# Religion, European secular identities, and European integration

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The rapid and drastic process of secularization in western Europe over the last decades has not diminished the continuing unease with which Europe considers the Islamic religion and Muslims in its midst. In this benchmark essay from 2004, José Casanova argues that the "Islam problem" is an indicator of the disparity between liberal and illiberal strands of European secularism.

Focal Point: Post-secular Europe?

Is religion a public or a private matter? Can there be such a thing as a European Islam? If so, what characterizes it? What role can religion -- or religions -- play when it comes to the emergence of a European solidarity? In a series of articles, *Eurozine* focuses on post-secular tendencies and religion(s) in the new Europe.

Since the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957 that established the EEC and initiated the ongoing process of European integration, western European societies have undergone a rapid, drastic, and seemingly irreversible process of secularization. In this respect, one can talk of the emergence of a post-Christian Europe. At the same time, the process of European integration, the eastward expansion of the European Union, and the drafting of a European constitution have triggered fundamental questions concerning European identity and the role of Christianity in that identity. What constitutes "Europe"? How and where should one draw the external territorial and the internal cultural boundaries of Europe? The most controversial and anxiety-producing issues, which are rarely confronted openly, are the potential integration of Turkey and the potential integration of non-European immigrants, who in most European countries happen to be overwhelmingly Muslim. It is the interrelation between these phenomena that I would like to explore in this paper.

The progressive, though highly uneven, secularization of Europe is an undeniable social fact.[1] An increasing majority of the European population has ceased to participate in traditional religious practices, at least on a regular basis, while still maintaining relatively high levels of private individual religious beliefs. In this respect, one should perhaps talk of the *unchurching* of the European population and of religious individualization, rather than of secularization. Grace Davie has characterized this general European situation as "believing without belonging".[2] At the same time, however, large numbers of Europeans even in the most secular countries still identify themselves as "Christian,"

pointing to an implicit, diffused, and submerged Christian cultural identity. In this sense, Danièle Hervieu-Léger is also correct when she offers the reverse characterization of the European situation as "belonging without believing."**[3]** "Secular" and "Christian" cultural identities are intertwined in complex and rarely verbalized modes among most Europeans.

The most interesting issue sociologically is not the fact of progressive religious decline among the European population, but the fact that this decline is interpreted through the lenses of the secularization paradigm and is therefore accompanied by a "secularist" self-understanding that interprets the decline as "normal" and "progressive", that is, as a quasi-normative consequence of being a "modern" and "enlightened" European. It is this "secular" identity shared by European elites and ordinary people alike, that paradoxically turns "religion" and the barely submerged Christian European identity into a thorny and perplexing issue when it comes to delimiting the external geographic boundaries and to defining the internal cultural identity of a European Union in the process of being constituted.

I would like to explore some of the ways in which religion has become a perplexing issue in the constitution of "Europe" through a review of four ongoing controversial debates: the role of Catholic Poland, the incorporation of Turkey, the integration of non-European immigrants, and the place of God or of the Christian heritage in the text of the new European constitution.

**Catholic Poland in post-Christian Europe: Secular normalization or great apostolic assignment?**

The fact that Catholic Poland is "re-joining Europe" at a time when western Europe is forsaking its Christian civilizational identity has produced a perplexing situation for Catholic Poles and secular Europeans alike. In a previous issue of *Transit*, I examined the convoluted, long historical patterns of convergence and divergence in Polish and western European religious developments.**[4]** It suffices to state here that throughout the Communist era, Polish Catholicism went through an extraordinary revival at the very same time when western European societies were undergoing a drastic process of secularization. The reintegration of Catholic Poland into secular Europe can be viewed therefore as "a difficult challenge" and/or as "a great apostolic assignment". Anticipating the threat of secularization, the integralist sectors of Polish Catholicism have adopted a negative attitude towards European integration. Exhorted by the Polish Pope, the leadership of the Polish church, by contrast, has embraced European integration as a

great apostolic assignment.

The anxieties of the "Europhobes" would seem to be fully justified since the basic premise of the secularization paradigm, that the more a society modernizes, the more secular it becomes, seems to be a widespread assumption, also in Poland. Since modernization, in the sense of catching up with European levels of political, economic, social, and cultural development, is one of the goals of European integration, most observers tend to anticipate that such a modernization will lead to secularization also in Poland, putting an end to Polish religious "exceptionalism". Poland becoming at last a "normal" and "unexceptional" European country is after all one of the aims of the "Euroenthusiasts".

The Polish Episcopate, nevertheless, has accepted enthusiastically the papal apostolic assignment and has repeatedly stressed that one of its goals once Poland rejoins Europe is "to restore Europe for Christianity". While it may sound preposterous to western European ears, such a message has found resonance in the tradition of Polish messianism. Barring a radical change in the European secular *zeitgeist*, however, such an evangelistic effort has little chance of success. Given the loss of demand for religion in western Europe, the supply of surplus Polish pastoral resources for a Europe-wide evangelizing effort is unlikely to prove effective. The at best lukewarm, if not outright hostile European response to John Paul II's renewed calls for a European Christian revival points to the difficulty of the assignment.

I've suggested that a less ambitious, though no less arduous, apostolic assignment could perhaps have equally remarkable effects. Let Poland prove the secularization thesis wrong. Let *Polonia simper fidelis* keep faith in its Catholic identity and tradition while succeeding in its integration into Europe, thus becoming a "normal" European country. Such an outcome, if feasible, could suggest that the decline of religion in Europe might be not a teleological process necessarily linked with modernization but a historical choice that Europeans have made. A modern religious Poland could perhaps force secular Europeans to rethink their secularist assumptions and realize that it is not so much Poland which is out of sync with modern trends, but rather secular Europe which is out of sync with the rest of the world. Granted, such a provocative scenario is only meant to break the spell which secularism holds over the European mind and over the social sciences.

**Could a democratic Muslim Turkey ever join the European Christian club. Or,**

**which is the *torn country*?**

While the threat of a Polish Christian crusade awakens little fear among secular Europeans confident of their ability to assimilate Catholic Poland on their own terms, the prospect of Turkey joining the European Union generates much greater anxieties among Europeans, Christian and post-Christian alike, but of the kind which cannot be easily verbalized, at least not publicly. Turkey has been patiently knocking on the door of the European club since 1959, only to be told politely to keep waiting, while watching latecomer after latecomer being invited first in successive waves of accession.

The formation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951 by the six founding members (Benelux, France, Italy, and West Germany) and its expansion into the European Economic Community (EEC) or "common market" in 1957 was predicated upon two historic reconciliations: the reconciliation between France and Germany, two countries which had been at war or preparing for war from 1870 to 1945; and the reconciliation between Protestants and Catholics within Christian Democracy. Indeed ruling or prominent Christian Democrats in all six countries played the leading role in the initial process of European integration. The Cold War, the Marshall Plan, NATO, and the newly established Washington-Rome Axis formed the geopolitical context for both reconciliations. Greece in June 1959 and Turkey in July 1959, hostile enemies yet members of NATO, were the first two countries to apply for association to the EEC. That same July, the other western European countries formed EFTA as an alternative economic association. Only Franco's Spain was left out of all initial western European associations and alliances.

The EEC always made clear that candidates for admission would have to meet stringent economic and political conditions. Ireland, The United Kingdom, and Denmark formally applied for admission in 1961 but only joined in 1973. Spain and Portugal were unambiguously rebuffed as long as they had authoritarian regimes, but were given clear conditions and definite timetables once their democracies seemed on the road to consolidation. Both joined in 1986. Greece, meanwhile, had already gained admission in 1981 and with it de facto veto power over Turkey's admission. But even after Greece and Turkey entered a quasi-détente and Greece expressed its readiness to sponsor Turkey's admission in exchange for the admission of the entire island of Cyprus, Turkey still did not receive an unambiguous answer, being told once again to go back to the end of the queue. The fall of the Berlin Wall once again rearranged the priorities and the direction of European integration eastward. In 2004, ten new members, eight ex-

Communist countries plus Malta and Cyprus are set to join the European Union. Practically all the territories of Medieval Christendom, that is, of Catholic and Protestant Europe, will now be reunited in the new Europe. Only Catholic Croatia and "neutral" Switzerland will be left out, while "Orthodox" Greece as well as Greek and Turkish Cyprus will be the only religious "other". "Orthodox" Romania and Bulgaria are supposed to be next in line, but without a clear timetable. Even less clear is if and when the negotiations for Turkey's admission will begin in earnest.

The first open, if not yet formal, discussions of Turkey's candidacy during the 2002 Copenhagen summit touched a raw nerve among all kinds of European "publics". The widespread debate revealed how much "Islam" with all its distorted representations as "the other" of Western civilization was the real issue rather than the extent to which Turkey was ready to meet the same stringent economic and political conditions as all other new members. About Turkey's eagerness to join and willingness to meet the conditions, there could be no doubt now that the new, officially no longer "Islamic" government had reiterated unambiguously the position of all the previous Turkish "secularist" administrations. Turkey's "publics", secularist and Muslim alike, had spoken in unison. The new government was certainly the most representative democratic government of all of Turkey's modern history. A wide consensus had seemingly been reached among the Turkish population, showing that Turkey, on the issue of joining Europe and thus "the West", was no longer a "torn country". Two of the three requirements stated by Samuel Huntington for a torn country to redefine successfully its civilizational identity had clearly been met: "First, the political and economic elite of the country has to be generally supportive of and enthusiastic about this move. Second, the public has to be at least willing to acquiesce in the redefinition of identity."[5] It was the third requirement that apparently was missing: "The dominant elements in the host civilization, in most cases the West, have to be willing to embrace the convert."

The dream of Kemal, "Father of the Turks", of begetting a modern Western secular republican Turkish nation-state modeled after French republican *laïcité* has proven not easily attainable, at least not on Kemalist secularist terms. But the possibility of a Turkish democratic state, truly representative of its ordinary Muslim population, joining the European Union, is today for the first time real. The "six arrows" of Kemalism (republicanism, nationalism, secularism, statism, populism, and reformism) could not lead towards a workable representative democracy. Ultimately, the project of constructing such a nation-state from above was bound to fail because it was too

secular for the Islamists, too Sunni for the Alevis, and too Turkish for the Kurds. A Turkish state in which the collective identities and interests of those groups that constitute the overwhelming majority of the population cannot find public representation cannot possibly be a truly representative democracy, even if it is founded on modern secular republican principles. But Muslim Democracy is as possible and viable today in Turkey as Christian Democracy was half a century ago in western Europe. The still Muslim, but officially no longer Islamist party in power has been repeatedly accused of being "fundamentalist" and of undermining the sacred secularist principles of the Kemalist constitution which bans "religious" as well as "ethnic" parties, religion and ethnicity being forms of identity which are not allowed public representation in secular Turkey.

One wonders whether democracy does not become an impossible "game" when potential majorities are not allowed to win elections, and when secular civilian politicians ask the military to come to the rescue of democracy by banning these potential majorities, which threaten their secular identity and their power. Practically every continental European country has had religious parties at one time or another. Many of them, particularly the Catholic ones, had dubious democratic credentials until the negative learning experience of Fascism turned them into Christian Democratic parties. Unless people are allowed to play the game fairly, it may be difficult for them to appreciate the rules and to acquire a democratic habitus. One wonders who the real "fundamentalists" are here. "Muslims" who want to gain public recognition of their identity and demand the right to mobilize in order to advance their ideal and material interests, while respecting the democratic rules of the game, or "secularists" who view the Muslim veil worn by a duly elected parliamentary representative as a threat to Turkish democracy and as a blasphemous affront against the sacred secularist principles of the Kemalist state? Could the European Union accept the public representation of Islam within its boundaries? Can "secular" Europe admit "Muslim" democratic Turkey? Officially, Europe's refusal to accept Turkey so far is mainly based on Turkey's deficient human rights record. But there are not-too-subtle indications that an outwardly secular Europe is still too Christian when it comes to the possibility of imagining a Muslim country as part of the European community. One wonders whether Turkey represents a threat to Western civilization or rather an unwelcome reminder of the barely submerged yet inexpressible and anxiety-ridden "white" European Christian identity.

The widespread public debate in Europe over Turkey's admission showed that Europe was actually the torn country, deeply divided over its cultural identity, unable to answer the question whether European unity, and therefore its external and internal boundaries, should be defined by the common heritage of Christianity and Western civilization or by its modern secular values of liberalism, universal human rights, political democracy, and tolerant and inclusive multiculturalism. Publicly, of course, European liberal secular elites could not share the Pope's definition of European civilization as essentially Christian. But they also could not verbalize the unspoken "cultural" requirements that make the integration of Turkey into Europe such a difficult issue. The spectre of millions of Turkish citizens already in Europe but not of Europe, many of them second-generation immigrants, caught between an old country they have left behind and their European host societies unable or unwilling to fully assimilate them, only makes the problem the more visible. "Guest workers" can be successfully incorporated economically. They may even gain voting rights, at least on the local level, and prove to be model or at least ordinary citizens. But can they pass the unwritten rules of cultural European membership or are they to remain "strangers"? Can the European Union open new conditions for the kind of multiculturalism that its constituent national societies find so difficult to accept?

**Can the European Union welcome and integrate the immigrant "other"? Comparative perspectives from the American experience of immigration**

Throughout the modern era, western European societies have been immigrant-sending countries, indeed the primary immigrant-sending region in the world. During the colonial phase, European colonists and colonizers, missionaries, entrepreneurs, and colonial administrators settled all corners of the globe. During the age of industrialization, from the 1800s to the 1920s, it is estimated that ca. 85 million Europeans emigrated to the Americas, to Southern Africa, to Australia and Oceania, 60 per cent of them to the United States alone. In the last decades, however, the migration flows have reversed and many western European societies have instead become centres of global immigration. A comparison with the United States, the paradigmatic immigrant society (despite the fact that from the late 1920s to the late 1960s it also became a society relatively closed to immigration), reveals some characteristic differences in the contemporary western European experience of immigration.

Although the proportion of foreign immigrants in many European countries (United Kingdom, France, Holland, West Germany before reunification), at approximately 10 percent is similar to the proportion of foreign born in the United States, most of these countries still have difficulty viewing themselves as permanent immigrant societies or

viewing the native second generation as nationals, irrespective of their legal status. But it is in the different ways in which they try to accommodate and regulate immigrant religions, particularly Islam, that European societies distinguish themselves not only from the United States but also from one another. European societies have markedly different institutional and legal structures regarding religious associations, very diverse policies of state recognition, of state regulation, and of state aid to religious groups, as well as diverse norms concerning when and where one may publicly express religious beliefs and practices.

In their dealing with immigrant religions, European countries, like the United States, tend to replicate their particular model of separation of church and state and the patterns of regulation of their own religious minorities. France's etatist secularist model and the political culture of *laïcité* require the strict privatization of religion, eliminating religion from any public forum, while at the same time pressuring religious groups to organize themselves into a single centralized church-like institutional structure that can be regulated by and serve as interlocutor to the state, following the traditional model of the concordat with the Catholic Church. Great Britain, by contrast, while maintaining the established Church of England, allows greater freedom of religious associations which deal directly with local authorities and school boards to press for changes in religious education, diet, etc, with little direct appeal to the central government. Germany, following the multi-establishment model, has tried to organize a quasi-official Islamic institution, at times in conjunction with parallel strivings on the part of the Turkish state to regulate its diaspora. But the internal divisions among immigrants from Turkey and the public expression and mobilization of competing identities (secular and Muslim, Alevi, and Kurd) in the German democratic context have undermined any project of institutionalization from above. Holland, following its traditional pattern of pillarization, seemed, until very recently at least, bent on establishing a state-regulated but self-organized separate Muslim pillar. Lately, however, even liberal tolerant Holland is expressing second thoughts and seems ready to pass more restrictive legislation setting clear limits to the kinds of un-European, un-modern norms and habits it is ready to tolerate.

If one looks at the European Union as a whole, however, there are two fundamental differences with the situation in the United States. In the first place, in Europe immigration and Islam are almost synonymous. The overwhelming majority of immigrants in most European countries, the UK being the main exception, are Muslims

and the overwhelming majority of western European Muslims are immigrants. This identification appears even more pronounced in those cases when the majority of Muslim immigrants tend to come predominantly from a single region of origin, e.g., Turkey in the case of Germany, the Ma'ghreb in the case of France. This entails a superimposition of different dimensions of "otherness" that exacerbates issues of boundaries, accommodation and incorporation. The immigrant, the religious, the racial, and the socio-economic disprivileged "other" all tend to coincide.

In the United States, by contrast, Muslims constitute at most 10 percent of all new immigrants, a figure that is actually likely to decrease given the strict restrictions to Arab and Muslim immigration imposed after September 11 by the increasingly repressive American security state. Since the US Census Bureau, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and other government agencies are not allowed to gather information on religion, there are no reliable estimates on the number of Muslims in the United States.[6] Available estimates range widely between 2,8 million and 8 million. Moreover, it is estimated that from 30 to 42 percent of all Muslims in the United States are African-American converts to Islam, making more difficult the characterization of Islam as a foreign, un-American religion. Furthermore, the Muslim immigrant communities in the United Sates are extremely diverse in terms of geographic region of origin from all over the Muslim world, in terms of discursive Islamic traditions, and in terms of socio-economic characteristics. As a result, the dynamics of interaction with other Muslim immigrants, with African-American Muslims, with non-Muslim immigrants from the same regions of origin, and with their immediate American hosts, depending upon socio-economic characteristics and residential patterns, are much more complex and diverse than anything one finds in Europe.

The second main difference has to do with the role of religion and religious group identities in public life and in the organization of civil society. Internal differences notwithstanding, western European societies are deeply secular societies, shaped by the hegemonic knowledge regime of secularism. As liberal democratic societies they tolerate and respect individual religious freedom. But due to the pressure towards the privatization of religion, which among European societies has become a taken-for-granted characteristic of the self-definition of a modern secular society, those societies have a much greater difficulty in recognizing some legitimate role for religion in public life and in the organization and mobilization of collective group identities. Muslim organized collective identities and their public representations become a source of anxiety not only

because of their religious otherness as a non-Christian and non-European religion, but more importantly because of their religiousness itself as the other of European secularity. In this context, the temptation to identify Islam and fundamentalism becomes the more pronounced. Islam, by definition, becomes the other of Western secular modernity. Therefore, the problems posed by the incorporation of Muslim immigrants become consciously or unconsciously associated with seemingly related and vexatious issues concerning the role of religion in the public sphere, which European societies assumed they had already solved according to the liberal secular norm of privatization of religion.

By contrast, Americans are demonstrably more religious than the Europeans and therefore there is a certain pressure for immigrants to conform to American religious norms.[7] It is generally the case that immigrants in America tend to be more religious than they were in their home countries. But even more significantly, today as in the past religion and public religious denominational identities play an important role in the process of incorporation of the new immigrants. The thesis of Will Herberg concerning the old European immigrant, that "not only was he expected to retain his old religion, as he was not expected to retain his old language or nationality, but such was the shape of America that it was largely in and through religion that he, or rather his children and grandchildren, found an identifiable place in American life," is still operative with the new immigrants.[8] The thesis implies that collective religious identities have been one of the primary ways of structuring internal societal pluralism in American history.

One should add as a corrective to the thesis that not religion alone, as Herberg's study would seem to imply, and not race alone, as contemporary immigration studies tend to imply, but religion and race and their complex entanglements have served to structure the American experience of immigrant incorporation, indeed are the keys to "American exceptionalism". Today, once again, we are witnessing various types of collision and collusion between religious identity formation and racial identity formation, processes that are likely to have significant repercussions for the present and future organization of American multiculturalism. Religion and race are becoming, once again, the two critical markers identifying the new immigrants either as assimilable or as suspiciously "alien".

Due to the corrosive logic of racialization, so pervasive in American society, the dynamics of religious identity formation assume a double positive form in the process of immigrant incorporation. Given the institutionalized acceptance of religious pluralism, the

affirmation of religious identities is enhanced among the new immigrants. This positive affirmation is reinforced moreover by what appears to be a common defensive reaction by most immigrant groups against ascribed racialization, particularly against the stigma of racial darkness. In this respect, religious and racial self-identifications and ascriptions represent alternative ways of organizing American multiculturalism. One of the obvious advantages of religious pluralism over racial pluralism is that, under proper constitutional institutionalization, it is more reconcilable with principled equality and non-hierachic diversity, and therefore with genuine multiculturalism.

American society is entering a new phase. The traditional model of assimilation, turning European nationals into American "ethnics", can no longer serve as a model of assimilation now that immigration is literally world-wide. America is bound to become "the first new global society" made up of all world religions and civilizations, at a time when religious civilizational identities are regaining prominence on the global stage. At the very same moment that political scientists like Samuel Huntington are announcing the impending clash of civilizations in global politics, a new experiment in intercivilizational encounters and accommodation between all the world religions is taking place at home.[9] American religious pluralism is expanding and incorporating all the world religions in the same way as it previously incorporated the religions of the old immigrants. A complex process of mutual accommodation is taking place. Like Catholicism and Judaism before, other world religions, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism are being "Americanized" and in the process they are transforming American religion, while the religious diasporas in America are simultaneously serving as catalysts for the transformation of the old religions in their civilizational homes, in the same way as American Catholicism had an impact upon the transformation of world Catholicism and American Judaism has transformed world Judaism.

This process of institutionalization of expanding religious pluralism is facilitated by the dual clause of the First Amendment which guarantees the "no establishment" of religion at the state level, and therefore the strict separation of church and state and the genuine neutrality of the secular state, as well as the "free exercise" of religion in civil society, that includes strict restrictions on state intervention and on the administrative regulation of the religious field. It is this combination of a rigidly secular state and the constitutionally protected free exercise of religion in society that distinguishes the American institutional context from the European one. In Europe one finds on the one extreme the case of France, where a secularist state not only restricts and regulates the

exercise of religion in society but actually imposes upon society its republican ideology of *laïcité*, and on the other the case of England, where an established state church is compatible with a wide toleration of religious minorities and a relatively unregulated free exercise of religion in society.

As liberal democratic systems, all European societies respect the private exercise of religion, including Islam, as an individual human right. It is the public and collective free exercise of Islam as an immigrant religion that most European societies find difficult to tolerate precisely on the grounds that Islam is perceived as an "un-European" religion. The stated rationales for considering Islam "un-European" vary significantly across Europe and among social and political groups. For the anti-immigrant, xenophobic, nationalist Right, represented by Le Pen's discourse in France and by Jörg Haider in Austria, the message is straightforward. Islam is unwelcome and un-assimilable simply because it is a "foreign" immigrant religion. Such a nativist and usually racist attitude can be differentiated clearly from the conservative "Catholic" position, paradigmatically expressed by the Cardinal of Bologna when he declared that Italy should welcome immigrants of all races and regions of the world, but should particularly select Catholic immigrants in order to preserve the Catholic identity of the country.

Liberal secular Europeans tend to look askance at such blatant expressions of racist bigotry and religious intolerance. But when it comes to Islam, secular Europeans tend to reveal the limits and prejudices of modern secularist toleration. One is not likely to hear among liberal politicians and secular intellectuals explicitly xenophobic or anti-religious statements. The politically correct formulation tends to run along such lines as "we welcome each and all immigrants irrespective of race or religion as long as they are willing to respect and accept our modern liberal secular European norms". The explicit articulation of those norms may vary from country to country. The controversies over the Muslim veil in so many European societies and the overwhelming support among the French citizenry, including apparently a majority of French Muslims, for the recently passed restrictive legislation prohibiting the wearing of Muslim veils and other ostensibly religious symbols in public schools, as "a threat to national cohesion", may be an extreme example of illiberal secularism. But in fact one sees similar trends of restrictive legislation directed at immigrant Muslims in liberal Holland, precisely in the name of protecting its liberal tolerant traditions from the threat of illiberal, fundamentalist, patriarchal customs reproduced and transmitted to the younger generation by Muslim immigrants.

Revealingly enough, Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin, in his address to the French legislature defending the banning of ostensibly religious symbols in public schools made reference in the same breath to France as "the old land of Christianity" and to the inviolable principle of *laïcité*, exhorting Islam to adapt itself to the principle of secularism as all other religions of France have done before. "For the most recently arrived, I'm speaking here of Islam, secularism is a chance, the chance to be a religion of France."[10] The Islamic veil and other religious signs are justifiably banned from public schools, he added, because "they are taking on a political meaning", while according to the secularist principle of privatization of religion, "religion cannot be a political project". Time will tell whether the restrictive legislation will have the intended effect of stopping the spread of "radical Islam" or whether it is likely to bring forth the opposite result of radicalizing further an already alienated and maladjusted immigrant community.

The positive rationale one hears among liberals in support of such illiberal restriction of the free exercise of religion is usually put in terms of the desirable enforced emancipation of young girls, if necessary against their expressed will, from gender discrimination and from patriarchal control. This was the discourse on which the assassinated liberal politician Pim Fortuyn built his electorally successful anti-immigrant platform in liberal Holland, a campaign which is now bearing fruit in new restrictive legislation. While conservative religious people are expected to tolerate behaviour they may consider morally abhorrent such as homosexuality, liberal secular Europeans are openly stating that European societies ought not to tolerate religious behaviour or cultural customs that are morally abhorrent in so far as they are contrary to modern liberal secular European norms. What makes the intolerant tyranny of the secular liberal majority justifiable in principle is not just the democratic principle of majority rule, but rather the secularist teleological assumption built into theories of modernization that one set of norms is reactionary, fundamentalist, and anti-modern, while the other set is progressive, liberal, and modern.

**Does one need references to God or to its Christian heritage in the new European constitution or does Europe need a new secular "civil religion" based on Enlightenment principles?**

Strictly speaking, modern constitutions do not need transcendent references nor is there much empirical evidence for the functionalist argument that the normative integration of modern differentiated societies requires some kind of "civil religion". In principle, there are three possible ways of addressing the quarrels provoked by the wording of the

Preamble to the new European Constitution. The first option would be to avoid any controversy by relinquishing altogether the very project of drafting a self-defining preamble explaining to the world the political rationale and identity of the European Union. But such an option would be self-defeating in so far as the main rationale and purpose of drafting a new European constitution appears to be an extra-legal one, namely to contribute to European social integration, to enhance a common European identity, and to remedy the deficit in democratic legitimacy.**[11]**

A second alternative would be the mere enumeration of the basic common values that constitute the European "overlapping consensus", either as self-evident truths or as a social fact, without entering into the more controversial attempt to establish the normative foundation or to trace the genealogy of those European values. This was the option chosen by the signatories of the Declaration of American Independence when they proclaimed *"We Hold These Truths To Be Self-Evident"*. But the strong rhetorical effect of this memorable phrase was predicated on the taken-for-granted belief in a Creator God who had endowed humans with inalienable rights, a belief shared by republican deists, Establishmentarian Protestants, and radical-pietist sectarians alike. In our post-Christian and post-modern context, it is not that simple to conjure such self-evident "truths" that require no discursive grounding. The 2000 Solemn Proclamation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union attempts to produce a similar effect with its opening paragraph: "Conscious of its spiritual and moral heritage, the Union is founded on the indivisible, universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality, and solidarity." But the proclamation of those values as a basic social fact, as the common normative framework shared by most Europeans, could hardly have the desired effect of grounding a common European political identity. It simply reiterates the already existing declarations of most national European constitutions, of the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights, and most importantly of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations. Without addressing explicitly the thorny question of Europe's "spiritual and moral heritage" and its disputed role in the genesis of those supposedly "universal values", it is unlikely that such a proclamation can have the desired effect of inscribing those values as uniquely, particularly, or simply poignantly "European".

The final and more responsible option would be to face the difficult and polemical task of defining through open and public debate the political identity of the new European Union: Who are we? Where do we come from? What constitutes our spiritual and moral

heritage and the boundaries of our collective identities? How flexible internally and how open externally should those boundaries be? This would be under any circumstance an enormously complex task that would entail addressing and coming to terms with the many problematic and contradictory aspects of the European heritage in its intra-national, inter-European, and global-colonial dimensions. But such a complex task is made the more difficult by secularist prejudices that preclude not only a critical yet honest and reflexive assessment of the Judeo-Christian heritage, but even any public official reference to such a heritage, on the grounds that any reference to religion could be divisive and counterproductive, or simply violates secular postulates.

The purpose of my argument is not to imply that the new European constitution ought to make some reference to either some transcendent reality or to the Christian heritage, but simply to point out that the quarrels provoked by the possible incorporation of some religious referent in the constitutional text would seem to indicate that secularist assumptions turn religion into a problem, and thus preclude the possibility of dealing with religious issues in a pragmatic sensible manner. Firstly, I fully agree with Bronislaw Geremek that any geneological reconstruction of the idea or social imaginary of Europe that makes reference to Greco-Roman antiquity and the Enlightenment while erasing any memory of the role of Medieval Christendom in the very constitution of Europe as a civilization evinces either historical ignorance or repressive amnesia.[12]

Secondly, the inability to openly recognize Christianity as one of the constitutive components of European cultural and political identity means that a great historical opportunity may be missed to add yet a third important historical reconciliation to the already achieved reconciliation between Protestant and Catholics and between warring European nation-states, by putting an end to the old battles over Enlightenment, religion, and secularism. The perceived threat to secular identities and the biased overreaction to exclude any public reference to Christianity belies the self-serving secularist claims that only secular neutrality can guarantee individual freedoms and cultural pluralism. What the imposed silence signifies is not only the attempt to erase Christianity or any other religion from the public collective memory, but also the exclusion from the public sphere of a central component of the personal identity of many Europeans. To guarantee equal access to the European public sphere and undistorted communication, the European Union would need to become not only post-Christian but also post-secular.[13]

Finally, the privileging of European secular identities and secularist self-understandings

in the genealogical affirmation of the common European values of human dignity, equality, freedom, and solidarity may not only impede the possibility of gaining a full understanding of the genesis of those values and their complex process of societal institutionalization and individual internalization, but also preclude a critical and reflexive self-understanding of those secular identities. David Martin and Danièle Hervieu-Léger have poignantly shown that the religious and the secular are inextricably linked throughout modern European history, that the different versions of the European Enlightenment are inextricably linked with different versions of Christianity, and that cultural matrixes rooted in particular religious traditions and related institutional arrangements still serve to shape and encode, mostly unconsciously, diverse European secular practices.**[14]** The conscious and reflexive recognition of such a Christian encoding does not mean that one needs to accept the claims of the Pope or of any other ecclesiastical authority to be the sole guardians or legitimate administrators of the European Christian heritage. It only means to accept the right of every European, native and immigrant, to participate in the ongoing task of definition, renovation, and transmission of that heritage. Ironically, as the case of French laic etatism shows, the more secularist self-understandings attempt to repress this religious heritage from the collective conscience, the more it reproduces itself subconsciously and compulsively in public secular codes.

The four issues analyzed in this paper, the integration of Catholic Poland in post-Christian Europe, the integration of Turkey into the European Union, the incorporation of non-European immigrants as full members of their European host societies and of the European Union, and the task of writing a new European constitution that both reflects the values of the European people and at the same time allows them to become a self-constituent European demos, all are problematic issues in themselves. But the paper has tried to show that unreflexive secular identities and secularist self-understandings turn those problematic issues into even more perplexing and seemingly intractable "religious" problems.

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. [1] Cf. David Martin, *A General Theory of Secularization*, London 1978; and Andrew Greeley, *Religion in Modern Europe at the End of the Second Millennium*, London 2003.

. [2] Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain Since 1945: Believing without Belonging*, Oxford 1994, and *Religion in Modern Europe: A Memory Mutates*, Oxford 2000.

. [3] Danièle Hervieu-Léger, "Religion und sozialer Zusammenhalt", *Transit* 26 (2003/2004).

. [4] José Casanova, "Das katholische Polen in säkularisierten Europa", *Transit* 25 (2003).

. [5] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York 1996, 139.

. [6] Karen Isaksen Leonard, *Muslims in the United States. The State of Research*, New York 2003

. [7] José Casanova, "Beyond European and American Exceptionalisms: towards a Global Perspective," in G. Davie, P. Heelas, and L. Woodhead, eds., *Predicting Religion*, Aldershot 2003.

. [8] Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*, Chicago 1983, 27-8.

. [9] Indeed, one of the most questionable aspects of Huntington's thesis is his nativist anti-immigrant and anti-multi-culturalist posture in order to protect the supposedly Western civilizational purity of the United States from hybridization.

. [10] Elaine Sciolino, "Debate Begins in France on Religion in the Schools", *New York Times*, 4 February 2004.

. [11] This point was forcefully made by Dieter Grimm at his keynote address, "Integration by Constitution – Juridical and Symbolic Perspectives of the European Constitution", at the Conference "Toward the Union of Europe – Cultural and Legal Ramifications", at New School University, New York, 5 March 2004.

. [12] Bronislaw Geremek, "Welche Werte für das neue Europa?", *Transit* 26 (2003/2004).

. [13] Even in his new post-secular openness to the religious "other" and in his call for the secular side to remain "sensitive to the force of articulation inherent in religious languages", Jürgen Habermas still implies that religious believers must naturally continue to suffer disabilities in the secular public sphere. "To date, only citizens committed to religious beliefs are required to split up their identities, as it were, into their public and private elements. They are the ones who have to translate their religious beliefs into a secular language before their arguments have any chance of gaining majority support." Jürgen Habermas, "Faith and Knowlwdge", in *The Future of Human Nature*, Cambridge 2003, 109. Only by holding to a teleological philosophy of history can Habermas insist that "postsecular society continues the work, for religion itself, that religion did for myth" and that this work of "translation", or rational linguistification of the sacred,

is the equivalent of "non-destructive secularization" and enlightenment.

.   [14] *Transit* 26 (2003/2004).