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The Popes and the Idea of European Unity

Abstract

While Pius XII was almost existentially bound up with European thought and with the defence against anti-Christian ideologies, his two successors initiated a tentative of opening of the “Western European citadel” towards a dialogue with the outer world. John Paul II relaunched a new evangelisation instead of compromises with secularism and Marxism, but maintained a fundamental European optimism, whereas Benedict XVI did not hesitate to admit that the European culture, transformed into a laicist utopia which substitutes God by the obstinate self-will of man, could disappear, too.

Keywords: John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, Christian civilisation, European unity

Streszczenie

Papieże i idea jedności europejskiej

Podczas gdy Pius XII był prawie egzystencjalnie związany z ideą europejską i obroną przed antychrześcijańskimi ideologiami, jego dwóch następców próbowało otworzyć „zachodnioeuropejską cytadelę” dialogu ze światem zewnętrznym. Jan Paweł II, zamiast iść na kompromis w sprawie sekularyzmu i marksizmu, zapoczątkował nową ewangelizację, ale zachował fundamentalny europejski optymizm. Benedykt XVI, wręcz przeciwnie, nie wahał się przyznać, że nawet kultura europejska, przekształcona w laicystyczną utopię, która zastępuje Boga wolą człowieka, może zaniknąć.

Słowa kluczowe: Jan XXIII, Paweł VI, Jan Paweł II, Benedykt XVI, cywilizacja chrześcijańska, jedność europejska

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For all postwar Popes “Europe” represented an important, if not crucial topic and all the Popes, although in a number of different ways that depended from the particular historical contexts, supported the idea of unifying Europe. Nevertheless, their understanding of “Europe” and her unity was fundamentally different from the way “Europe” was and continues to be treated in the dominant secular political and scientific discourse. The Popes were convinced that a common European identity preexisted and was outside any institutional union, because it did not consist in coal, steel or common market, but in the millenary Christian identity as a common cultural and spiritual fundament of the European nations. The Popes never drafted concrete political solutions for a united Europe nor proposed technical instruments of how to achieve them. At the same time, however, they never ceased to remind the Europeans of the principles on which a just and durable European convivence had to be based: on the natural law, on the respect for the dignity of human person and of all natural communities from the family to the nation, on liberty in its ethical and social dimension, on solidarity. Europe should not be a super state disrespecting national cultures, but a synthesis of national identities and transnational solidarity based not on a coincidence of economic or political interests, but on the unity of spirit. The Popes repeatedly stressed that both the individual states and the European Union had to preserve a secular nature that excluded any modern imitation of the medieval *res publica christiana*, but at the same time respect the truth, the natural rights and a universal ethical norm transcending the subject, that excludes any laicist utopia determined to substitute God by the obstinate self-will of man. In other words: The Popes were convinced supporters of the idea of European unity. The question was only: which unity for which Europe. The present article, in continuation of the previous contribution dedicated to Pius XII,² tries to reconstruct how the successors of Pacelli coped with the idea of European unity.

² E. Hrabovec, *Pius XII and the Idea of European Unity*, “Polonia Sacra” 24 (2020) no. 4 (62), p. 121–136.

John XXIII and Paul VI

John XXIII and Paul VI followed all the fundamental principles of European thought out of unity with their predecessor Pius XII: the conviction that it was the Christian religion which gave Europe her spiritual and cultural unity and the richness of her civilisation, and that any united Europe had to respect and preserve the peculiarity of cultures and identities of the nations she consisted of and to bond them into a community based not on a coincidence of instantaneous economic or political interests, but on the unity of spirit.³ But while Pius XII was almost existentially bound up with European thought and with the defence against anti-Christian ideologies and political systems, his successors abandoned this close linkage with Europe and in a changed historical context of gradual universalisation represented a tentative opening of the “Western European citadel” towards the outer world.

This opening was theologically justified in their social encyclicals that explained the difference between the “false philosophical doctrines” to be condemned, and political and social movements that arose from them, but with which a collaboration in a just case was not excluded.⁴ The change of attitude also mirrored the new atmosphere of *détente* that was starting to appear in the relations between the two blocs, as well as the profound cultural changes in Western society. Dialogue became the key notion of the Montini-pontificate. It opened new perspectives

³ Paul VI, *Discours aux participants à la Conférence du Mouvement européen*, 9.11.1963, http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/fr/speeches/1963/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19631109_movimento-europeo.html (10.04.2020); Paul VI, *Discours au Président de la France*, 31.5.1967, w: “Acta Apostolicae Sedis” (= AAS) 59 (1967), p. 627–629; Paul VI, *Ansprache an die Teilnehmer des 3. Symposiums der europäischen Bischöfe*, 18.10.1975, *Katholische Kirche und Europa. Dokumente 1945–1979*, ed. J. Schwarz, München 1980, p. 221–226; Paul VI, *Ansprache an den deutschen Bundeskanzler Willy Brandt*, 13.7.1970, *ibidem*, p. 146–148. Cf. G. Rumi, *Il Papato contemporaneo e l’Europa. L’insegnamento pontificio per l’unità politico-sociale del continente, Quale federalismo per quale Europa. Il contributo della tradizione cristiana*, eds. F. Citterio, L. Vaccaro, Brescia 1996, p. 289–290.

⁴ Joannes XXIII, *Mater et magistra*, AAS 53 (1961), p. 401–464; Joannes XXIII, *Pacem in terris*, AAS 55 (1963), p. 257–304; Paulus VI, *Ecclesiam suam*, AAS 56 (1964), p. 609–659; Cf. The pastoral constitution of the Second Vatican Council *Gaudium et spes*, AAS 58 (1966), p. 1025–1115, particularly chapter 92.

of cooperation with secular institutions⁵ and of ecumenical and political-diplomatic contacts with the East that became known as the Vatican *Ostpolitik*.

In the course of the two postwar decades, an intensive process of secularisation took place in Western Europe that found its first culmination at the end of the Nineteen-sixties and led to changes within a cultural paradigm.⁶ The concept of Christian civilisation, the fundament of the European agenda of Pius XII, was losing a great part of its attraction. Nor did the young generation feel the urgent need of religiously motivated conciliation of “hereditary enemies,” that had motivated the generation of their fathers immediately after the war to intensively seek a Franco-German rapprochement.⁷ Significantly, the great “conciliation discourse” was transferred to the East and gave rise to the first Polish-German dialogue initiated by the episcopate.⁸ The documents of the Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes* with its new view of the Church in the modern world, or *Dignitatis humanae* with its new concept of religious liberty, not conceived exclusively from the perspective of truth, but also from that of human dignity which allowed the recognition of religious liberty, was the cause of profound changes in Catholic thinking.⁹ Against the background of decolonisa-

⁵ A. Cicognani, *Interesse della Chiesa per l'Europa delle persone e dei popoli*, “L'Osservatore Romano” 19.07.1962.

⁶ Cf. B. Ziemann, *Säkularisierung und Neuformierung des Religiösen in der zweiten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, “Archiv für Sozialgeschichte” 51 (2011), p. 3–36.

⁷ On the post-war Franco-German rapprochement cf. Ch. Kösters, *Europäische Integration und Katholizismus in Deutschland (1945–1990)*, *Katholizismus – eine politische Kraft*, ed. K. Abmeier, P. Bahr, Sankt Augustin 2016, p. 50–53; P. Chenaux, *Un'Europa vaticana? Dal Piano Marshall ai Trattati di Roma*, Roma 2017, p. 85–107.

⁸ W. Bartoszewski, *Relazioni polacco-tedesche durante il pontificato di Paolo VI (1963–1978)*, *L'Ostpolitik di Agostino Casaroli 1963–1989*, ed. A. Silvestrini, Bologna 2009, p. 45–62; *Orędzie biskupów polskich do biskupów niemieckich. Materiały i dokumenty*, Warszawa 1966, p. 7–19; E. Heller, *Macht, Kirche, Politik: Der Briefwechsel zwischen den polnischen und deutschen Bischöfen im Jahre 1965*, Köln 1992.

⁹ Cf. E.W. Böckenförde, *Religionsfreiheit als Aufgabe der Christen. Gedanken eines Juristen zu den Diskussionen auf dem Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil, Kirche und christlicher Glaube in den Herausforderungen der Zeit. Beiträge zur politisch-theologischen Verfassungsgeschichte 1957–2002. 2. erweiterte Auflage fortgeführt bis 2006*, ed. E.W. Böckenförde, Berlin 2007, p. 197–212.

tion and globalisation, the question of transmission of faith in missions began to be treated very carefully in order to avoid potential accusals of violence,¹⁰ whereas the concept of a particular European missionary vocation was gradually abandoned in order to evade the suspicions of eurocentricism or European imperialism. In a transforming European society, the Catholics themselves were losing their sensibility for the Catholic social doctrine, which was suspected of enforcing a utopic “third way,” for the natural law, or for the *a priori* suspicious value of national identity. Under such circumstances, the question of spiritual fundamentals of the European unity had to be picked up anew. It was not by chance that Paul VI at the very beginning of his pontificate returned to the great figure of St. Benedict, elevating him to the patron of Europe, but at the same time trying to “modernize” his legacy, focussing it on faith, unity and peace.¹¹

Against the backdrop of the Cold War, globalisation, problems of the Third World, the proxy wars and the arms race, the diplomatic, social and pastoral activities of Paul VI received a clear universal dimension, distinguishing the Holy See with her moral authority as a bearer of “a message for all mankind,”¹² a mediator in a universal framework, who speaks for the poor, the disinherited, those who long for justice, liberty and progress, i.e. values comprehensible also to the non-Christian world. Whereas Pius XII, against his own will, at the peak of the most radical phase of the Cold War, could not completely avoid a *de facto* closeness to the Western world, Paul VI tried to emancipate the Church from any shadow of identification of Catholicism with Western civilisation. Only seldom did he broach the topic of a special vocation of European civilisation and if so, he integrated it into a global perspective, ascribing to a united Europe a new role as an engine of international

¹⁰ Ch. Kösters, *Europäische Integration und Katholizismus in Deutschland (1945–1990)*, op. cit., p. 54.

¹¹ Paulus VI, *Pacis nuntius. Sanctus Benedictus Abbas principalis totius Europae patronus eligitur. Ad perpetuam rei memoriam*, AAS 56 (1964), p. 965–967.

¹² Paolo VI, *Discorso alle Nazioni Unite*, 4.10.1965, http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/it/speeches/1965/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19651004_united-nations.html (15.09.2020).

justice and world peace.¹³ The visiting diplomacy was significant for the global dimension of Montini's political and diplomatic action, too: as the first Pontiff he visited all continents, however dedicating only two short visits to European destinations: to Fatima on the occasion of the anniversary of the Apparitions of Our Lady, and to Geneva on the occasion of the anniversary of the International Labour Organisation. The only European pastoral journey in any real sense, planned for 1966, should have taken him to Poland, but it did not take place since Warsaw did not grant him entry permits.¹⁴

The Western European dimension of the Pope's diplomatic action was characterized by the unprecedented effort to secure the institutional presence of the Holy See in European institutions. Paul VI was able to overcome both the traditional Vatican distrust towards international organisations rooted in lay humanism, and the prudence towards dealing with political structures that could be seen as a violation of neutrality. The accreditation of an apostolic nuncio to the European Economic Community in Brussels in November 1970¹⁵ and the founding of the Committee of the European Bishops' Conferences the following year changed principally the political, institutional and pastoral position of the Holy See at a European level.

By the latter part of his burdened pontificate, Paul VI had already clearly verbalized the deep crisis both of European civilisation and of the Church in Europe. At the meeting of European bishops in 1975

¹³ Paul VI, *Discours aux membres de la Commission politique du Conseil de l'Europe*, 2.9.1968, http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/fr/speeches/1968/september/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19680902_consiglio-europa.html (15.09.2020). Cf. A. Riccardi, *La Santa Sede fra distensione e guerra fredda: da Paolo VI a Giovanni Paolo II, L'Italia repubblicana nella crisi degli anni settanta. Tra guerra fredda e distensione*, eds. A. Giovagnoli, S. Pons, Soveria Manelli 2003, p. 145–151.

¹⁴ Österreichisches Staatsarchiv Wien, Archiv der Republik (ÖStA, AdR), BmfAA, AA, Pol. 74, Res-Berichte, Vatikan, Karton 2324, Austrian Ambassador to the Holy See Hans Reichmann to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 18.2.1974 and 5.9.1974.

¹⁵ *Instaurazione di rapporti diplomatici tra la Santa Sede e le Comunità Europee*, in: *Attività della Santa Sede nel 1970*, Città del Vaticano 1971, p. 498. Cf. M. Valente, *La Santa Sede e l'Europa unita, dalla Conferenza dell'Aja al Trattato di Maastricht (1948–1992)*, in: *Fede e diplomazia. Le relazioni internazionali della Santa Sede nell'età contemporanea*, ed. M. de Leonardis, Milano 2013, p. 395 (Quaderni del Dipartimento di Scienze Politiche, 3).

he warned that only Christian culture “can liberate this continent from the emptiness it feels” and give it back its spiritual identity and moral responsibility for the world.¹⁶

John Paul II

John Paul II, elected in autumn 1978 in the hope that he would find the way out from the profound crisis felt in the Church since the Sixties, indeed surprised the resigned Europe with an optimistic vision. Contrary to the dominant Western opinion, the Polish Pope was convinced that beneath the surface of the Communist system there were profound cleavages that in a non distant future would lead to its decomposition, thus allowing the overcoming of Yalta and the reunification of the continent.¹⁷ To a not lesser surprise of his contemporaries, Wojtyła did not share the pessimistic conviction predicated both by the Marxist historical materialism and the theoretics of secularisation and silently accepted also by the Christian majority, that the European Christianity was condemned to die. On the contrary, Wojtyła firmly believed in its ability of renewal, if only the European nations open them up to their history and to the desire for the Divine present also in the postmodern man.¹⁸ More than 700 public pronouncements on European topics and 54 from 104 foreign pastoral journeys to European destinations demonstrated clearly the relevance which the Pontiff ascribed to the European Christianity.

While in the European vision of his predecessors a defensive character prevailed, John Paul II was not afraid to relaunch a spiritual “offensive,”

¹⁶ Paul VI, *Ansprache an die Teilnehmer des 3. Symposiums der europäischen Bischöfe*, 18.10.1975, in: *Katholische Kirche und Europa. Dokumente 1945-1979*, ed. Schwarz, op. cit., p. 221-226.

¹⁷ E. Hrabovec, *L'Ostpolitik di Giovanni Paolo II e la Slovacchia (1978-1989)*, in: *Incorrupta monumenta ecclesiam defendunt. Studi offerti a mons. Sergio Pagano, prefetto dell' Archivio Segreto Vaticano. Vol. III. Inquisizione romana, Indice, Diplomazia pontificia*, eds. A. Gottsmann, P. Piatti, A.E. Rehberg, Città del Vaticano 2018, p. 267-290.

¹⁸ Significant was the Pope's speech in Santiago de Compostela on 9.11.1982, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/1982/november/documents/hf_jp-ii-spe_19821109_atto-europeistico_it.html. Cf. Giovanni Paolo II, *Varcare la soglia della speranza*, Milano 1985, p. 128.

to mobilize masses, to announce a new evangelisation instead of compromises with Modernity, secularism and Marxism, and to repropose the Church as an alternative moral and social authority. He was not afraid to speak again of a special vocation of Europe, “the lighthouse of civilisation,”¹⁹ and to extend his perspective to the “great Europe” “from the Atlantic to the Ural.”²⁰

From the view of the self-centred Western Europe it was something new when the Pope repeatedly asserted that the Slavic nations were an integral part of Europe.²¹ Similarly surprising was the reintroduction of the “nation” into the magisterium. In Wojtyła’s teaching, nations represented historical subjects powered by a specific vocation to “embody a particular aspect of the Revealed Word”²² and with a particular culture as an expression of spiritual sovereignty. The nation as a source of virtues and of spiritual and cultural wealth should be protected against the ideological or practical liquidation, be it of Marxist or liberal-globalist origin. Europe should be a fatherland of fatherlands, in which every nation is allowed to live the proper life according to proper traditions.²³

The eminently historically thinking Pope suffered because of the disturbed relation of modern Europeans to their history and searched

¹⁹ Giovanni Paolo II, *Discorso a Santiago de Compostela*, 9.11.1982, op. cit.

²⁰ John Paul II used very often this expression ascribed originally to Charles de Gaulle. Cf. the homily in Speyer on 4.5.1987, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/homilies/1987/documents/hf_jpii_hom_19870504_conceleb-spira_it.html (12.07.2018).

²¹ Cf. particularly his famous homily in Gniezno from 3.6.1979, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/homilies/1979/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19790603_polonia-gniezno-cattedrale_it.html (12.07.2018).

²² Giovanni Paolo II, *Discorso ai partecipanti al Simposio internazionale su «Ivanov e la cultura del suo tempo»*, 28.5.1983, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/speeches/1983/may/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19830528_ivanov-cultura.html (10.04.2020).

²³ Cf. Giovanni Paolo II, *Discorso all’Organizzazione delle Nazioni Unite per l’educazione, la scienza e la cultura (UNESCO)*, 2.6.1980, https://w2.vatican.va/content/johnpaulii/it/speeches/1980/june/documents/hf_jpii_spe_19800602_unesco.html (10.04.2020); John Paul II, *Speech in the sea of the United Nations on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of its foundation*, 5.10.1995, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/1995/october/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_05101995_address-to-uno_it.html (10.09.2020). Cf. J. Tischner, *Die Nation und ihre Rechte. Einführung in die Ansprache Johannes Pauls II. vor den Vereinten Nationen im Oktober 1995, Aufklärung heute. Castelgandolfo-Gespräche 1996*, ed. K. Michalski, Stuttgart 1997, p. 122–145.

for ways how to give them back their historical memory. By reminding them of important moments and great personalities of their history, Wojtyła tried to remind the Europeans that their history had begun with the adoption of Christianity and would certainly outlive both the Communist regime and the present cultural crisis.²⁴ In this context, the cyrilo-methodian vision conferred Wojtyła's European vision a strong spiritual and symbolic dimension and became the fundamental element of his religious and moral and indirectly also social and political project, whose final aim was to renew, by means of the rediscovered spiritual and cultural heritage of the Christian East and the Christianity of Slavic nations, the identity, unity and missionary vocation of Europe.²⁵

Wojtyła's resistance against Communism did not mean the assumption of the Western model of liberal capitalism, against which he voiced a surprisingly strong criticism. The Pope insisted on the fact that the struggle for shaping Europe was not happening between Marxism and capitalism, but between these equally materialistic systems on one side and the Catholic social doctrine on the other side. In December 1989, while receiving Michail Gorbačov in the Apostolic Palace, the Pope confessed: "It is not possible to demand that the transformations in Europe and in the world take place according to the Western model. This contradicts my deepest conviction."²⁶

The Pope, deeply rooted in the "people's Catholicism" as he knew it from Poland and the neighbouring Slovakia, ascribed to the Slavic nations a crucial European mission. He hoped they would help the West overcome its cultural and spiritual crisis, loss of identity and missionary spirit, predominance of economic logics, resignation in front of the decay and acceptance of non-Christian models of life. Not least because of this hope, in spite of the firm criticism of the materialistic and laicistic spirit of the European Union, he invited the Central-Eastern European nations to enter the Union. Not to become a weaker appendage of the

²⁴ Cf. particularly the homily in Gniezno from 3.6.1979, op. cit.

²⁵ E. Hrabovec, *Giovanni Paolo II, il culto cirillo-metodiano e la visione europea, I Santi Cirillo e Metodio e la loro eredità religiosa e culturale, ponte tra Oriente e Occidente*, eds. E. Hrabovec, P. Piatti, R. Tolomeo, Città del Vaticano 2016, p. 319–347.

²⁶ A. Riccardi, *Giovanni Paolo II. La biografia*, Cinisello Balsamo 2011, p. 374.

well established company, but to introduce in it the richness of their Christian spirit and become “a precious reserve of energies, which today’s Europe so bitterly needs.”²⁷

Wojtyła’s hopes that the Church that so fundamentally contributed to the shaping of Europe²⁸ and to the mobilisation of the spiritual forces that enabled the overcoming of Communism, would become the leaven of a Christian renewal and unification of the post-communist Europe, did not come true. The most bitter disappointment caused him the outcome of the ethico-judicial battle for the mentioning of God and of Christian roots in the Preamble of the European Constitution as the basic declaration of moral purposes of the European Union. The Pope used every occasion to mobilize the Catholic masses, and the papal diplomacy launched a broad action in favour of the Christian standpoint. It became evident, however, that while the European policy needed the Pope as a potential ally in the Cold War, it was willing to demonstrate goodwill and the media were creating a basically positive image of him. Once he fulfilled the mission of an ally against communism and began to challenge the conscience of European policy, his words provoked sharp criticism. It hit him hard when the summit in Bruxelles in June 2004 approved the new European Constitution without mentioning God or Europe’s Christian roots.

²⁷ John Paul II, *Address to heads of state, Gniezno*, 3.6.1997, https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/speeches/1997/june/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19970603_mess-gniezno.html; P. Samerek, *La Chiesa cattolica in Polonia. Giovanni Paolo II e l'Europa*, “pl.it. Rassegna italiana di argomenti polacchi” 3 (2009), p. 545–546.

²⁸ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Europa*, 108–120, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_20030628_ecclesia-in-europa.html (12.07.2018).

Benedict XVI

While Wojtyła's vision concentrated on Europe, his successor Benedict XVI was convinced that in the globalized world it was necessary to approach it in the context of global challenges. While Wojtyła's conception was more political and cultural, focussed on the reunification of European nations, Ratzinger with his fine philosophical and theological culture aimed at penetration to the essence of phenomena, tried above all to understand what the European identity consisted in, what were the causes of its present crisis and how it could be resolved. While John Paul II, in spite of disappointments, maintained a fundamental European optimism till the end, Ratzinger already at the beginning of the nineties did not hesitate to admit publicly that "the European culture could disappear, too."²⁹

Starting point of Ratzinger's reflections was the thesis that Europe is not comprehensible as a geographical or a political term, but represents a spiritual, cultural and historical concept developed through centuries from the transformation of the Mediterranean antique civilisation into the civilisation built on Christian fundament, till the birth of a new, secular thinking based on Enlightenment and rationalism. Unlike his predecessors Ratzinger explicitly recognized positive elements of Modernity and Enlightenment and tried to come to a true conciliation between the Church and Modernity. At the same time however, he pointed out the ambivalence and potential dangerousness of the secular concept of Enlightenment that systematically excluded God from history and from the public conscience, absolutised the reason emancipated from the faith and the liberty conceived as an autonomous self-determination, and promised a new utopia which would radically break with the old world and create a new unity, deprived of the unique real unifying force – the common moral conviction. Since the necessity of a morality in the public space was still recognized, it was the calculation of consequences that determined what must or must not be considered moral, a calculation

²⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Wendezeit für Europa, Wendezeit für Europa; Diagnosen und Prognosen zur Lage von Kirche und Welt*, Einsiedeln 1991, p. 109–115.

that in the last consequence led to a society of wolves and social darwinism. In this way Europe, once the space in which Christianity had found its most effective form, developed a culture that constitutes the absolutely most radical contradiction not only of Christianity, but of the religious and moral traditions of humanity.³⁰

Ratzinger was convinced that the European culture of technics and commerce that was victoriously spreading in the world, was in fact already “post-European”, born from the decay of European cultures. A culture hollowed from inside, paralysed by a pathological hate of itself and without any will to survive, opening up to foreign values, but not loving itself and negating its own history as condemnable.³¹ The dying of Europe manifests itself also by a demographic and ethnic decay that cannot be healed by “transplants that destroy Europe’s identity.”³² “Europe must accept herself – although critically and humbly – if she wants to survive“, Benedict’s diagnose sounded.³³

Ratzinger tried to answer the question why there was no place for God and Christian roots in the European Constitution. He saw the real reason not in the attempt not to injure the sentiments of non-Christians living in Europe, as the official statements argued, but in the secularized culture that attempted to build the human community without God and presupposed that only the radical Enlightenment culture could be constitutive for European identity. Beside this culture, then, different religious cultures could coexist with their respective rights, on the condition and to the degree in which they would respect the criteria of the Enlightenment culture, and were subordinated to it. Ratzinger saw in this radical Enlightenment culture two great dangers: first, that its incorrectly defined concept of freedom would lead, through the concept of tolerance and (non)discrimination, to an intolerant dogmatism increasingly hostile to freedom; and second, that its conviction of being

³⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Europa. I suoi fondamenti spirituali ieri, oggi e domani, Senza radici. Europa, relativismo, cristianesimo, islam*, eds. M. Pera, J. Ratzinger, Milano 2004, p. 47–72, 97–122; J. Ratzinger, *L’Europa di Benedetto nella crisi delle culture*, Bologna 2005, p. 29–65.

³¹ J. Ratzinger, *Europa - i suoi fondamenti spirituali ieri, oggi e domani*, op. cit., p. 59–71.

³² J. Ratzinger, *Europa - i suoi fondamenti spirituali ieri, oggi e domani*, op. cit., p. 60.

³³ J. Ratzinger, *Europa - i suoi fondamenti spirituali ieri, oggi e domani*, op. cit., p. 70–71.

universal and perfect and that only its norms and contents would be able to determine Europe's identity, would lead to the consequence that every state that makes these criteria its own, will be able to belong to Europe, independently on what roots its culture is implanted in. The exclusion of Christian roots from the Preamble of the European Constitution not only excluded God from the European public space, but enabled the acceptance of states and peoples into Europe which culturally and historically do not belong there.³⁴

Ratzinger never ceased to urge the Europeans to recognize their Christian roots. A common declaration with the Constantinople Patriarch Bartolomeus I from November 2006 emphasized the necessity to join the forces in defence of Europe's Christian heritage.³⁵ In a speech to the members of the European People's Party from March 2006 the Pope invited the Christians to draw inspiration "with creative fidelity" from the Christian heritage and the Catholic social doctrine in order to resolve the urgent problems of the European Union like further integration, institutional relations or the social model of the Union.³⁶ In the speech to the participants of a conference organized by the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union in March 2007, the Pope painted a gloomy picture of Europe, characterized by imbalance between the economic and the social dimension of politics, by absence of solidarity, disrespect for the environment, demographic decay, by unification processes separated from the citizens and ignoring their expectations. How can a "common house" be built in Europe, asked the Pope, when the historical, cultural and moral identity of its citizens and its fundamental element – Christianity that still represents the majority of the population, is being neglected? How can Europe be a community of values when

³⁴ J. Ratzinger, *L'Europa di Benedetto nella crisi delle culture*, op. cit., p. 38–45.

³⁵ *Common Declaration of Pope Benedict XVI and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew*, 30.11.2006, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/it/speeches/2006/november/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20061130_dichiarazione-comune.html (12.07.2018).

³⁶ Benedict XVI, *Address to the members of the European People's Party on the occasion of the Study days on Europe*, 30.3.2006, http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/march/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060330_eu-parliamentarians.html (12.07.2018).

it denies the very existence of universal and absolute values? The Pope warned of political pragmatism and compromises deprived of values and invited the European Union to recognize first of all the durable truth about man as the real source of human rights.³⁷

The Pope's strict warning, Europe should not turn her back on her history, contrasted sharply with the superficial celebration atmosphere of the meeting of Europe's chiefs of states and governments who at the same time met in Berlin to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome and adopted The Berlin Declaration that defined the European identity without mentioning its Christian heritage.³⁸ The hostility of a significant number of members of the European institutions to the Pope and his ideas became evident, as he remained excluded from a visit of the European Parliament, in spite of negotiations to prepare a visit.

Seeking for the answer to the question what kind of political shape should the future unified Europe have, Ratzinger excluded unrealistic dreams about a renewal of an "organically Christian community."³⁹ The state must be ideologically neutral, he insisted, but at the same time it must rely on moral forces that transcend it. A plural democracy cannot live without political ethics. This is the space for the contribution of Christian religion that should awake people's consciences and encourage the recognition of the basic values like the inviolability of the human dignity and of human rights, marriage of a man and a woman, family, respect for the Divine, for God.⁴⁰ A state guided only by the pragmatism of group interests formally legitimized by positivist law, but

³⁷ Benedict XVI, *Address to the participants in the Convention organized by the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE)*, 24.3.2007, https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/it/speeches/2007/march/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20070324_comece.html (12.07.2018).

³⁸ For the German text of the Declaration from 25.3.2007 see https://web.archive.org/web/20070927204801/http://eu2007.de/de/News/download_docs/Maerz/0324-RAA/German.pdf. (12.07.2018).

³⁹ M. Politi, *Il laicismo nuova ideologia - l'Europa non emargini Dio*, "La Repubblica" 19.11.2004.

⁴⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Christliche Orientierung in der pluralistischen Demokratie? Über die Unverzichtbarkeit des Christentums in der modernen Welt*, J. Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, Einsiedeln 1987, p. 194–195; Benedictus XVI, *Spe salvi*, AAS 99 (2009) Nr. 24–25, p. 985–1028.

without ethical foundation in values that transcend it, becomes a “gang of robbers,” Benedict XVI reminded his listeners in the German *Bundestag* on 22 September 2011,⁴¹ and a democracy, reduced to the arithmetics of majority and compromise, the worst totality.⁴²

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⁴¹ Benedict XVI, *Address to the Bundestag*, 22.9.2011, http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2011/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20110922_reichstag-berlin.html (12.07.2018).

⁴² J. Ratzinger, *Werte in Zeiten des Umbruchs. Die Herausforderungen der Zukunft bestehen*, Freiburg im Breisgau, Basel, Wien 2005, p. 95.

november/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20061130_dichiarazione-comune.html (12.07.2018).

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