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**The Other Side of Globalisation**

**The New Power of Religion as a Cultural and Political Challenge**

**Abstract**

*Religion has returned as a political and cultural factor. After the political ideologies, whose secular and worldly promises of salvation had influenced the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in such a radical manner, had been (for the time being, at least) invalidated, the reappearance of religion on a global level cannot be overlooked: as a focal power as to how to conduct one's life, as a guarantor of cultural identity, and as religious-political creativity. We cannot understand the current state of the world, its crises, conflicts and wars, but also the self-perception and self-awareness of non-European cultures and peoples anymore, if we do not also realise that religion as a "power of life" (Max Weber's "Lebensmacht") has returned. In addition to sketching this process, this essay raises the question: what are the cultural and political challenges which especially the secular societies of the West are to face?*

**Key words**

globalisation, religion, religion and politics, fundamentalism, culture, clash of civilisations, secularisation, Europe and Islam, values

**1. Preliminary remarks**

Any political action is integrated into a network of ideas and interests. While it is certain that politicians need to deal directly with the pragmatics of economic, social, security and power interests as well as any other interest and need as may exist, and while it is likewise certain that their foremost task is to safeguard the external conditions of our existence, the following statement applies nonetheless: like any human activity, political action will invariably be interwoven with ideational, intellectual-cultural prerequisites. Even the predominance of mere utilitarianism and economism – which almost every political field, from family politics to educational politics, finds itself swept into nowadays – is in itself an expression of intellectual prerequisites and of a world picture, namely that of economism and utilitarianism being the only decisive criterion for the shaping of socio-political conditions. Consequently, one fact needs to be called to mind before elaborating on the subject matter: it is especially the realistic analysis and diagnosis of present-day politics and its foreseeable future tasks and challenges that will invariably give rise to the question as to the explicit or implicit intellectual-cultural prerequisites of such politics.

The following text is based on the assumption that the global return of the power of religion forces the political actors – and in particular those who feel themselves conditioned by Christian responsibility – to remind themselves of their spiritual roots and foundations.

## 2. The new power of religion – worldwide

Religion has returned into history. As the political ideologies whose secular, this-worldly promises of healing had such a deep-reaching effect on the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have (at least temporarily) lost in vigor, one is bound to notice the worldwide return of religion: as a life-guiding power, as a guarantor of cultural identity, and as a religious-political creative force. We will no longer understand the current world situation, its crises, conflicts and wars, and even the self-perception and self-assuredness of the extra-European civilizations and peoples if we fail to perceive *also* the return of religion as a “power of life” (or “Lebensmacht”, as Max Weber called it).

And yet, talking of the “return” or “recurrence” of religion is not without its problems. For religion has never ceased to be a public force in the civilizations outside Europe, a fact which has remained hidden only to those narrow European minds that did not longer know what to make of religion. If not before, this state of affairs should have been remedied in 1979, when Great Ayatollah Khomeini flew from Paris to Tehran to take charge of a revolution unleashed by religious forces which led to the Iranian theocracy. Since then, the new power of religion has come ever closer and has made its advance into Europe and Germany quite some time ago.

The new power of religion – worldwide: The following selected points will have to suffice: it is in almost all cultural spheres that we are seeing a reorientation back to the respective heritage religions as a foundation of cultural and national identity. Yet it would be wrong to jump to conclusions and apply the often misleading formula of “fundamentalism”, which – as an interpretation pattern spread by the media – rather is an impediment to a deeper understanding of new situations.<sup>1</sup> The core issue of the religious reorientation witnessed throughout the world is, first and foremost, the wish to assure oneself of one’s affiliation to one’s civilization, people or nation, in and by one’s traditional or newly adapted religion.

In Russia, for example, the nation-building role of Orthodox Christianity was rediscovered in 1989. Here, the focus is not on the question whether individuals have turned into practicing Christians after the collapse of the Communist system, although they have done so in large numbers; rather, it is about an elementary cultural process in which Russian-Orthodox Christianity has once again become a public power of legitimation and a cultural guarantor of the Russian nation.

A similar process may be discerned in former Yugoslavia. After fifty years of state-imposed Communist atheist doctrine, the former constituent republics of the disintegrated Yugoslavia (with the exception of Slovenia) have based their newly-founded nations *also* on their ties to their respective, either rediscovered or newly discovered, heritage religions.

The *political* power of religion is put before our very eyes by the vivid, everyday example of the Islamic world, which will be discussed later in more detail. Suffice it to say at this point that today’s Islam – whether in its Sunnite or Shiite form – presents itself as a political religion not only to the outside observer but also, and widely so, in its conception of itself. Islam as a unity

of politics and religion is not only a nation-forming idea in Iran and the Arabian peninsula, but it is a partly vigorously, partly subtly developing movement which has spread from Malaysia up to Senegal, from the Maghreb to the former Soviet republics, and has now reached the metropolitan areas of Europe.

Similarly, the core issue of the war between Israel and Palestine can only be understood by *also* considering its religious-political dimension. Apart from the external aspects of power politics and other fields of interest, it is about the “Holy Land” and the “Sacred City of Jerusalem”, which are also laid claim to by a programmatism oriented towards salvation history.

Mention should also be made of a specific politicalization of Hinduism, which we had come to see as an expression of spiritual Indian introspection and withdrawal from the world. Yet, in some of its determinant movements Hinduism has been turning into a political-religious force for several years now, viewing itself as the foundation of Indian civilization – and national identity.

Apart from such rediscovery and new discovery of the heritage religions as a civilization-determining and identity-creating force, there is another tendency: a religion’s missionary forays into cultural areas to which it had been alien or which had offered it nothing but a marginal existence. This applies in particular to the Christian religion, and primarily so to the Protestant-Evangelical denomination. Characterized by tremendous dynamics, this religious movement has taken hold of large areas of East and Southeast Asia, Africa and almost all the countries of Latin America. It has even reached Communist China. Most recently, there have been reports about “home churches” used by Chinese people converted to Christianity for near-illegal gatherings, eyed with suspicion by the state power and responded to with measures of repression. Within a period of only a few years, the number of these “home church” adherents has allegedly increased to 70 million by now.<sup>2</sup>

It would be tantamount to barring oneself from understanding the global power of religion, were we to restrict the power of religion to those nations which, as we see it, have not yet been reached by “modernism”. That secularization theory-based dogma which states that religion is on the wane the more a country or a civilization is taken in by modernism is now devoid of explanatory power. This is most clearly illustrated by the example of a nation that most certainly has embraced “modernism”, yet has remained a religious nation in many respects – The United States of America. Throughout the country’s history, religion has proved to be a determining factor, and especially so in its political activities.<sup>3</sup> Religious faith takes a strong effect on the way many millions of Americans live their lives, and – quite unlike their German counterparts running for chancellor – no American candidate could venture to stand for the presidency without presenting him- or herself as a practicing Christian. It is in times of crisis in particular that the religious undercurrent of American civilization and society finds renewed expression, and it even does so in the shaping of American politics.

<sup>1</sup> As to “fundamentalism”, cf. Gottfried Küenzlen, “Fundamentalismus – Phantom oder Phänomen der Moderne?”, in: Gottfried Küenzlen, *Die Wiederkehr der Religion*, Olzog, München 2003, pp. 41–63.

<sup>2</sup> Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 30 December 2006, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Gottfried Küenzlen, “Amerika ist anders – Religion und Politik in den USA”, in: *Die Wiederkehr der Religion*, p. 129ff.

The new power of religion is most pressingly revealed by a process which the free societies of the West have found themselves drawn into for years now – terrorism, mostly of the Islamistic variety. Admittedly, it would be utterly nonsensical to equate Islam (after all, there is no such thing as “the” Islam) to terrorism. But, one cannot understand terror *without* considering its religious-political dimension, whatever individual motivations may be its driving force.

For that reason, you also miss the point if you follow the fast and easy explanation for terrorism that has been adopted unquestioningly by many a representative of the cultural intelligentsia, namely – terrorism is basically the counterstrike led by the poor and exploited non-Western people against the countries of the West. Its proponents argue that the problem is just one of global economic distribution, and if we could only bring ourselves to solve it, terrorism would disappear. While it is certain that the globally unequal distribution of goods is conducive to terrorism and is sustaining its driving forces, it would not do justice to what we are faced with were we to name it as the only cause. Let me repeat: without considering the religious-ideological roots of terrorism, *too*, we cannot understand terrorism, nor will we be able to counter it.

In his 1970 presentation on the state of religion, Arnold Gehlen said: “If religion were to turn into a more serious issue again, this would be most apparent in the forming of religiously determined frontlines ready to do battle.”<sup>74</sup> What Gehlen still expressed in the conditional tense has turned into the reality of today. One only needs to read Bin Laden’s invocation published in the aftermath of the terrorist assaults against the U.S.A. which had been initiated by him:

“There is America, hit by God in one of its softest spots. Its greatest buildings were destroyed, thank God for that. There is America, full of fear from its north to its south, from its west to its east. Thank God for that. What America is tasting now is something insignificant compared to what we have tasted for scores of years. Our nation has been tasting this humiliation and this degradation for more than 80 years. Its sons are killed, its blood is shed, its sanctuaries are attacked, and no one hears and no one heeds. When God blessed one of the groups of Islam, vanguards of Islam, they destroyed America. I pray to God to elevate their status and bless them. (...) These events have divided the whole world into two sides. The side of believers and the side of infidels, may God keep you away from them. Every Muslim has to rush to make his religion victorious. The winds of faith have come. The winds of change have come to eradicate oppression from the island of Muhammad, peace be upon him.”<sup>75</sup>

No matter how we interpret this statement from the viewpoint of theology, religious science, sociology or psychology, it is – however authentic or perverted – a statement of a religious faith.

The Islamism that supports and advances terrorism is the expression of a cultural revolutionary, radically politicized religion. The core of the Islamist message is: even if the West is overwhelmingly superior in economic, technological and military terms and may therefore appear victorious, and even if the “House of Islam” may be puny in appearance, however, in spiritual-moral terms, as the keeper of the true faith and because of its religious-cultural substance, Islam is superior to the “Satan U.S.A.” and the West in its entirety, and will *therefore* be victorious in the end. Islamism is ultimately about a cultural struggle directed against the faithless non-civilization of the West.

### 3. The cultural disempowerment of European Christianity

The situation outlined above imposes the question as to the resulting challenges and tasks in the field of political activities. But first it is necessary to

call to mind another fact: Europe – and Western Europe, in particular – is an exception from a global perspective; an exception in world history because of its marginalization of religion and almost complete secularization. While we are witnessing a global revitalization of religion, which also embraces the Christian world outside Europe, with the number of believers soon to exceed one thousand million, when taking a look at Europe it would appear that Europe (and Germany, too) has grown tired of *its* heritage religion. Christianity, which has been the singularly important heritage religion of Europe and has provided its spiritual foundation for more than a thousand years, has lost almost all of its civilization-determining power today. The process of the cultural disempowerment of Christianity cannot be ignored – for all trends to the contrary as may exist.

Cultural disempowerment: Of course, what is not meant by this is the nonsensical thesis that Christianity in Europe is about to disappear or that the Christian faith has ceased to exist as a life-guiding force for the individual. Rather, the loss of the Christian faith in terms of cultural significance manifests itself mainly in its diminished stature as a guiding force in the *public* sphere. This process historically originates from the path chosen by European Modernism – which we cannot further elaborate here. *One* result of the path towards secular European Modernism is the evaporation of the Christian interpretation of the human individual and of human existence and the increasing domination of a radical this-worldly orientation – a process “in which, like never before in history, the power wielded by *external* worldly goods over people is on the rise and, eventually, becomes inescapable for them.”<sup>6</sup>

This is correlated with what we discover everywhere when we diagnose our present times – the vanishing presence of Christian elements in the public. This is so in daily life, yet it is also to be felt in the political field. For example, for years now we have been witnessing an insidious dissolution of the Christian symbolic set of traditions, which even in our secular civilization were still observed when celebrating major Christian holidays. At best, we may receive wishes of “Happy Holidays” at Christmas, while the formerly common “Merry Christmas” greeting has become marginalized as a phrase used only by those who consciously and deliberately “out” themselves as Christians. The fact that Easter is not only the holiday of the Easter Bunny but is meant to commemorate the central event that defines Christianity has disappeared from the horizon of our secular world, while Whitsuntide no longer has any religious connotations at all.

In the political sphere, too, there are obvious signs of the public disempowerment of the Christian faith. Just to name a few examples: references to God were not permitted to be included in the draft of the constitution of the European Union, not even in a most generally worded form. *Or*: Mr. Buttiglione, an Italian philosopher and member of the European Parliament, was not allowed to become commissioner of the European Union because he presented himself as a convinced Catholic Christian. What makes this case so impor-

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Arnold Gehlen, “Religion und Umweltstabilisierung”, in: Oskar Schatz (ed.), *Hat die Religion Zukunft?*, Styria, Graz–Wien–Köln 1971, p. 96.

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Quote taken from *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 9 October 2001, p. 6.

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Max Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie I*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 1972 (1920), p. 203.

tant: There was nothing to blame Buttiglione for but his creed, and it made no difference at all that during the interview he invoked all the secular saints of Modernism, including Kant, swearing that he was indeed capable of distinguishing between his personal Christian creed and his political office, and that he – if appointed – would invariably uphold the decisions taken by the political majority even if they were contrary to his own way of thinking. Yet to no avail, he was unacceptable because of his personal Christian conviction, because it did not go together well with the liberal concept of life and convictional common sense which is meant to be binding for Europe. This case shows the general trend, namely how quickly the much avowed tolerance of cultural liberalism ceases to exist, changing into the total – and almost totalitarian – control of political life, where convictions such as held by Buttiglione have no place. *Or*: the policy pursued by the Senate of Berlin, led by Social Democrats and post-Communist politicians, which actively aimed at marginalizing religious education in schools and which succeeded in the end despite the fact that religious education is protected under the German constitution.

There are a number of examples like these. Now, one may welcome such processes and, like the politicians in Berlin, actively support them with a secular-missionary zeal, considering them to be a necessary consequence of the state's political activities that are based on its previously acquired secular, this-worldly orientation – or one may lament them as being the signs of intellectual-cultural impoverishment of a community which is thus severing the roots of its origins. There is only one conclusion, though – we are witnessing the continuing disintegration of Christianity's public-cultural presence in Europe and, accordingly, in Germany.

*Whether* this process shall continue unabatedly, however, remains to be seen. At least there are subtle indicators of an existing countertendency, such as the massive public media coverage of the death of Pope John Paul II and the following election of the German pope; also, public surveys would suggest that there is a newly-found attraction of religion and a moderately rising interest in faith and the church in Germany.<sup>7</sup>

But regardless of such indicators, one of the most peculiar diagnostic observations to be made in these present days, particularly so in Germany, is the fact that the loss of public importance of the Christian faith causes hardly any spiritual unrest; even today's cultural intelligentsia – who is at liberty to reflect on the situation and the fate of our societal and cultural conditions – appears to be strangely unaffected by this erosion of the Christian faith. And this is hardly impacted by the fact that Jürgen Habermas, the decades-long preceptor of leftist-liberal *zeitgeist* hegemony, has – just recently and certainly not by mere coincidence – called to mind that religion is a power that is active in a secular civilization, too.<sup>8</sup> From an overall religious perspective, though, it would seem that the liberal *juste milieu* has chosen to settle into a comfortable stance of indifference or mild criticism towards religion. This done, the question as to the future of European Christianity is considered to be of no relevance, as it is regarded as a closed case or as a minor issue that is important only for the social remains of a Christian-ecclesiastic “milieu apart”.

Admittedly, such awareness determined by Enlightenment, which to some extent is an heirloom of 19<sup>th</sup>-century religious criticism, has by now become peculiarly antiquated and stale. It is not only because such awareness, in the ways of Eurocentric provinciality, closes its eyes to the above described return of religion as an active factor of *realpolitik*, adopting a stance of helplessness because – for its lack of categories – it does not know what to make of

such practical politics. What is more, even in Europe it will no longer be possible in the future to go into intellectual hibernation, just sustaining oneself on the depleted stocks of Enlightenment-oriented religious criticism or religious indifference existing in peaceful separation. For the global revitalization of religion, especially of religion as a politically effective force, has reached us long since, as one may learn from the controversy concerning the Danish Muhammad cartoons, just to give one example. We will *not be able* to evade the new power of religion, neither culturally nor theologically, and most certainly not politically.

However, the challenge which political actors – and in particular those who feel themselves conditioned by Christian responsibility – have to deal with in such a situation lies in the question as to whether we here in Germany are really intellectually prepared for these new conditions. Will our established political action patterns and diagnostic tools and the intellectual-cultural prerequisites which they are based upon suffice for us to cope with the political terms of the described situation? What compels us most to face this question is the religious creed that has long since immigrated into Europe and will continue to do so on an enhanced scale as a religion that will gain in *public* validity and assertion – Islam. The following paragraph discusses the new situations and challenges that will arise from this.

#### 4. The Islamic challenge

Before our very eyes, a process is unfolding which in this form is unique in the history of Europe – along with the major flows of Muslim migration, Islam is entering into Europe. We have not yet really understood – and are not able to really understand yet – what this process means for Europe, and in particular for Germany, now and in the future.

But *one* thing is obvious even at this stage – gone are the times when it was possible to dismiss religion as a publicly, and thus politically, irrelevant topic or even view it as a closed topic. For with Islam, a religion is moving in – or rather, *has been* moving in – which is sure of itself and its public claim. As for the Christian religion, we may have grown accustomed to its being privatized and disempowered in the public civilization, but in Islam we encounter something of which our secularized minds had but little notion – the power of a religion.

*One* of the central challenges to our Western liberal constitutional state is the Islamic concept of the relationship between religion and politics. Yet, it is appropriate to warn against equating every Islamistic group that says ‘Islam’ and means violence to Islam as such, as there is no such thing as “the” Islam, anyway. But there is one basic element that has left its mark on Islam from the very beginning: Islam is the law and the law is Islam. The

“... divine laws (...) hold a central position in the Islamic creed. As the laws are directly understood to be the will of God, adherence to these laws is service to God in the literal sense; they are not just one element of Islam amongst others, but living according to the laws is what defines Islam (...) From this central position of the laws, it follows that they ideally dictate the entire legal system of the Muslim community. The God-oriented life is lived in the community

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Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach, in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 12 April 2006, p. 5.

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Jürgen Habermas, *Glaube und Wissen. Friedenspreis des deutschen Buchhandels*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M. 2001.

of Muslims; for that reason, a separation of state and church as practiced in Christendom is not possible.”<sup>9</sup>

This is not just a special path followed by the radical Islamism of today; rather, the principle of Islam being religion *and* state (*din wa dawla*) was a determining element of the Muslim conception of society and state as early as in the original community of Medina and has remained the guiding principle and objective of the Muslim *umma* to this day. So the question is: will Islam, a religion that *is* the law that pervades everything, even state and society, be capable of transforming itself on its way to Europe and within Europe in such a way that it permanently foregoes a central element of its religious identity – or at least changes it in substance in such a way that it is compatible with the neutrality of religion as a constituent of the secular constitutional state and with the principle of pluralism of Western-liberal societies?

Certainly, this question needs to be kept open and any premature answers are to be ruled out – such as the answer that Islam is principally and permanently incompatible with the conditions prevailing in European/Western societies. Religions, too, are subject to historical change, as has been shown throughout the history of religions – and not least so in the history of Christianity. Therefore, one must not ignore the reform efforts taken by Islamic intellectuals and theologians aiming at an Islam that faces the legacy of European Enlightenment, just as we must not ignore the voices of Muslims, and German Muslims in particular, who try to find a way to bring the Muslim faith in consonance with the living conditions prevailing in the West and who consider the European diaspora as an opportunity for Islamic efforts at reform:

“Islamic politicians and theologians, too, are of the opinion that Islam is currently kept in a Babylonian captivity of some sort in its countries of origin. To expect it to provide future-oriented impulses would be unworldly, indeed. Europe’s interest should therefore be directed primarily at Muslims and their communities in the diaspora, some of whom are making attempts at reconciling Islam with the civilization of technology, who are actively dealing with pluralism and secularism, and who are working on an as yet not finally defined model of ‘Islam in a secular nation’.”<sup>10</sup>

Even though such comments must not be disregarded, realistic stocktaking will reveal a picture which is different in many ways. The Islam which has arrived at our doorsteps is not of the “liberal” but of the orthodox and sometimes even fundamentalist variety, as is clearly shown by the analysis of organizations, groups and centers in Germany. As little success as has been attained – so far, at least – with regard to the social integration of Muslim immigrants, who mostly set themselves up in parallel societies and ghetto-like communities, as much is revealed by the religious presence of Islam in our country. The notions of a “Euro-type” of Islam have been nothing but intellectual wishful thinking that does not stand up to the observable reality.

Be that as it may, we have to take Islam seriously as a *religion*. This implies that we must not reinterpret Islam by applying hermeneutics with the best of intentions, yet in a misled fashion, so as to immunize us against the harshness of the question: can the Islamic conception of the relationship between religion and politics be brought in consonance with the fundamentals of our state and our concept of society? After all, one cannot possibly ignore Tilman Nagel’s illusionless and realistic diagnosis: if one were to harmonize the fundamental statements contained in the German Basic Law with the fundamental statements of Islam,

“... one would have to declare essential parts of the Koran and the Prophet’s tradition to be null and void; especially, eternal validity would have to be denied to the numerous Koran passages

and words of the Prophet which demand that violence be inflicted upon those of a different creed (...) and which uphold Islam's claim to absolute validity, as well as the many statements of evidence that dwell on the inferiority of women."<sup>11</sup>

The central, utterly *realpolitik*-like challenge which Islamic presence forces upon the political actors even today, and will increasingly do so in the future, is this: is the religion moving into Germany – Islam – a creed which will not accept the separation of politics and religion, and which does not even want to accept it because it cannot do so without losing its original identity?

## 5. The new power of religion: tasks of political governance conducted in Christian responsibility

In the following, the tasks which current political governance conducted in Christian responsibility will inevitably be dealing with due to the situation described above are *selectively* outlined and thrown into relief.

### 5.1. The distinction between religion and politics

The return of religion as a process of *practical* politics forces us to assure ourselves anew of the relationship between religion and politics. It is not least the "Islamic challenge" briefly discussed above that raises the question: which conception of religion and politics should determine our society and our civilization in future?

First, it is necessary for us to assure ourselves anew of our heritage of "religious-political enlightenment" (H. Lübke), the result of which is a certain decoupling of religious convictions and civil rights. To put it differently, it is about the general neutrality of the state with regard to religious or worldly claims to truth. The state is not a community of salvation but a community based on the law. It is only in this way that the liberal constitutional state can become a guarantor of fundamental religious freedom, permitting its citizens to live as believers or as non-believers of their own choosing, *without* their civil rights being impaired or extended on grounds of their choice. Only in this way was civil peace assured in a Europe torn and disrupted by confessional wars. And it is only in this way that internal peace can be protected in a civilization and society stirred up by religious issues or even religious conflicts. This distinction between religion and politics so fundamentally characteristic of Western development may become a downright survival imperative of the Western world when faced with an inflow of religious messages that do not know of such distinction and might even be unwilling to accommodate it to their creed. Augustinus' distinction between the *civitas terrena* and the *civitas dei*, Luther's two Empire doctrine, Hobbes' motto "auctoritas, non ver-

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Hendrik Hansen, "Globaler Dschihad? Die Freund-Feind-Unterscheidung im Islam und in der Theorie des Gesellschaftsvertrages", *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschehen* (B 18/2002), p. 19.

10

Mohammad S. Abdullah, "Neue Wege neue Wagnisse. Zur Koexistenz der christlich-abendländischen und islamischen Kultur", *Zur Sache.bw, Evangelische Kommentare zu Fragen der Zeit* (2/2002), p. 17.

11

Tilman Nagel, "Kann es einen säkularisierten Islam geben?", in: Reinhard C. Maier-Walser, Rainer Glagow (eds.), *Die islamische Herausforderung – Eine kritische Bestandsaufnahme von Konfliktpotenzial; aktuelle Analysen 26*, Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung, München 2001, p. 19.

itas facit legem” – those are the determining fundamentals of the occidental conception of religion and politics; they need to be newly discovered and understood, and they need to be reworded in accordance with today’s real-world practicalities.

This is why this task is so important: the distinction between religion and politics *relieves* politicians of the burden of ultimate religious or secular justifications. Political action is not to bring *salvation* but to increase the *welfare* of the people. Otherwise the path will lead to a theocracy of religious fundamentalism or to the totalitarianism of political-secular religions which – driven by the promise of secular salvation – left a bloody trail across the past century (National Socialism and Communism).

Finally, the issue is about the *distinction* between religion and politics, not about their *separation*. So, any political action is embedded in the question: which is the conception of the human being that serves as motivation and objective to the political actors? There is no political action free of religion, ideology or philosophy of life. It is especially in times of new religious or old secular messages and *their* conceptions of the human being that the decisive question will read: *which* conception of the human being will determine politics?

The attempt of making a radical distinction between religion and politics will, after all, not lead to a “religionless” political sphere. The place of faith – even in politics – is never void. Accordingly, a radical privatization of the Christian religion would eventually lead to nothing but its further public marginalization and to the influx of other religious or secular messages of the human being which will then determine politics and, finally, civilization.

## 5.2. Values and truth

“Values” are a topical issue at the moment. We are witnessing a downright flood of public discussion on, and evocation of, values. This applies in particular to the political area, for rare is the politician – regardless of his or her party affiliation – who would fail to appeal to ‘our foundation of values’ or to raise ‘demands’ for values and the like. This is not a coincidental process, and there is even an explanation: talking about values is an attempt at securing an intellectual and sense-giving foundation for political activities threatening to dwindle away into mere pragmatics, as the passed-down, sense-giving secular as well as Christian traditions are no longer a matter-of-fact issue of unquestioned validity. Yet, values do not come into existence by means of evocation. Nor do they descend on us from an imaginary heaven of values. Rather, they are based on the claims to truth made by religions, ideologies and concepts of the world and their views on existence and images of mankind. So, values and truth belong to each other. Whenever this correlation is abandoned, or even no longer understood, values may only be *set* in a decisionistic-subjectivistic mode, but they can no longer be *justified*. Yet if this is so, values may become a quickly and randomly exchangeable, volatile legitimation authority subject to changing interests; and, what is more, especially those of us who are actors in the political field cannot do anything but helplessly try to keep pace as the “change in values” runs its purportedly fateful course.

So, whoever talks about values needs to talk about the faith upon which they are based. But now, the increasing presence of new religious messages inevitably confronts us with the question about the truth of *that* belief upon which our values are based. For religions – and this particularly applies if they ap-

pear as a public power – follow *their* truths and *thus* their values which are to be applied. So, politicians whose politics are based upon a Christian conception do not have any other option but to newly assure themselves of the truth preserved by the Christian faith in order to lend substance, permanence and, finally, attractiveness to the values which are to be applied. In the long term, a mere and weak rhetorical evocation of values that are no longer based upon faith will not suffice to make a show of strength – and least so when encountering a “new power of religion” which is sure of *its* truth and, therefore, *its* values.

### 5.3. *Dialogue or clash of civilizations?*

It has become obvious by now – we will not be able to evade the new power of religions in the cultural and religious sphere, and certainly not in the political arena. The truly fateful question, then, will be: *how* do we want to – and how are we going to – deal with it?

In the last few years, there has been much discussion about the thesis of Samuel Huntington, the American politologist, who claims that as the political-ideological confrontation between West and East has come to an end, there will now be a “clash of civilizations” and, possibly, conflicts or even wars would be started *between* civilizations striving for power and importance. It was a striking fact that the intellectual interpretation elites, in particular in Germany, largely reacted to Huntington by taking a defensive stance and even by refusing to give any argumentation, frequently making the rhetorical assertion that it was not a clash of civilizations that was the order of the day, but rather the *dialogue* between them. But the alternative of “clash” or “dialogue” falls short. Also, the issue is not whether Huntington’s thesis is “right”, as its diagnostic and prognostic explanatory power may be questioned, indeed. And certainly, we here in Europe, and particularly in Germany, who have learned our bitter historical lessons *cannot* possibly wish for anything other than a tolerant, peaceful and dialogue-oriented meeting of civilizations and religions. But what shall we do if *others* declare the “clash of civilizations” on us? As has been shown above, this is what the Islamist challenge is all about, which sees *itself* as a fight led in the name of its god against Western societies and their civilization. So, what shall we do if others do not want to carry a dialogue and do not share our tolerance? Then we who live in the open, liberal societies of the West inevitably face the task of discovering *our* intellectual-cultural roots anew; for example, whether we are willing and capable of recognizing as indispensable, and as worth to be defended if necessary, the fundamentals of our constitution, which are by no means a matter of course: the protection of life, the dignity of the individual, the renunciation of violence and strict adherence to the government’s monopoly on the use of force, the freedom of religion and ideology, and so on. The real-world situation we are facing in religious fundamentalism and, above all, Islamist terrorism, forces us to reacquire virtues which have almost fallen into oblivion: moral courage and endurance, and the awareness of the value and the dignity of our own intellectual-cultural foundations.

Yet, this does not at all mean for us to abandon tolerance, peacefulness and our willingness to carry a dialogue. Rather, these are an imperative of our own cultural and religious heritage tradition, and they almost become an issue of survival in a world of globalizing civilizations – and certainly so with regard to the “House of Islam”. But tolerance is not indifference, and one may carry a dialogue only if founded upon one’s own convictions and “truths”, no matter how incompletely grasped they may be.

The new power of religion: Tolerance and the willingness to carry a dialogue will need to go hand in hand with reassurance and reassertion of what we are or what we would like to be, as Europeans, as Germans – and certainly also as Christians in a world of increasing religious pluralism. It is not cultural self-abandonment but cultural self-assurance and self-assertion that are the pre-conditions for a successful dialogue. Those who, out of misguided tolerance and almost proactive humility, cancel opera performances (including artistic failures as well) and those who do not dare to hold *kindergarten* Christmas parties any longer as they might hurt the religious feelings of people of a different faith do not at all promote the urgently required dialogue but, at best, raise feelings of contempt in those who are the addressees of such a reality-blind ideology of dialogue.

The fact that the described situation and the resulting tasks apply particularly to politicians who feel themselves conditioned by Christian responsibility has been indicated above and requires no further justification: the readiness to meet others and the dialogue with others are postulates and fruits of the Christian faith itself; in the same way, the contribution of politics guided by Christian principles is indispensable for the self-assurance and the self-assertion of our civilization and society and will become even more so in future. For what would Europe – and in particular Germany – be without its Christian heritage? And this is not just out of mere reverence for an outlived museal heritage, nor is it about repressing the memory of the dark chapters in Christian history. Rather, as new religions and the civilizations shaped by them are entering our spheres, Christianity is an all new item high on the *realpolitical* agenda presenting the now inevitable question: is there a future for our preparedness to meet and enter into dialogue, and is there a real future for cultural self-assurance and reorientation, unless they are accompanied with a recollection of our religious heritage and the Christian faith?

**Gottfried Küenzlen**

### **Druga strana globalizacije**

#### **Nova snaga religije kao kulturni i politički izazov**

##### **Sažetak**

*Religija se vratila na mjesto političkog i kulturnog čimbenika. Nakon što su političke ideologije, čija su sekularna i svjetovna obećanja spasenja utjecala na povijest 20. stoljeća na radikalnan način, (barem privremeno) obesnažena, ponovna pojava religije na globalnom nivou ne može biti zanemarena: kao žarišna sila po pitanju vođenja vlastitog života, kao jamac kulturnom identitetu i kao religijsko-politička kreativnost. Ne možemo više razumjeti trenutno stanje u svijetu, njegove krize, konflikte i ratove, ali također i samopercepciju i samosvjesnost izvan-europskih kultura i naroda, ako isto tako ne shvatimo da se religija kao »moć života« (Weberov »Lebensmacht«) vratila.*

*U dodatku skice ovog procesa ovaj članak postavlja pitanje: koji su kulturni i politički izazovi s kojima se posebno suočavaju sekularna društva Zapada?*

##### **Ključne riječi**

globalizacija, religija, religija i politika, fundamentalizam, kultura, sukob civilizacija, sekularizacija, Europa i islam, vrijednosti

**Gottfried Küenzlen**

**Die andere Seite der Globalisierung**

**Die neue Kraft der Religion als kulturelle und politische Herausforderung**

**Zusammenfassung**

*Die Religion ist in die Position des politischen und kulturellen Faktors zurückgekehrt. Nachdem die politischen Ideologien, deren säkulare und diesseitige Erlösungsversprechen die Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts durchgreifend bestimmt haben, (zumindest temporär) entkräftet worden sind, kann die Wiedererscheinung der Religion auf der globalen Ebene nicht vernachlässigt werden: als brennende Lebensmacht in puncto Führung des Eigenlebens, als Garant der kulturellen Identität sowie als religiös-politische Kreativität. Wir können die aktuelle Weltlage, ihre Krisen, Konflikte samt Kriegen, aber auch die Selbstperzeption und das Selbstbewusstsein außereuropäischer Kulturen und Völker nicht mehr begreifen, ohne zeitgleich einzusehen, die Religion sei als Webers „Lebensmacht“ wiedergekehrt.*

*Im Anhang zur Skizzierung dieses Prozesses stellt dieser Artikel die Frage: Welche sind die kulturellen und politischen Herausforderungen, mit denen insbesondere die säkularen Gesellschaften des Westens konfrontiert werden?*

**Schlüsselwörter**

Globalisierung, Religion, Religion und Politik, Fundamentalismus, Kultur, Zivilisationskonflikte, Säkularisierung, Europa und Islam, Werte

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**L'autre face de la globalisation**

**Une nouvelle force de la religion comme défi culturel et politique**

**Résumé**

*La religion est de retour en tant que facteur politique et culturel. Après l'invalidation – du moins provisoire – des idéologies politiques dont les promesses laïques et temporelles de salut ont influencé l'histoire du XXe siècle de manière radicale, la réapparition de la religion au niveau global ne peut être ignorée en tant que force centrale qui détermine comment on vit sa propre vie, ni en tant que garant de l'identité culturelle, ni en tant que créativité religieuse et politique. Nous ne pouvons plus comprendre la situation actuelle dans le monde, ses crises, ses conflits et ses guerres, comme nous ne pouvons comprendre l'auto-perception et la conscience de soi des cultures et des peuples non-européens, si nous ne réalisons pas en même temps que la religion comme « puissance vitale » (Lebensmacht de Weber) est de retour.*

*En plus de faire l'esquisse de ce processus, l'article présent pose la question : à quels défis culturels et politiques en particulier les sociétés laïques de l'Occident sont-elles confrontées ?*

**Mots-clés**

globalisation, religion, religion et politique, fondamentalisme, culture, choc des civilisations, laïcisation, Europe et islam, valeurs