their positions and attempting to influence the proceedings. They were linked in many ways by a network to the convention members and to

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<sup>22</sup> József Szájer, “Speech delivered by József Szájer, Hungary, at the European Convention, 27.02.2003,” online at <http://european-convention.europa.eu/docs/speeches/9468.pdf> (retrieved 22 May 2008); cf. Janos M. Kovacs, “Zwischen Ressentiment und Indifferenz: Solidaritätsdiskurse vor der EU-Erweiterung,” *Transit* 26 (2003/2004), 71–99.

<sup>23</sup> E.g. Floch (2003) and Kaufmann (2003:1f.). The socialists Berès and Di Rupo (2003) proposed to include the separation between churches and states among the European values.

their milieu. The Catholic Church and the other Christian churches in Europe were the most prominent among these actors. Both Pope John Paul II and many national conferences of bishops and churches pleaded for a religious reference in the preamble to the constitution. On the European level, the churches brought this proposal forward via their European organizations. Above all, the Catholic COMECE and the Council of European Churches (Protestant, Free Church, and Orthodox) launched an extensive and partly coordinated campaign to mobilize support for a reference to transcendence and the mention of Christianity.<sup>24</sup> Weninger speaks of an “agreed strategy” on the part of the churches and confessions which led to “a lobbying by the Church officials which was unprecedented in this form.”<sup>25</sup> On a variety of levels, they vigorously argued for a reference to transcendence in the constitution and for the mention of Christianity or of a “Jewish-Christian patrimony” in the preamble. This campaign was successful, firstly, in that it managed to keep the theme alive in the media and in the European discourse over a relatively long period; secondly, because a large number of public supporters and politicians were in fact won over to this cause; and thirdly, because at least some representatives of Judaism and of Islam supported at least a part of the Christian concern, viz. the inclusion of a reference to God or to transcendence.<sup>26</sup>

Naturally, we should not lose sight of the pluralism among Christians and within the churches. Some Christian and ecclesiastical voices expressed reservations about both themes, or even rejected the proposals.

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<sup>24</sup>) On the history and the structure of Christian representations at the EU, see Patrick R. Schnabel, “Geschichte und Strukturen christlicher Vertretungen bei der Europäischen Union,” *Österreichisches Archiv für Recht & Religion* 54/2 (2007), 222–290. Bérengère Massignon, “Les relations des organismes européens religieux et humanistes avec les institutions de l’Union européenne: logiques nationales et confessionnelles et dynamiques d’eupéanisation,” in : Commissariat Général du Plan (ed.), *Croyances religieuses, morales et éthiques dans le processus de construction européenne* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 2002), 23–40; Michael H. Weninger, *Europa ohne Gott?: Die Europäische Union und der Dialog mit den Religionen, Kirchen und Weltanschauungsgemeinschaften* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2007), 147–178, also give information about the other religious and non-religious organizations.

<sup>25</sup>) Weninger, *Europa ohne Gott?*, 185.

<sup>26</sup>) In Germany, for example, the President of the Central Jewish Council spoke in favor of a reference to God (Press release of the EKD, the Protestant Church in Germany, 2003); in the convention, Turkey supported this. Altogether, however, there seem to have been only a few public statements from the Jewish and Muslim side (Weninger, *Europa ohne Gott?*, 193–195).

For theological or political reasons, they supported the principle of laicism, or were afraid of an excessive Catholic influence on the European organizations.<sup>27</sup> For example, a manifesto written mostly by French Christian “basis groups” pleaded for laicism as a European value and attacked the “particularism of ‘Christian values.’”<sup>28</sup> A forum of Muslim student organizations demanded the acknowledgment of the Muslim contribution to European culture, but opted on the other hand for a “secularism” on the part of public institutions which would acknowledge and promote the plurality of the religious traditions of the religions (Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations, FEMYSO, May 2003). These voices had a limited influence, not only because of their small dimensions, but also because their discourse was scarcely different from the humanist positions. Outside the convention, the “European Humanist Federation” deserves special mention among the organized non-ecclesiastical opponents of a reference to transcendence and of a mention of any religious traditions.<sup>29</sup>

The argument which appeals to the secular nature of the Union or to its neutrality with regard to worldviews displays an understanding of the public political community which is strongly related to values; this understanding is in turn linked to particular experiences and to a specific European narrative. Even the rejection by the political Left of a pluralistic formula modeled on the Polish constitution—on the grounds that one “cannot divide people in the Union into two categories, into believers and unbelievers” or obligate “Europe to accept formulae of religious faith”<sup>30</sup>—is recognizably a position related to values, which believes that the category

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<sup>27</sup> See Jean-Louis Clergerie, “La place de la religion dans la future Constitution européenne,” *Revue de droit public et de la science politique en France et à l'étranger* 120/3 (2004), 739–754, p. 744–745; Virginie Riva, “La mobilisation catholique en France autour des ‘racines chrétiennes de l’Europe’: Naissance et enjeux d’une controverse. Mémoire de DEA” (2005), online at <http://www.univ-paris1.fr/IGM/pdf/Riva-DEA.pdf> (retrieved 23 March 2009).

<sup>28</sup> L’observatoire chrétien de la laïcité 2003: §1; see European Network Church on the Move et al., “Which Europe at the beginning of the Millennium?: Declarations of grass roots Catholic movements about the future of Europe on the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty of Rome” (2007), Rome, Berlin, London, online at [http://www.we-are-church.org/int/statements/tor50/Appello\\_50\\_anni\\_EU\\_en.pdf](http://www.we-are-church.org/int/statements/tor50/Appello_50_anni_EU_en.pdf) (retrieved 10 June 2009).

<sup>29</sup> See Weninger, *Europa ohne Gott?*, 195–197.

<sup>30</sup> Sylvia-Yvonne Kaufmann, “Rede auf der Plenartagung des Konvents, Brüssel, 27. Februar 2003,” online at <http://european-convention.europa.eu/docs/speeches/8142.pdf> (retrieved 23 March 2009), 1.

of the religious must be dispensed with altogether in the public sphere. The opponents of a reference to religion held that the reference to the freedom of religion, conscience, and faith which is guaranteed by the Charter of Fundamental Rights as a part of the Constitutional Treaty sufficiently covered the concern of the “adherents of religion”: and this position must be interpreted as a differently accentuated understanding of religious freedom which emphasizes the equal freedom of religion, rather than the publicly guaranteed freedom to practice religion (which is what the supporters from the newly admitted member states had in mind). It is not difficult to discern behind the two fundamental attitudes to the theme of religion, which clashed in the preamble controversies, the different collective experiences, e.g. in western and eastern Europe. These experiences are closely tied to the respective institutional regulations which concretely translate into political and legal reality the principles (such as religious freedom) which are seen as bearers of values. Since experiences take place within the existential world which is described by means of these regulations, and are experiences with these institutions, the experiences themselves can become values.

It follows from these reflections that it is not only the background in worldview, religion, or confession that is decisive for the position taken on the controversial questions relating to the reference to religion in the EU constitution. The pluralism within the religious field and within the Christian confessions, as well as the pluralism between the original contexts in western and eastern Europe, draw our attention to the experiences with religion and the public sphere, or with politics, which lie behind these positions. Clearly, the decisive factor is not whether it is Christian (Catholic or Protestant), Jewish, or Muslim actors who take one particular position. This depends much more importantly on the experiences of these persons with the position of a political and cultural majority or minority in their national societies and histories. Ultimately, therefore, while the theme in the foreground is religion, in reality it is a question of the understanding of those values that are to play a determinative role in the Union.

#### *2.4. The End of the Controversy*

The events of the controversy, its lines of conflict and actors, are interesting; but so are the mechanisms and motives which limited it and made it possible to end it. The debates were vehement but limited, and were characterized by a quick de-escalation once the decision had finally been taken.

In addition to the fact that both sides could lay claim to partial successes, the “solution” consisted in an agreement about values which were capable of finding a consensus, while leaving open the question of the basis of these values—or more precisely, while emphasizing that this question was open.

On the side of the Christian actors, two main motives were decisive for the limitation of the controversy: they had other concerns, and they wanted to avoid supporting a fundamental Christian opposition “against Europe.” The preamble was neither the only nor even the primary item on the European-political agenda of the Christian churches. In terms of *Realpolitik*, other things were more important, above all the adoption in the ECT (as art. I-52) of Declaration No. 11 to the Final Act of the Amsterdam Treaty, which deals with the status of churches and non-confessional organizations and the maintenance of a “structured dialogue” with them. The declared goals of the churches also included the obligatory adoption in the ECT of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and thereby of freedom of religion, and the adoption of sustainability and the fight against poverty as objectives of the politics of the Union.<sup>31</sup> These goals can count as essentially achieved; they survive even in the changed situation of the Lisbon Treaty. The fact that they are not promoted with the same verve in public—or perceived by the public—probably lies in the nature of these concerns, which were also much less a matter of debate.<sup>32</sup> Secondly, the obvious irenicism in the declaration by the COMECE after the failure to secure the reference to God and the mention of Christianity in the preamble is all the more instructive. This sums up the question of the preamble by saying, “The Constitutional Treaty draws its inspiration from specific traditions that have shaped Europe, thus clearly referring to the centre of

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<sup>31</sup>) See Secretariat of the COMECE, “Letter Written by Several Church Representatives and Church-Related Agencies to the President of the European Convention” (Brussels 2002), online at [http://www.comece.org/upload/pdf/secr\\_conv\\_letter\\_020630\\_en.pdf](http://www.comece.org/upload/pdf/secr_conv_letter_020630_en.pdf) (retrieved 23 March 2009).

<sup>32</sup>) Schlesinger and Foret argue that the debate about the preamble was a maneuver on the part of the churches to draw attention away from the adoption of the Amsterdam Declaration about the churches; see Philip Schlesinger & François Foret, “Political Roof and Sacred Canopy? Religion and the EU Constitution,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 9/1 (2006), 59–81. However, this argument is not convincing, since art. I-52 is neither so important for the churches; nor was it so controversial. Clergerie evaluates art. I-52 as a compensation for the non-inclusion of the reference to Christianity in the preamble; see Clergerie, “La place de la religion,” 744.



this tradition, which is Christianity.”<sup>33</sup> No doubt, the agency which represented the church was also under pressure to present its own work as successful; besides this, this strategy of recognizing a reference to Christianity in the constitution—although precisely *this* concern had not achieved success—is an attempt to win sympathy for the Union on the part of those the COMECE is addressing in the church, despite or precisely in this situation. This goal—appealing to Christians to identify with the Union, although the “Christian patrimony” is not explicitly mentioned—must be understood as one consequence of a basic interest in a European integration which overcomes the national element and unites eastern and western Europe.

How was it possible for the theme of religion to produce such a mobilizing effect in the context of a constitution for the European Union? This is not due alone to the interest of faith communities in this theme, or to the influence they exerted, but also to the fact that this concern found a resonance in the media and in the public sphere. The theme is centrally relevant to the political identity of Europe and to the national identities. Firstly, the European political integration brought uncertainty to the national political self-understanding of the member states. Would the EU become more important than the nations? Would they even become subordinate to it? The title of the EU reform document—“constitution,” which sounded like the constitution of a state—contributed to the uncertainty. Secondly, the fundamental question whether it is acceptable in a secular and ideologically neutral political community to make an affirmative reference to religion is in fact only the more obvious level of the debate. On a lower level lies the question of identity in a wider sense, which had been smoldering for some time. In Europe, the question of the essence of what it is to be a state, the question of the political community, always touches on the question of religion or of the church as well, since the understanding of the state developed historically either with or against churches. It was clear at the two European conventions that a fundamental dissent (admitting many variations) was present: is the modern history of Europe, of the European states, to be read as a history of emancipation of the state or of society from religion, or as a history of repression of religion by the state or by politics? This antithesis underlies in turn the two

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<sup>33</sup>) Secretariat of the COMECE, “The Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe: Elements for an Evaluation” (Brussels 2005), online at [http://www.comece.org/upload/pdf/pub\\_const\\_treaty\\_050311\\_EN.pdf](http://www.comece.org/upload/pdf/pub_const_treaty_050311_EN.pdf) (retrieved 23 March 2009), 15.

understandings of political identity. According to one reading, if political identity is legitimately oriented to the principles of the constitution of a modern democratic state, there is no room for an affirmation of particular ideological and religious convictions. Or is the political identity rooted in a cultural common ground which also includes a “religious patrimony” and a religious history? Here, two concepts of identity are employed, viz. the distinction between political identity and cultural identity. These can be separated in conceptual analysis, but they were closely combined in the debate.<sup>34</sup> In the European debates, the contingency and the perspective of the national consensus and dissensions were experienced in the ways in which cultural traditions and historical experiences were read: and the result was uncertainty. The question of identity (“What keeps us Europeans together?”) was linked to the question: “Whose Europe is it?” And this showed that the question of identity could no longer be answered in terms of its substantial contents, but primarily in a formal procedural manner by means of the concept of “the values of the Union.” The sleight of hand consisted in giving the central position to the (formal) political values of democracy, but at the same time also including different opinions about the roots of these values in historical and traditional traditions *and* acknowledging these differences by emphasizing the values of tolerance and pluralism.

### 3. Identity, Values, and Religion

Let us now look at the concept of the identity of the European Union, which we have mentioned several times. How can Europe, the European Union, possess an identity? In the case of persons, the identity is linked to concepts such as the individual self-understanding of the person, his relationship to himself, and the fundamental identifications which have left an imprint on his life history and are essential to him. Hans Blumenberg formulates this pointedly: “A self-understanding is what one has when someone else asks about it.”<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> See Christof Mandry, “Die Europäische Union als ‘Wertegemeinschaft’ in der Spannung zwischen politischer und kultureller Identität,” in: Helmut Heit (ed.), *Die Werte Europas: Verfassungspatriotismus und Wertegemeinschaft in der EU?* (Münster: Lit, 2005), 284–294.

<sup>35</sup> Hans Blumenberg, *Ein mögliches Selbstverständnis: Aus dem Nachlaß* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1997), 9. I owe this reference to Heike Kämpf, “Das ambivalente Erbe der philosophischen

The question about the identity of a political community is generated by the insight that political communities such as states, and even the supranational European Union, are associations of human beings which are so large that it is no longer possible for individuals to have an overview of them. This is why nations are called “imagined communities”: for their members, the citizens, they exist only in the mode of imagination. As a whole, they are not accessible to the experience of a group cohesion.<sup>36</sup> When we speak of the identity of a social group, we seek to ascertain what is so important for the group that it plays a decisive role in their cohesion. The characteristics of identity draw the boundary between membership and non-membership. One belongs to the imagined community via identification with it. Accordingly, it must possess characteristics with which one can identify. These may be a shared national character, membership of a cultural or ethnic group, the shared identification with an historical mission, with common values, or some other factor. The political identity—or when one belongs to more than one entity, the political identities—constitute a partial identity of human beings, viz. their identity as *citizens* of a state or of the European Union.

For democracies, a consciousness of a common bond has a particular systematic importance. As Charles Taylor shows, this is a consequence of the principle of popular sovereignty.<sup>37</sup> Democracy contains the idea of self-government. The citizens are in the position both of the ruled and of the rulers. In democratic systems of government, decisions between opposing views and interests are achieved by means of a political majority decision. But why—Taylor asks—does the losing party go along with a decision which is disadvantageous to it? Why does it agree to help shoulder burdens that it has not caused? Why do the citizens of a democracy regard the distribution of advantages and disadvantages as something that takes place “among us” rather than “between them and us”? His answer: this is because a fundamental consciousness of a common bond, including the

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Hermeneutik: Zum produktiven Scheitern historischer Selbstvergewisserung europäischer Identität,” in: Matthias Schöning & Stefan Seidendorf (eds.), *Reichweiten der Verständigung: Intellektuellendiskurse zwischen Nation und Europa* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2006), 174–190, pp. 174–175.

<sup>36</sup> See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition (London: Verso, 1992).

<sup>37</sup> Charles Taylor, “Religion, politische Identität und europäische Integration,” *Transit* 26 (Winter 2003/2004), 166–186.

acknowledgment of a “we,” must exist in a democracy. There is a fundamental solidarity among the citizens which cushions even electoral defeats. Membership and solidarity continue to exist, despite dissent and mutually antagonistic interests.

It is possible in principle to give two alternative answers to the question of the basis of this common bond, which can be contrasted in the ideal types of the “cultural nation” and the “state nation.”<sup>38</sup> In the former instance, a people regards itself as united by a common culture, language, and history. The state is then the expression and the realization of a common ground which already exists independently of it. The reverse applies to the state nation: here, the nation is that which gathers together under the state, is admitted to its institutions and rules, and lets its identity be defined by the constitution.

In the case of Europe, however, this alternative leads to problems. There is no constitution, no state institution, which could define the identity of the Europeans, and it is very questionable whether this will ever be the case—and there is no agreement about whether this should be aimed at in the first place. We do indeed assume that there is a European culture—it is described to us from the perspective of outsiders, and we perceive it in experiences of foreignness—but it is vague and there is no agreement about its precise content. This means that every definition of what constitutes European culture is obliged to define both central and marginal things.<sup>39</sup> We cannot expect that all Europeans would recognize their own selves in any one description of European culture. This problem becomes virulent precisely with regard to the Christian patrimony of Europe and the affirmation of Christianity; but a definition of Europe on the basis of the Enlightenment is no less problematic. *Every* definition risks turning into a usurpation of the power to make definitions, or at least being seen as a hegemonial presumption.

This is why Habermas proposes a patriotism centered on the European constitution. The aim is the solidarity of the citizens, and he argues that this requires not a concentrated *cultural* basis of identity, but only a thin

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<sup>38</sup> Münch speaks of an alternative between “community of origin” and “community of will”; see Richard Münch, “Elemente einer Theorie der Integration moderner Gesellschaften: Eine Bestandsaufnahme,” in: Wilhelm Heitmeyer (ed.), *Was hält die Gesellschaft zusammen?* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1998), 66–109, pp. 73–75.

<sup>39</sup> See Thomas Meyer, *Die Identität Europas: Der EU eine Seele?* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 2004), 28–32.

*political* basis of identity, viz. the consciousness of being citizens of the European Union.<sup>40</sup> This means above all participating in the democratic procedures and decisions on the European level, sharing in decisions and bearing responsibility for them. The political identity is generated by political participation. The only obstacle to this is unfortunately the European deficit in democracy. Habermas logically demands a genuine constitution for the Union and the strict democratization of its institutions.

The most recent events in European politics have made it clear that this cannot be expected in the immediate future. But since the constitutional convention, there is an answer to the question of identity. It too attempts to avoid the problematic substantial definitions of a European culture and to understand European political identity in post-national terms. To understand the Union as a community of values and to construct its essential foundations as a commitment to values means deciding in favor of a middle level, viz. the level of the shared political values. The understanding of the EU as a community of values thus seeks on the one hand to formulate a relevant basis for identification while at the same time avoiding (or better, resolutely leaving open) the disputed reference to traditions and religions. In this context, the reference to values fulfills the function of a discursive bridge which mediates between rival and conflicting systems of convictions. It thereby takes on the integrative function in the pluralistic context and occupies the position that belonged to the reference to a religious basis in the pre-pluralist society. When one examines the discursive role of this concept of value, it also becomes clear how the talk about values does justice to the increased importance of societal discourses.<sup>41</sup> In the pluralistic society, it is much less possible to presuppose a basic consensus; rather, this must be established and secured afresh each time. The discursive merit of the talk about values is that it remains possible to address the level of the evaluative basic options in the political sphere without the need to tie oneself to a more unambiguous conceptuality and without the need to discuss the disputed ideological embeddings of these ideas about value in a group ethos. By means of the relatively vague semantic about values, a fragile acknowledgment of pluralism can be realized also on the level of

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<sup>40</sup> Jürgen Habermas, “Ist die Herausbildung einer europäischen Identität nötig, und ist sie möglich?” in: idem, *Der gespaltene Westen: Kleine politische Schriften X* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 2004), 68–82.

<sup>41</sup> On the theoretical derivation and development of this concept of values, see Mandry, *Europa als Wertegemeinschaft*, chs. 6 and 7.

the fundamental presuppositions of the political community, although (as the example of the European Union shows) this achieves only a pragmatic pacification of conflicts, not their resolution in principle.

#### **4. Conclusion: The Mobilization of Religion in Europe**

We conclude by returning to the overarching theme of this volume and locating our reflections in the perspective of the mobilization of religion in Europe. The conceptual openness of this perspective allows us to begin by looking at a broad palette of approaches to what happened in the context of the two conventions. The mobilization of religion poses questions such as: “Who mobilizes whom with what, and in what way (real, symbolic)?” On the one hand, ‘religion’ is mobilized in the sense that political actors feed ‘religion’ into the discourse in the form of symbolic references and claims which possess a connotation of identity, thereby mobilizing agreement or opposition, i.e. creating political constellations in specific situations and influencing discourses. This draws attention to the ‘political entrepreneurs’ who make use of the symbolic resource ‘religion’ and the mechanisms which come into play in this context. On the other hand, it is only through events on the political stage that ‘religion’ in the sense of a self-description or of a subjectively acknowledged value is summoned into being: the commitment to religion is awakened, recalled, and modified. For both aspects, it is important to see that the polarity between religion and secularity is decisive on the level of the actors and on the level of the discursive references. The effect of mobilization would be different, and probably smaller, if no antagonism were constructed and employed between the two fields. This shows us a further element of the mobilization of religion: it brings simplification in a diffuse field of spiritual, religious, transcendental, ecclesiastical, ideological, and other commitments which otherwise undermine the smooth polarity in the world of people’s lives between ‘religious’ and ‘secular.’ The actors launch a process of identification which encompasses both their own selves and the milieu of third persons who are initially uninvolved.

We can do no more here than indicate the theoretical framework. The approach taken by the theory of social movements to the mobilization of resources<sup>42</sup> illuminates the character of a social movement in both the

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<sup>42</sup> See John D. McCarthy & Mayer N. Zald, “Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory,” in: Mayer N. Zald & John D. McCarthy (eds.), *Social*

supporters and the opponents of the reference to religion in the EU constitutions, with a loose organization and only a selective cooperation. The churches, or the governing bodies of the churches, have the resources to operate and help shape such a political and public debate. They have professional personnel, financial means, ideological prestige (the authority to undertake interpretations), and the necessary know-how. The decisive question, however, is how far they succeed in activating allies and influencing neutral third persons. Here, learning effects in the period between the two preamble controversies can be discerned both among the supporters and among the decided opponents. We should note that although these resources are available to the churches in other themes too, they do not have the same measure of success there; and this is particularly true on the European level. This means that if we are to explain the extent of the mobilization, we must not underestimate the involvement of other actors, especially of the political parties and governments. Here, further research is needed.

Neither the breadth nor the length of the public debate about European identity and religion can be plausibly explained by looking at the resources which were mobilized. It can be understood only when we appraise the mobilizing potential of the theme of religion itself, i.e. when we reflect on the relationship between (political) identity and religion. Political mobilization requires a collective self-understanding (as a presupposition for the ability to act), which in turn is supported by the discursive construction of identity and continuity.<sup>43</sup> For it is astonishing that precisely the questions of a reference to God and the mention of Christianity in the EU constitution should find such an echo. If one does not wish to dismiss this by appealing to the regrettable tendency of the unenlightened masses to let themselves be manipulated, we must inquire into more diffuse forms of religiosity or into the openness to religious themes in Europe. Grace Davie has drawn attention to the more ambiguous and complex forms in which an affective link to religion and religious institutions, a link connected to people's identity, survives in the European societies in which the churches

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*Movements in an Organizational Society: Collected Essays* (New Brunswick: Transition, 1987), 15–42.

<sup>43</sup> See Craig J. Jenkins & William Form, "Social Movements and Social Change," in: Thomas Janoski et al. (eds.), *The Handbook of Political Sociology: States, Civil Societies, and Globalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 331–349, pp. 339–341; Mayer N. Zald, "Ideologically Structured Action: An Enlarged Agenda for Social Movement Research," *Mobilization* 5 (2000), 1–16.

are absent to a greater or lesser degree. This variety goes beyond the dual alternative of either religious or non-religious, either a church member or not.<sup>44</sup> The concept of “vicarious religion” seems particularly helpful in this context. Davie uses this to describe the phenomenon whereby an esteeming commitment to traditional religion, its buildings, symbols, or institutions, can continue to exist even when a personal religious conviction no longer exists. This mostly silent and implicit “weak” membership can become explicit in particular circumstances and can be translated into collective action. This religiosity is “vicarious” because even those who have no religious attitude of their own regard religion as somehow “good” and important: they value the fact that religion exists.<sup>45</sup> Vicarious religion seems to be a concept that makes plausible the temporary, selective mobilizability of parts of the population when particular events in the public sphere challenge their deeply rooted identifications and in this context also appeal to aspects related to religion. In our present context, it may have been the recollection of religious traditions and achievements with a significance that people felt should be retained as something valuable, or also a kind of resistance against a secular simplification of the political community on the basis of an unbroken faith in modernity. In that case, the religious or Christian roots of European values would have functioned as a cipher for an ideal of community and an image of society which seek to hold fast to a fundamental solidarity in opposition to individualism.

These reflections too suggest that the conflict about the meaning of religion in the constitution of Europe ultimately concerns the ethos of European democracy. The debates about religion and values demonstrate the political ethos of Europe at the contemporary height of its ability to deal constructively with the plurality and diversity of its traditions, and they make it clear that these debates cannot be conducted in a value-free manner.

*English translation: Brian McNeil*

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<sup>44</sup> These forms of religiosity, which are linked to weak and temporary loyalty, and which David Voas, “The Rise and Fall of Fuzzy Fidelity in Europe,” *European Sociological Review* 25/2 (2009), 155–168, calls “fuzzy fidelity,” are attracting increased scholarly interest at present; see Grace Davie, *The Sociology of Religion* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2007), 115–116.

<sup>45</sup> See Davie, *Sociology of Religion*, 140–143; Grace Davie, “Vicarious Religion: A methodological challenge,” in: Nancy T. Ammerman (ed.), *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 21–37.



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