often Europe is described as secular. Today you find a much more complex and diversified picture. On this basis sociological analyses, systematic-theological reflections and reconstructions regarding the Franciscan-Capuchin spirituality are dealing with the most challenging question: What does Europe believe in?

Thomas Dienberg OFMCap, Phil.-Theologische Hochschule Münster, Theologie der Spiritualität (Theology of Spirituality)

Thomas Eggensperger OP, Institut M.-Dominique Chenu Berlin, Sozialethik (Social Ethics)

Ulrich Engel OP, Institut M.-Dominique Chenu Berlin, Fundamentaltheologie (Systematical Theology)

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Woran glaubt Europa?
What does Europe believe in?
What does Europe believe in?

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Vorwort

Fast 100 Teilnehmerinnen und Teilnehmer, zumeist Kapuziner aus ganz Europa, stellten sich vom 4. bis 8. November 2009 in Madrid die Frage: „Woran glaubt Europa?“ Im Auftrag der Konferenz der Nordwesteuropäischen Kapuzinerprovinzen (CENOC) ging es insbesondere um die Frage, wie sich eine Franziskanische Theologie und Spiritualität zu dem komplexen Phänomen der Säkularisierung verhalten. Im vorliegenden Band sind sämtliche Beiträge und Referate des Symposiums jeweils in Deutsch und in Englisch wiedergegeben. Dabei sind die Publikation wie auch das Symposium in drei verschiedene Blöcke mit je unterschiedlichen Fragestellungen unterteilt.


Gibt es Entwürfe, die einen Weg aufzeigen, wie der Aspekt der Säkularisierung positiv in theologisches Denken überführt worden ist bzw. überführt werden kann? Der Laiendominikaner Erik Borgmann aus Tilburg/Niederlande sowie Ulrich Engel OP aus Berlin stellen sich dieser Frage. Stefan Knobloch OFMCap (Mainz) und


In die Welt gesandt sein heißt, Verantwortung zu übernehmen, solidarisch, in Gerechtigkeit und Frieden. Der Einsatz für die Schöpfung, angesichts der Weltklimakatastrophe äußerst aktuell, fordert alle heraus, gerade auch als Franziskanische Menschen. Wie wird diese Verantwortung gelebt?

Diese und andere Fragen stellen Michael Blastic OFM aus New York, Thomas Dienberg OFM Cap aus Münster sowie in ihren ergänzenden Kommentaren zu den Vorträgen Niklaus Kuster OFM Cap aus Olten/Schweiz und Paolo Martinelli OFM Cap aus Rom. Insbesondere der Aspekt der Gemeinschaft wurde von allen betont. In ei-
ner gemeinschaftlich gelebten Spiritualität und einer vor allem auch kommunitär gelebten Sendung liegt die Stärke der Franziskanischen Bewegung heute, so der Tenor der Artikel.


Die Herausgeber hoffen, dass die Leserinnen und Leser mit der vorliegenden Publikation einen ähnlichen Weg beschreiben können und sich am Ende der Lektüre eine Weiterführung der Diskussion wünschen.


Münster/Berlin im Juni 2010

Thomas Dienberg OFMCap (Philosophisch-Theologische Hochschule Münster)
Thomas Eggensperger OP (Institut M.-Dominique Chenu Berlin)
Ulrich Engel OP (Institut M.-Dominique Chenu Berlin)
Foreword

Between 4th and 8th November 2009 in Madrid, almost 100 participants, mostly Capuchins from all over Europe, asked themselves the question: “What does Europe believe in?” On behalf of the North-West Europe Capuchin Conference (CENOC), the particular issue was how Franciscan theology and spirituality relate to the complex phenomenon of secularisation. In the current volume, all contributions and lectures from the symposium are printed in both German and English. The publication, like the symposium, is divided into three different sections, each posing different questions.

In a first step, the initial concern is to observe of secularisation realistically and neutrally with the country-specific differences. In their articles, sociologist of religion Michael N. Ebertz from Freiburg im Breisgau and the publisher Jean-Louis Schlegel from Paris put forward some fundamental key data and observations regarding secularisation trends in Europe, “the only really secular continent on earth”. Ebertz presents extensive empirical material, which presents the sometimes stealthy, but sometimes very forced process of mistrust towards an institution such as the church to the point of its withdrawal and search for meaning on the great religious market of possibilities. It quickly becomes clear that each country has experienced or is currently experiencing a quite specific development. In France, according to Schlegel, the question is more about laicism and the dealings of the state with religions. Religious unrest and pleading for the understanding of others are his keywords.

The stimuli are rounded off with a statement from US theologian Robert Schreiter C.P.P.S., who teaches in Chicago. His statement uses brief keywords to highlight the situation in the USA with regards to secularisation. Religion in the USA has a different significance than in Europe; on one hand, it is much more self-evident and, on the other hand, much more individualised. The churches take up the challenge of competition in order to have any sort of chance in a fast-moving and experience-driven world.

Are there drafts which show a way to that the aspect of secularisation has been or can be positively transferred into theological thinking? Lay Dominican Erik Borgmann from Tilburg in the Netherlands and Ulrich Engel OP from Berlin try to answer this question. Stefan Knobloch OFMCap (Mainz) and Ricardo de Luis Capballada OP (Salamanca) complement their statements in the form of critical commentaries. The tenor is the statement that: secularisation is the feeding ground
of our theology. God came into the world in his son in an impressive and everlasting way. The world is the place of incarnation and the kenosis of God.

The world is the theological site where Christ convened his church. In Jesus Christ, God is forever connected with the world. Correspondingly, the political, social and cultural factors must be read in terms of the Gospel. The enculturation of the Gospel follows the path of the incarnated Son of God in the world. It is also necessary to do justice to this in the proclamation.

The task of the beholder is to ponder upon and analyse the vestiges of God in the contexts of the reality in which they live, in the social realities of which they are a part. In this situation of uncertainty religion addresses them: “Have no fear! Have courage!” On the basis of these theological perspectives, secularisation does not have to be frightening but rather disquieting in a positive sense. This second part is rounded off with statements from Ulrich Engel OP and Thomas Eggensperger OP (Berlin), in which they interpret art as a seismograph for the current issues, from which even theologians cannot escape. The relevance and challenge through art becomes very clear in both articles.

The third part of the publication deals with the Franciscan perspective. “The world is our enclosure”: this is the answer formulated by the Brothers of Francis to the question by Lady Poverty in the medieval scripture “Sacrum Commercium”: “Where is your monastery? Show it to me!” A distinct and trend-setting statement in the debate with secularisation. The world is the place of God and the place of our living as Franciscan people. Where are Franciscan people today intimate with the cultures and subcultures of their time? Are they familiar with the lives of the people, as Francis and his first Brothers, who lived with the people and worked with them?

Being sent into the world means taking responsibility in a solidary, righteous and peaceful way. The protection of the Creation, which is extremely topical in the face of the world climate catastrophe, challenges everyone, especially as Franciscan people. How is this responsibility experienced?

These and other questions are posed by Michael Blastic OFM from New York, Thomas Dienberg OFMCap from Münster and, in their supplementary commentaries on the lectures, Niklaus Kuster OFMCap from Olten, Switzerland and Paolo Martinelli OFMCap from Rome. In particular, the aspect of community was emphasised by all lecturers. According to the tenor of the articles, the strength of the Franciscan movement lays in a collectively experienced spirituality and a, above all, communally lived mission.

The symposium has broken interesting ground, in accordance with the triad: Seeing – Judging – Acting. At the end, the participants agreed that the conference has only made a start. With regards to the complexity of the secularisation process and in view of the discussions and debates which have not yet occurred, especially
related to incarnation theologically focussed concepts and relating to Franciscan spirituality, we can be curious about the future.

The editors hope that the readers can break a similar path with this publication and hope for a continuation of the discussion after reading.

At this point, we would like to give particular thanks to the Ministers Provincial of the CENOC and the Minister General of the Order of the Capuchins, Mauro Jöhri, for the initiative to take a chance on a symposium in this manner. Above all, we thank the Provincial of the Rhenish-Westphalian Capuchin province, Christophorus Goedereis, and the former employee of the Institut M.-Dominique Chenu in Berlin, Mr. Horst Wieshuber OPL, for the organisation and practical implementation of the days in Madrid. Without these two, the symposium would not have been able to take place in this successful manner! We would also like to thank the two Spanish Capuchins Jaime Rey and Enrique Garcia, who were not just our contacts in Madrid but were also a great help in the local organisation. Finally, we would like to thank the escorts of the symposium, Dr. Regina Bäumer and Prof. Dr. Dr. Michael Plattig O.Carm, the trainee of the Institut M.-Dominique Chenu, Sören Scherg, Heinz Finking, who proof-read the manuscript, and the translators from the Order of Capuchins, who all contributed greatly.

Münster/Berlin in June 2010

*Thomas Dienberg OFMCap* (University of Philosophy and Theology in Münster)
*Thomas Eggensperger OP* (Institut M.-Dominique Chenu Berlin)
*Ulrich Engel OP* (Institut M.-Dominique Chenu Berlin)
I. SEHEN ~ SEEING
Säkularisierung, Entchristlichung oder Entkirchlichung?
Eine religionssoziologische Perspektive

Der religiöse Ausnahmefall?

spективе nicht jedes europäische Land – im Osten wie im Westen – als Sonderfall? Und ist nicht auch der Katholizismus oder der Protestantismus oder der Islam in West-Deutschland ein (jeweils) anderer als – sagen wir beispielsweise – in Italien oder in Polen oder in Schweden oder in Großbritannien oder in Ost-Deutschland?


dass Religiosität und Modernität sich nicht ausschließen müssen, sind doch die USA zweifellos eine „religiös höchst vitale moderne Gesellschaft“ (Joas 2007, 361).

Ein säkularer Kontinent?

Bevor wir der kausalen Frage nachgehen, weshalb ausgerechnet Europa, von wo aus das Christentum zur Weltreligion wurde, zum ‚einzig wirklichen säkularen Kontinent‘ geworden ist, wird man zunächst den Begriff der ‚Säkularisierung‘ differenzieren müssen, zumindest nach den Dimensionen:

- der Entkirchlichung als des Rückgangs der normativen Verbindlichkeit spezifisch kirchlicher Einfluss- und Engagement-Erwartungen,
- der Entchristlichung als Distanzierung von spezifisch christlichen Sinngehalten und
- der Säkularisierung als Bedeutungsschwund von Religionen und Religiosität überhaupt.

Diese drei Dimensionen verweisen darauf, dass weder Religionen im Christentum und das Religiöse im Christlichen aufgehen, noch das Christentum und Christliches im Kirchlichen. Das Christentum, dem weltweit 2,1 Milliarden Menschen zugerechnet werden, das auch und gerade in Europa Konkurrenz durch ‚Fremdreligionen‘ erhalten hat, hat sich im Verlauf seiner Geschichte auf verschiedenen Ebenen ausdifferenziert. Freilich werden viele Sinngehalte des Christentums auf der organisationellen Ebene, d. h. „auf einen besonderen, als Kirche definierten Sozialzusammenhang hin erlebt und erfahren“ (Gabriel 1996, 140f). Im Folgenden werden wir deshalb entsprechende Kirchlichkeitsindikatoren heranziehen (Zugehörigkeit; Vertrauen; Glauben; Gottesdienstbesuch; Kirchenmitgliedertypus), um einen Vergleich zwischen den verschiedenen europäischen Ländern zu ermöglichen.


Im Anschluss an die bisherigen Überlegungen wird man analytisch auch nach verschiedenen Ebenen zu unterscheiden haben (vgl. Luckmann 1988, 38.), also dann, ob sich Prozesse der Entkirchlichung, der Entchristlichung und/oder der Säkularisierung im engeren Sinn vollziehen in den Überzeugungen, Praktiken und Identitäten der Einzelpersonen, in den tragenden gesellschaftlichen Ideen, Werten, Normen und sozialen Objektivationen, also auf der Ebene der gesellschaftlichen Ideen, Werte, und/oder auf der Ebene der Sozialstruktur, also z. B. in der Sphäre des Staats, der Wirtschaft, des Bildungssystems und der Massenmedien (vgl. Abb. 1).

Abb. 1: Dimensionen und Ebenen der ‚Säkularisierung’

<table>
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<th>Kultur</th>
<th>Einzelperson</th>
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<tr>
<td>Entkirchlichung</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entchristlichung</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Säkularisierung</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Entkirchlichung, Entchristlichung und Säkularisierung auf der Ebene der Sozialstruktur

Charakteristisch für alle als ‚modernen’ zu qualifizierenden Gesellschaften ist die strukturelle Pluralisierung und funktionale Ausdifferenzierung, d.h. die institutionelle Herausbildung und Abtrennung solcher Sphären, die der Kontrolle (a) kirchlicher,
(b) christlicher oder (c) religiöser Normierungen weitgehend entzogen sind. Dies ist und bleibt „ein durchgängiger und für alle modernen Gesellschaften charakteristi-
scher Trend“ (Casanova 1996, 182), d.h. in Europa wie in den USA. Diesem Prozess, der historisch gesehen mit der so genannten „Päpstlichen Revolution“, d.h. den Grego-
rianischen Reformen im Investiturstreit des 11. und 12. Jahrhunderts begann und zunächst dazu führte, dass fortan „lediglich Geistliche über Geistliches urteilen durf-
ten“ (Greschat 2001, 138), trug – nicht zuletzt mit Blick auf das Verhältnis von Kirche und Staat – schließlich auch die römisch-katholische Kirche auf dem II. Vatikan-
schen Konzil durch die doktrinäre Anerkennung des Prinzips der Religionsfreiheit und der so genannten „Autonomie der irdischen Wirklichkeiten“ Rechnung (vgl. Ebertz 2004), ohne deshalb das französische Modell einer religions-, christentums-
und kirchenfeindlichen Trennung von Staat und Kirche zu präferieren. Dieser dok-
zycka 2009), wo es allerdings niemals eine Staatskirche gab (vgl. Casanova 1996, 186), die Kirche sich nicht in den zentralen Machtkomplex einbinden ließ, aber in wichtigen Phasen der nationalen Geschichte, als Fremde über den Staat geherrscht haben, sämtliche Hoffnungen des ganzes Volkes und einen erheblichen Teil der na-
tionalen Identität verkörpert hat (vgl. Martin 1996, 162). Die variantenreiche „Ent-
staatlichung‘ der religiösen Institutionen drückt sich auf mentaler Ebene z. B. darin aus, dass deutliche Bevölkerungsmehrheiten in den europäischen Ländern für eine Trennung von Religion und Politik votieren. So stimmen sie z. B. zu, dass die religiö-
sen Oberhäupter „nicht versuchen sollten, die Entscheidungen der Bürger bei politi-
schen Wahlen zu beeinflussen“ (vgl. Osteuropa 2009, 112a). Die Bevölkerungen Belgi-
gens, Dänemarks und Frankreichs, aber auch von Belarus, Bulgarien, Kroatien und Polen vertreten dieses Postulat, gemessen mit einer Fünferskala (1= Ja; 5= nein), am entschiedensten (1,58–1,85), gefolgt von den Bevölkerungen in Deutschland, Grie-
chenland, Italien, Portugal, Rumänien, Slowenien, der Slowakei, Tschechien und Ungarn, ja sogar der Türkei mit dem zustimmenden zweiten Platz (1,86–2,12). Auf einer mittleren Position, die immer noch mehrheitliche Zustimmung signalisiert (2,13–2,38), lassen sich die Bevölkerungen der jüngeren „Staatskirchenländer‘ Finn-
land, Großbritannien, Schweden und Spanien, aber auch Irlands, das formell keine Staatskirche kennt, aber „die besondere Stellung der heiligen katholischen, apost-

Den Ausfall der gesellschaftlichen Integrationsfunktion durch Religion lehrt die blutige europäische Religionsgeschichte selbst, aber auch das undramatische Beispiel des aktuellen religiösen ‚Sonderfalls’ Deutschland, wo die Mehrheit der Ostdeutschen nachhaltig zumindest nicht-kirchlich und nicht-christlich eingestellt ist. Nicht nur an diesem Beispiel ist widerlegbar, „dass sich die Sozialintegration eines säkularen Staates in religiösen Gemeinsamkeiten der Bürger gründet“; denn die Bevölkerungen der früheren deutschen Teilstaaten leben nun schon seit beinahe zwei Jahrzehnten zusammen und „viele ihrer politischen Einstellungen haben sich angenähert, aber ihre Religiosität liegt weit auseinander. Worauf immer eine Sozialverfassung sich gründet, die Religion ist es nicht ... Sie hilft den Menschen auf der Suche nach ihrem persönlichen Heil. Sie ist der wichtigste Antrieb für soziales Engagement ... Aber sie ist nicht Kitt des säkularen Staates“ (Meulemann 2004, 74). Die soziale Integrationskraft der Religion dürfte nicht zuletzt auch deshalb an Bedeutung verlieren, als in vielen europäischen Ländern die Anteile derjenigen steigen, die keiner Religionsgemeinschaft zugehörig sind. In einigen Ländern stellen die religiös Ungebundenen bereits die Bevölkerungsmehrheit,


Entkirchlichung, Entchristlichung und Säkularisierung auf der Ebene der Kultur

Der Bedeutungsverlust von Kirche, Christentum und Religion kann sich auch kulturell vollziehen, ist aber – anders als auf der strukturellen Ebene - in modernen Gesellschaften nicht zwingend. Kirchliches, Christliches oder Religiöses kann in
den modernen europäischen Gesellschaften regionale und lokale Identitäten be-
dienen, müssen wir doch immer auch unser „Leben in überlieferten Ordnungen“
(Leopold Schmidt) vollziehen und sind schicksalhaft mit dem Leben unserer Vor-
fahren, mit dem von ihnen hinterlassenen Erbe konfrontiert. Wir stehen eben auch
im Kontext der Generationen vor uns – ob wir wollen oder nicht. Dies gilt für das
Gebiet des Geistigen (Kulturideen) ebenso wie für die materiell sichtbaren sozialen
Objektivationen (Kulturobjekte) wie die Kunst, die wie Philosophie, Wissenschaft
und Religion immer auch die Hüter des kollektiven Gedächtnisses sind. Man ver-
gleiche nur die architektonische Gestaltung des Zentrums einer europäischen Stadt
(etwa in Italien, Frankreich, Spanien, Polen oder Deutschland) mit dem Zentrum ei-
ner amerikanischen Stadt. Dieses wird nicht von einem imposanten Dom beherrscht,
sondern vom Platz eines „offenen Raums“, eines „leeren Zentrums“, um das es herum
ein Ensemble von höheren und niedrigeren Kirchtürmen gibt, „in denen die Vielfalt
und Lebenskraft der rivalisierenden Konfessionen ihren sichtbaren Ausdruck
findet“, aber auch mit „Statuen großer Persönlichkeiten, deren Reformideal und ... wohltätige
Werke zum Gemeinwohl beigetragen haben“ (Martin 1996, 168). Neben dieser „Ah-
nenkommunikation“ der Architektur, die bislang kaum in die soziologische Betrach-
tung gerückt wurde (Fischer 2009; vgl. Delitz 2009), werden – bei aller Beschleuni-
Zeitvorstellungen, die Rhythmierung sozialer Zeit, sei es des Wochen- und Jahres-
rhythmus, sei es des Festkalenders, ganz wesentlich über christliche, ja konfessions-
kirchliche Sinngehalte markiert. Trotz einer wachsenden Kluft zwischen Kirchen-
kultur und Jugendkultur, die auch die Weltjugendtage z. B. der katholischen Kirche
nicht aufheben konnten, können christliche Sinngehalte sogar Bezugspunkte der ju-
gendlichen Musikszene, auch von Brauch und Sitte sein. Aber auch das Rechtssystem
kann, bis in das Strafrecht hinein, christliche Sinngehalte tragen, ohne dass deshalb
das Strafrecht selbst Religions- oder Kirchenrecht wird oder einer explizit religiösen
Legitimierung bedarf. Unterlassene Hilfeleistung gilt im deutschen Strafrecht (StGB
§ 323 c) als Straftatbestand und ist das in Rechtsform gegossene Samaritergleichnis
des Neuen Testaments, das ja eine Kernvorstellung des Christentums auf den Punkt
bringt, den Troeltsch (1923, 14) im Glauben an eine „aus Gott quellenden und zu ihm
zurückkehrenden Liebe“ sieht. Ein anderer Strafrechtstatbestand betrifft die Sünde
der Unkeuschheit und Schamlosigkeit, die vom Strafrecht als „Erregung öffentlichen
Ärgernisses“ (StGB § 183 a) auf den verletzten Blick in der Öffentlichkeit transformiert
und reduziert wurde (vgl. Saurer 1997, 219). Wenn die These richtig ist, dass sich die
Identität einer Kultur auch und gerade von der Religion her ergibt und Religion nicht
bloß irgendein Moment von Kultur, sondern deren Ursprung und Zentrum ist (vgl.
Assmann 2003), dann können selbst diejenigen Texte, die gestern und heute in expli-
ziter Negation zur christlichen Erlösungsreligion entstanden sind, ohne diese Wur-
zeln nicht verstanden werden. Ohne diesen kulturellen Kontext wird man wird viele Gemälde, die hier in Madrid im Museo del Prado aushängen, nicht verstehen, wo freilich auch ein Werk von Velázquez de Silvas „Las Meninas“ (Die Hofdamen) von 1656 aushängt, das für Michel Foucault den Übergang zur autonomen Kunst markiert, die sich von Kirche und Adel zu emanzipieren beginnt.


Entkirchlichung, Entchristlichung und Säkularisierung auf der Ebene der Einzelperson


**Abb. 2: Gottesdienstbesuch in ausgewählten europäischen Ländern**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>in %</th>
<th>W-D</th>
<th>O-D</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>GB</th>
<th>It</th>
<th>Ö</th>
<th>Pol</th>
<th>CH</th>
<th>Sp</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wie oft besuchen Sie einen Gottesdienst? (wöchentlich)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wie oft besuchen Sie einen Gottesdienst? (1-3 x im Monat)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wie wichtig ist Ihnen die Teilnahme an einem Gottesdienst? (ziemlich wichtig + sehr)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Quelle: Bertelsmann Religionsmonitor 2008, eigene Berechnung**

Trotz abnehmender Verhaltensgeltung kirchlicher Normen zur persönlichen Lebensführung ist daraus nicht auf eine generelle Bedeutungslosigkeit des Kirchlichen zu schließen (vgl. auch Ebertz 2003). Auf der Ebene der Person und des persönlichen Selbstverständnisses lehnt eine überdeutliche Mehrheit der Bevölkerung z. B. auch in Deutschland (73%–77% in Westdeutschland und sogar 54% in Ostdeutschland – die Aussage ab, dass „Kirche und Religion für mich keine Bedeutung haben“ (Ebertz 2004a, 18ff). Die Kirchen bleiben schon ein wichtiger Träger des Christlichen und Religiösen, freilich unter den situativen Vorbedingungen der Freiheitslogik der Einzelpersonen.

Abb. 3: Christliche Zugehörigkeit u. Sinngehalte in ausgewählten europ. Ländern

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>in %</th>
<th>W-D</th>
<th>O-D</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>GB</th>
<th>It</th>
<th>Ö</th>
<th>Pol</th>
<th>CH</th>
<th>Sp</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welcher Religionsgemeinschaft gehören Sie an? (Christentum): Alle</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gesamt-D: 77</td>
<td>Gesamt-D: 77</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcher Religionsgemeinschaft gehören Sie an? (Christentum): 18-29</td>
<td>Gesamt-D: 68</td>
<td>Gesamt-D: 68</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>„Es gibt einen Gott, der sich mit jedem Menschen persönlich befasst“: stimme voll + eher zu: Alle</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gesamt-D: 43</td>
<td>Gesamt-D: 43</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>„Es gibt einen Gott, der sich mit jedem Menschen persönlich befasst“: stimme voll + eher zu: 60+</td>
<td>Gesamt-D: 34</td>
<td>Gesamt-D: 34</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quelle: Bertelsmann Religionsmonitor 2008, eigene Berechnung

Dass die Zurechnung zum Christentum weder mit einer Zugehörigkeit zur Kirche, noch mit regelmäßigem Gottesdienstbesuch, ja nicht einmal mit dem Glauben an einen personalen Gott, wie ihn ja das Christentum verkündet, einhergehen muss, wird ebenfalls deutlich.

Ein belonging without believing und ein believing without belonging verweist auf eine weitgehende institutionelle Freisetzung auch und gerade christlicher Vorstellungen. Auch innerhalb einer Glaubensgemeinschaft zeigen sich zwischen den Ländern deutliche Unterschiede. So bleibt das Niveau der Ablehnung eines theistischen Gottesglaubens unter den deutschen Katholiken nicht nur weit hinter dem Ausmaß, das sich unter den deutschen Protestanten zeigt, sondern auch hinter der Ablehnung der französischen Katholiken zurück.


**Abb. 4: Aspekte persönlicher Religiosität in ausgewählten europäischen Ländern**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>in %</th>
<th>W-D</th>
<th>O-D</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>GB</th>
<th>It</th>
<th>Ö</th>
<th>Pol</th>
<th>CH</th>
<th>Sp</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Religiöse Selbsteinschätzung: ziemlich + sehr religiös</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Lebensbereich Religiosität ist: ziemlich wichtig + sehr wichtig</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Nachdenken über religiöse Themen: oft + sehr oft</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Interesse an religiösen Themen: ziemlich + sehr stark</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Jede Religion hat wahren Kern: stimme voll + eher zu</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Offen sein gegenüber allen Religionen: stimme voll + eher zu</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) Eigener Rückgriff auf Lehren verschiedener Religionen: stimme voll + eher zu</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h) Opferbereitschaft für eigene Religion: stimme voll + eher zu</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) Menschen für meine Religion gewinnen: stimme voll + eher zu</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j) Meine Religion allein ist im Recht: stimme voll + eher zu</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k) Meine Religion führt allein zum Heil: stimme voll + eher zu</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l) Glaube an Wirksamkeit von Engeln ziemlich + sehr</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m) Glaube an Gott ziemlich + sehr</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n) Glaube an Leben nach Tod: ziemlich + sehr</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o) Leben hat nur Sinn, wenn man ihm selber einen Sinn gibt: stimme voll + eher zu</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p) Leben folgt letztlich den Gesetzen der Natur: stimme voll + eher zu</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q) Gott ist nur eine Idee: stimme voll + eher zu</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r) Habe das Gefühl, Gott will etwas zeigen: oft + sehr oft</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s) Habe das Gefühl, Gott greift ins Leben ein: oft + sehr oft</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quelle: Bertelsmann Religionsmonitor 2008, eigene Berechnung


Diese religiöse Konsensformel findet allerdings auch in den USA (65%) hohe Akzeptanz, und eine noch stärkere in Brasilien (78%). Die spannende Frage ist deshalb, weshalb in Europa – grosso modo – die Durchsetzung der Religionsfreiheit dazu führte, dass die Bindungen an Religion und Kirche zunehmend schwächer wurden, während die programmatische Religionsfreiheit in den USA und die Auflösung staatskirchlicher Monopole wie etwa in Brasilien zu ganz anderen Auswirkungen führten.

**Erklärungs- und Deutungsversuche**


**Varianten der ‚Säkularisierung‘ in Europa**

Dagegen habe sich die angelsächsische Mission bei den deutschen und nordischen Germanenstämmen „der Strategie der Christianisierung von oben“ bedient und bei diesen Völkern ein „kollektives Trauma“ hinterlassen, „das sich langfristig, wenn nicht in einer Antipathie gegen die christliche Religion überhaupt, so doch in einer distanzierten Haltung zur Römischen Kirche niederschlug“. Ähnlich spät wie in Norwegen, nämlich im 10. Jahrhundert, aber nicht per königlichem Dekret und Gewalteinsatz, sondern als tiefgreifendes Werk irischschottischer Mönche, „traten die Polen zum katholischen Glauben über“. 


Kirche und Staat wie in Deutschland, noch zu einer einseitigen Identifizierung mit der einen oder anderen Seite, wie dies seit der Aufklärung in Frankreich der Fall war, gekommen“. So sei in Italien das Verhältnis zwischen der Kirche und ihren ideologischen Gegnern im Unterschied zu Frankreich oder Spanien „viel freundschaftlicher, wie in humoristischer Weise die Filme über Don Camillo und Peppone zeigen“ (Höllinger 2009, 466). Ähnlich wie in Italien bildete die Kirche in Polen „eine eingeständige Gegenmacht zur weltlichen Herrschaft“, schuf eine „enge Bindung ... an Rom“, was die kirchliche „Unabhängigkeit von den polnischen Königen und Fürsten“ gestärkt habe. So habe sich die „gesellschaftliche Stellung der Kirche in Irland, Polen und Italien ... im Mittelalter in wesentlichen Punkten vom germanischen Landeskirchenum“ unterschieden, indem sich die Kirche als eine Institution etablierte, „die zwar mit der weltlichen Herrschaft kooperierte, zu dieser aber eine kritische Distanz hielt“ (Höllinger 1996, 258f). In denjenigen katholischen Ländern, wo die Kirche nicht – wie in Polen oder Irland – „die symbolische Institution nationaler Integration gegenüber einer illegitimen äußeren Macht ist“, sondern – wie in Frankreich oder Spanien oder auch Tschechien – eine „Institution, die mit einem illegitimen Nationalstaat verbunden“ war (Casanova 2007, 331), ist Kirchlichkeit, Christlichkeit und darüber auch Religion weitgehend diskreditiert.


**Literatur**


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Secularisation, De-Christianisation or De-Ecclesiasticalization? 
A Sociological Religious Perspective

The religious exception?

Well over one hundred years ago, clever statisticians calculated that the statistical focal point of Christianity – which once emanated from Jerusalem and shifted westwards and northwards – reached Madrid, our present-day meeting place. The statistical focal point of the gravitation of all Christians was here around the year 1900. In the past one hundred years, this statistical focal point shifted further and further away from Madrid southwards and to the east with the expansion of the Christian churches in Africa and Asia. If one looks back a few centuries and considers the European past, then depending on the region and culture, the majority of the population in most European countries belonged to certain religions, primarily ‘Christianity’ or Christian denominations. If one looks ahead, then it can be seen that not only the statistical focal point will ‘ultimately’ become a thing of the past, but this religious legacy shall no longer be worth a reference in the European constitution: ‘Christianity’ no longer seems to have a majority political appeal. And “all over Europe politicians risk their career if they make themselves protagonists of pontifical notions of marriage, family, abortion, contraception and homosexuality” (Drobinski 2005). If one considers the contemporary Europe from the global perspective of astronautics, then this part of the world seems to have become “the only truly secular continent on the Earth” (Martin 1996, 170) – not only in contrast to North America, but also to Latin America, Africa, India and the Islamic world. Seen in the global context, Europe evidently represents a religious exception. However, if one takes the bird’s eye perspective and looks at Germany, for instance, it is hardly disputable that this country with its strident religious differences between West and East Germany has even become a religious special case in the European exception (Meulemann 2004). But from the bird’s eye perspective, does not every European country – in the East as well as in the West – prove to be a special case? And is Catholicism or Protestantism or Islam in West Germany also not a (respectively) different case than – let’s say, for instance – in Italy or in Poland or in Sweden or in Great Britain or in East Germany?
If one attempts to define the European countries in the degree of religious affiliation and the subjective religiosity of their population by falling back on generally accessible data sources – on the basis of the European Value Studies of the European Value Systems Study Group (www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu; www.issp.org; www.atlasofeuropeanvalues.eu; www.worldvaluessurvey.org [Zugriff: 25.05.2010]) – in an initial access, then quite generally speaking, Ireland, Italy, Croatia, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Romania and Cyprus prove to be the strongest ‘religious’ countries, whereas East Germany and the Czech Republic are ranked on the other end of the scale. With the exception of laically characterised France, nevertheless the ‘oldest daughter of Christendom’, the populations of the countries with dominance of the Catholic partial tradition of Christianity (in addition to Ireland, Italy and Poland, also Austria, Spain, Portugal, Croatia, Slovenia, Slovakia and Lithuania) and the ‘orthodox’ tradition (Greece, Bulgaria and Romania) are more strongly religiously oriented than the ‘Protestant’ and – with the exception of comparably highly religious Switzerland – the mixed-denominational countries (The Netherlands; West Germany). That is why a religious and denominational plurality – i.e. also an intra-religiously and intra-denominationally fissured plurality – is a further important feature of the religious landscape in Europe.

But this feature of religious plurality as such no longer differentiates Europe from other continents, and can therefore also not be a decisive reason for the fact that Europe has become a religious exception, particularly since freedom of religion and pluralistic competition of religions in the USA is virtually regarded as religiously vitalising. Of course, it has to be pointed out that in Poland, Italy, Portugal and Ireland, but also in Croatia, Lithuania and Romania, the weakly characterised religious plurality does not particularly weaken the (high) rates of religiosity, and does not particularly strengthen the strong religious plurality, for instance in Great Britain or in The Netherlands. However, other religiously largely homogeneous monopolistic circumstances, as we come upon them in the Scandinavian countries, show that they may not be capable of preventing a massive weakening of religiosity. Based on what has been stated, it can also be hardly argued – as an economic theory of religion suggests (cf. Stark 2000) – that religious vitality generally increases with the number of religious offerings and the liberalisation of religious competition (cf. Pollack 2008, 42f; Casanova 2007, 333f). Restricted as well as developed religious competition may not particularly make Europe a religious exception. But also outside Europe it would be plausible that religiosity and modernity must not exclude each other; after all, the USA is undoubtedly a “religiously highly vital modern society” (Joas 2007, 361).
A secular continent?

Before we look into the causal question regarding why of all places Europe, from where Christianity became a world religion, has become the ‘only truly secular continent’, the concept of ‘secularisation’ first has to be differentiated, at least in accordance with the dimensions:

- **De-ecclesiasticalization** as the declining normative obligation of specific ecclesiastical influence and involvement expectations
- **De-Christianisation** as the disassociation of specific Christian meaning, and
- **Secularisation** as the loss of the meaning of religions and religiosity altogether

These three dimensions point out that neither religions in Christianity and the religious aspect merge into the Christian aspect, nor do Christianity and the Christian aspect merge into the ecclesiastical realm. Christianity – to which 2.1 billion people worldwide can be seen as belonging to, and which has also and particularly in Europe received competition through ‘foreign religions’ – has been differentiated on various levels in the course of its history. Certainly many meanings of Christianity are on the organisational level, i.e. “experienced and learned in a special social context defined as the Church (Gabriel 1996, 140f). That is why in the following we will cite corresponding ecclesiastical indicators (affiliation; faith; belief; attending church service; type of congregation) in order to enable a comparison between the various European countries.

However, the meanings of Christianity cannot be constrained to the ecclesiastical realm of organisation. Indeed, in a certain way the Reformation also particularly led to a “Christian emancipation from the Church”, with which the foundation was laid for the “formation of a secular Christianity” (Rendtorff 1967, 225). Accordingly, de-ecclesiasticalization does not have to be associated with De-Christianisation. At the same time, Christian aspects are not only consolidated in ecclesiastically-shaped social structure, but also as sect, Free Church, movement and mysticism (cf. Troeltsch 1923, 967ff). For instance, individuals can perceive themselves as Christians without feeling as if they belong to a Christian community or having to participate in it. In addition, Christian meanings not only transcend the organised boundaries of religion in terms of the individual. Christian meanings are also adopted in various ways into societal cultural patterns – into family image, understanding of welfare production, even in classical music and modern pop culture. For instance, the question pertaining to the De-Christianisation of Europe could be embraced in the dimensions of subjective identification with Christianity and of belief in a personal God who has become Man.
If one seeks to define the extent of ‘secularisation’ in a narrower sense, this cannot be comprehended solely via the processes of de-ecclesiasticalization and De-Christianisation. On the contrary, one would have to determine whether and to what extent the “belief in a transcendental reality” as the “core of religion” (Meulemann 2009, 692) is oriented towards coexistence in the European countries and is also possibly superimposed, permeated or supplanted by secular world views. In addition, the question pertaining to the secularisation of Europe could also be determined via the decline in religious affiliation, the extent of belief in a transcendental world (the hereafter, God, wonders), religious experiences and religious self-description.

Subsequent to the previous considerations, one will also have to differentiate according to various levels (cf. Luckmann 1988, 38.), i.e. according to whether processes of de-ecclesiasticalization, De-Christianisation and/or secularisation in the narrower sense are consummated in the convictions, practices and identities of individuals, in the sustaining societal ideas, values, norms and social objectifications — i.e. on the level of culture and/or on the level of social structure; for instance, in the sphere of the state, the economic system, the educational system and the mass media (cf. Fig. 1).

**Fig. 1: Dimensions and levels of ‘secularisation’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Social structure</th>
<th>Culture</th>
<th>Individual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>De-ecclesiasticalization</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De-Christianisation</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secularisation</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**De-Ecclesiasticalization, De-Christianisation and secularisation on the level of social structure**

Characteristic for all societies to be qualified as ‘modern’ is the structural pluralisation and functional differentiation, i.e. the institutional development and separation of such spheres which are for the most part removed from the control of (a) ecclesiastical, (b) Christian or (c) religious standardisations. This is and remains “a universal and for all modern societies characteristic trend” (Casanova 1996, 182), i.e. in Europe as well as in the USA. This process, which in historical terms began with the so-called “Papal Revolution”, i.e. the Gregorian Reforms in the Investiture Controversy of the 11th and 12th centuries, and initially also led to the fact that henceforth “only clergymen were allowed to pass judgement on clergymen”
(Greschat 2001, 138), and also ultimately led – not least in view of the relationship of church and state – the Roman Catholic Church at the Second Vatican Council to take into account the doctrinaire recognition of the principle of freedom of religion and the so-called “autonomy of earthly reality” (cf. Ebertz 2004), without therefore having to give preference to the French model of a religious, Christian and anticlerical separation of state and church. This doctrinaire transformation had and has enormous consequences for the relationship of state and church in the Catholic countries of Europe, e.g. in Italy (cf. Punsmann 2004), in Spain (cf. Casanova 2009) and eventually also in Poland (cf. Puza 2004; Zarzycka 2009), where there never was a State church (cf. Casanova 1996, 186), and the Church was not integrated in the central power complex, but embodied all hopes of the entire populace and a significant portion of the national identity in important phases of national history, when foreign entities held sway over the State (cf. Martin 1996, 162).

For instance, the multi-variant ‘disestablishment’ of religious institutions is expressed on the mental level due to the fact that clear majorities of the population in the European countries vote for a separation of religion and politics. For instance, they agree that the religious leaders “should not attempt to influence the decisions of the citizens in political elections” (cf. Osteuropa 2009, 112a). The populations of Belgium, Denmark and France, but also from Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia and Poland advocate this postulate, measured on a five-point scale (1 = yes; 5 = no), most decidedly (1.58–1.85), followed by the populations in Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Hungary; yes, even Turkey with the consenting second place (1.86–2.12). The populations of the younger ‘State church countries’ Finland, Great Britain, Sweden and Spain, but also Ireland, which does not formally recognise any state church, but recognises “the special position of the Holy Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church as Guardian of the Faith” in the constitution from 1922 (Art. 44) (cf. Höllinger 1996, 244) are located in a median position which still signals majority agreement (2.13–2.38). The differentiation of church and state, as it is also currently recognisable in the Lutheran-characterised Scandinavian countries, but is also subtly executed in Germany in the so-called ‘limping separation’ of church and state (cf. Ebertz 2002), does not rule out that the “churches operate as a public power” (Hahn 1997, 24; cf. Ebertz 2004a). In Sweden, where freedom of religion was first granted in 1952, the state church was disestablished in 1999/2000 (cf. Brugger 2007, 274; Foss 2003). In Poland, for instance, “even in the era of communism … the authorities were unsuccessful in abolishing all public manifestations of religiosity” (Mazurkiewicz 2003, 181f; cf. Luks 1997). The position of the Scandinavian “state church countries” (Hans Maier), where the Christian bishops and priests had the status of royal officials from the beginning of Christianisation on (cf. Höllinger 1996, 257), historically harks back to the starting point of the develop-
ment in Western and Central Europe, where the nationalisation of religion was evident in the Catholic as well as in the Protestant countries before the nation became a quasi-religion. With the increasing separation of religion as a central integrative power of the society as a whole through the state or the nation in Western and Central Europe since the 17th century, religion itself has increasingly become a differentiated functional area among others, a subsystem of the society, no longer a factor encompassing all other areas of life, even if it intends to do this by virtue of its claim (cf. Dorschel 1986; Sweeney 2007). Measured against this claim, the social structures of the European societies are to a large extent secularised and no longer require any religious system integration. Any religious community which claims to intend to bring all existential realms – economy, law, education, mass media etc. – under its religious auspices, whether it is the Roman Catholic Society of Saint Pius X (cf. Ebertz 2009) or some of the competing associations of an increasing number of Muslims, must reckon on being ostracised as ‘fundamentalist’ in virtually every European country nowadays.

The failure of the societal integrative function through religion teaches the bloody history of religion in Europe itself, but also the undramatic example of the current religious ‘special case’ Germany, where the majority of East Germans is strongly focussed at least on a secular and non-Christian basis. Not only in this example is it refutable “that the social integration of a secular state is founded in the religious commonalities of the citizens”; because the population of the former German federate states have been living together now for nearly two decades and “many of their political attitudes have converged, but their sense of religiosity is far apart. No matter what a social constitution if founded upon, it is not religion … It helps people in the search for their personal well-being. It is the most important incentive for social involvement … But it is not the cement of a secular state” (Meulemann 2004, 74). If nothing else, this is why the social integrative power of religion may also lose importance as the proportions of those who are not a member of any religious community increases in many European countries. In some countries, religiously uncommitted individuals already represent the majority of the population. After East Germany this applies to The Netherlands. In France, Great Britain and the Czech Republic, the percentage of religiously uncommitted individuals already corresponds to half of the population. In the meantime, those individuals who are not a member of any religious community in Latvia, Sweden, Hungary and Slovenia approach one fourth up to one third in demographic terms. And this also applies to Western European countries if one takes into account the respectively youngest age group. In Spain, for instance, every fourth person among the individuals age 18–29 and 30–39 is already without affiliation with a religious community (cf. Casanova 2009, 230). In Western Europe, individuals who are not members of a religious community already consti-
tute about 40 percent altogether, whereby a clear shift is recognisable amongst the generations: In one to two generations – among those over 55 years old (25%), those 36–55 years old (40%) and those up to age 35 (47%) – the percentage of religiously uncommitted individuals has nearly doubled (cf. Wolf 2007, 10). And in those East European countries which had a socialist form of government until 1989/90 and thus for a long time pursued a different policy towards religions and churches than the countries of Western Europe, about one third are not ascribed to a religious community – a group which is also increasing among young people in the course of generations, even if also clearly weaker than in Western Europe (27%; 34%; 36%) (cf. Wolf 2007, 10).

Ecclesiastical, denominational, Christian or religious elements can also serve less and less as a pan-European integrative power if several denominations and religions live on the same territory and the percentage of religiously uncommitted individuals increases so clearly in Eastern as well as Western Europe. So today Europe can “no longer be Christian in the sense that Adenauer, Schumacher and De Gasperi envisioned if this Christian Europe was not already more cipher than vision at that time. And much less can simply be Catholic” as Matthias Drobinski (2005) formulated on the papal election of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who is said to have the absolute preference for “the model of a Europe (and a world society grouped around Europe)”, “that the Christian faith once again concedes the leading function of the early church dogma. In it the Catholic Church – transcending the politics of states and international organisations – assumes a leading role” (Häring 2005, 182). The social structures in the countries of Europe are therefore to be largely understood as non-ecclesiastical, de-Christianised, indeed as secularised.

De-Ecclesiasticalization, De-Christianisation and secularisation on the cultural level

The loss of importance of the church, Christianity and religion can also take place on a cultural level, but – unlike on the structural level – is not imperative in modern societies. Ecclesiastical, Christian or religious elements can serve regional and local identities in the modern European societies, but we must always also carry out our “life in traditional systems” (Leopold Schmidt), and are fatefully confronted with the life of our forefathers, with the legacy left behind by them. We are also standing in the context of the generations before us – whether we want to or not. This applies to the intellectual realm (cultural ideas) as well as the materially visible social objectifications (cultural objects) such as art, which like philosophy, science and religion are always also the custodians of collective memory. If one compares only the architectural design of the centre of a European city (for instance in Italy,
France, Spain, Poland or Germany) with the centre of an American city, this is not dominated by an imposing cathedral, but by the square of an “open space”, an “empty centre”, where there is an ensemble of higher and lower church towers all around, “in which the plurality and vitality of rival denominations finds its visible expression”, but also with “statues of great personalities, whose reform ideal and … charitable works have contributed to the common weal” (Martin 1996, 168). In addition to this “ancestral communication” of architecture, which up to now was hardly taken into sociological consideration (Fischer 2009; cf. Delitz 2009), the notions of time – with all the acceleration of technology, social change and pace of life (cf. Rosa 2005) – and also the rhythmisation of social time, whether it is marked by the weekly and annual rhythm, the festive calendar, and quite essentially marked by means of Christian, indeed denominational-eclesiastical meanings. Despite a growing gap between church culture and youth culture, which even the World Youth Days of the Catholic Church could not offset, for instance, Christian meanings can even be reference points for the adolescent music scene, also of tradition and custom. But the legal system, including criminal law, can also sustain Christian meanings without criminal law itself becoming religious or canon law, or requiring an explicit religious legitimisation. Failure to render assistance is regarded as a statutory offence in the German criminal code (StGB §323c), and is the New Testament’s parable of the Good Samaritan cast in legal form, that indeed brings a pivotal notion of Christianity to the point, which Troeltsch (1923, 14) sees in the belief in “a love emanating from God and returning to him”. Another statutory offence pertains to the sins of unchastity and shamelessness, which have been transformed and reduced by German criminal law as “creating a public nuisance” (StGB §183a) and public lewdness (cf. Saurer 1997, 219). If this thesis is correct, that the identity of a culture also and particularly ensues from religion and religion is not merely some moment of culture, but its origin and focal point (cf. Assmann 2003), then even those texts which were created yesterday and today in explicit negation to the Christian religion of salvation will not be understood without these roots. Without this cultural context one will not understand many paintings displayed here in Madrid’s Museo del Prado, where of course a work by Diego Velázquez from 1656 – “Las Meninas” (Maids of Honour) – is displayed. For Michel Foucault, this masterpiece marks the transition to autonomous art which starts to become emancipated from church and nobility.

One will be able to say: Europe, West as well as East, is to a great extent “Christian in the sense of tradition and culture, which more strongly defines the Europeans than they are aware of” (Szawiel 2003, 26). The sustaining cultural ideas – e.g. the fundamental views of human dignity, the authority of conscience, compassion and justice, freedom and responsibility – which serve as general orientation models and have been manifested in denominational-cultural terms in varyingly prepared wel-
fare-state forms of association (cf. Gabriel 2003; Kaufmann 2003; Manow 2008; Rieger 2005), are also confronted with Christian tradition if they can be supplied from other sources of justification in the meantime. The “mapping of a religious welfare state landscape of Europe”, undertaken in particular by Philip Manow (2005, 232), illustrates a persistently “strong anti-state programme” of predominantly individual-centred services of general interest in those European countries in which Calvinist-Free Church trends of Protestantism are characterised (The Netherlands, Great Britain, Switzerland). It refers to an anti-etatist, familialistic-ecclesiastical juridictional programme with regard to services of general interest in the Catholic, particularly Mediterranean countries, yet – as Ernst Troeltsch (1923, 13) has already aptly noted – to “the Catholic social policy primarily necessitates the subordination of the state under ecclesiastical aspects”. Manow also works out a central-state welfare production programme in the Scandinavian countries, which is characterised by Lutheran – and by no means Free Church – Protestantism.

It can be fittingly disputed whether Christianity has effectively enforced the value accent of the person as an individual and asserted their civil rights and liberties in the European culture. Considering the list of cases in which, for instance, orthodox churches position themselves to this day in more or less open contrast to questions of human rights (cf. Brüning 2009), the doubts will hardly go away. But one would probably have to concede that in the current ethical cultural struggle Christianity is still at the very least the publicly most vociferous power which attempts to oppose the tendency towards desubjectivisation, i.e. especially the utilitarian attitude, and to arrange the maximisation of general well-being in harmony with the rights of the individual (cf. Müller 1995, 167). According to Franz-Xaver Kaufmann (2000, 97): “If the churches today – particularly in the realm of human rights and in the struggle for social justice – seek to make a mark as advocates of the secularised holdings of the Christian body of thought, they are faced with the dilemma that this body of thought is no longer ascribed as theirs. Because these value ideas have become – fortunately, one would like to say – an integral part of a universally normative consensus; on the other hand, the churches will be perceived as somewhat particular and partisan entities. They will be qualified according to their meaningful claim as ‘religious institutions’, whereby at the same time religion is now no longer regarded as universally binding, but as a ‘private matter’ in a qualified sense”. A universal De-Christianisation (e) or a loss of the importance of religion (f) can by no means be spoken of generally in the – certainly only roughly here – view of the cultural level for Europe, at best one can speak of the tendencies of de-ecclesiasticalization (d) in terms of a normative church dwindling in many areas, i.e. even the integrative power of churches capable of imposing sanctions. The church is no longer the mistress of cultural discourse.
According to Rainer Bucher (2004, 358), this disempowerment of the church in Europe took place “from cosmos to community and eventually in the body. Christianity’s cosmically-coded implicitness was initially questioned by men such as Galileo, Copernicus and Kepler; the ecclesiastical access to the (secular) community was consequently lost with the bourgeois societal project in the 19th century, after the absolutism of the 18th century had already largely emancipated from ecclesiastical horizons of determination. But finally the churches still attempted, for example via their moral promulgation, to exert influence on the body, on its practices and techniques” — attempts which eventually also failed, dramatised in the deprivation of the woman’s body (cf. Aigner/Bucher 2004), moreover perverted through the emerging (not only in the USA, but particularly also in Ireland) “double and ambiguous catastrophe” (Haker/Ammicht-Quinn/Junker-Kenny 2004, 364) of sexual violence against children “under the protection of church walls” (Ulonska/Rainer 2003). The body-related pastoral access attempts with an eye toward the young and educated women grasped at nothing with regard to the young people and even the children, to say noting of the men and the nascent men. Someone, such as Cardinal Lehmann, who utters that “the girls at St. Peter’s Square who cheer the Pope (have) the birth control pill in their pocket: we have known that for a long time” (FAZ [Frankfurt newspaper], 21 July 2005), merely confirms this void in his own way. Catholic Ireland, which was well-known for its “extraordinary loyalty to the church” (and by way of comparison still also is) and created irritations as recently as 2009 through an amendment to the blasphemy law, has been for years heading for a massive acceptance and influence crisis of the Catholic Church, yet has “not so much lost its belief in God as rather its faith in the Church. Married Catholics perceive the prohibition of artificial contraceptives as inoperative and detrimental to family life. Catholic women feel frustrated and estranged in the patriarchal Church”; and for priests, whose number is massively declining for lack of new vocations, “celibacy has become a source of inner anxiety” (Hill 1999, 81, 85, 87). If one follows the results of the European Values Study (1999–2004), then – measured on a four-point scale (1 = yes; 4 = no) – faith in “the churches” obtains the highest values in Portugal and Romania (1.54–1.93), followed by (the Catholic countries) Ireland, Italy, Poland, Lithuania, Slovakia and Croatia (1.94–2.32). Among the populations of Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Sweden and Hungary (2.33–3.12), the mean values already reach the side of mistrust, and then obtain their most negative values (2.73–3.12) in Bulgaria, Germany, France, Great Britain, The Netherlands, Slovenia and the Czech Republic.
De-Ecclesiasticalization, De-Christianisation and secularisation on the level of the individual

The dwindling of ecclesiastical, Christian and religious convictions and practices is also not a necessary trend of modernity, but a shift of the definition of their obligation from the institutional to the personal level. But this dwindling – in contrast to the USA, for instance – is also characteristic for Europe, especially the flagging acceptance of specific ecclesiastical-Christian convictions and normative practices (g, h). Recent surveys (Wolf 2007, 10) show that “only one fourth of West Europeans can be counted” among the so-called ecclesiastical ‘core members’, i.e. among those who participate in a church service at least one to three times a month, whereby the percentage of these practicing churchgoers has halved within one to two generations to the effect that it is unlikely that the youngest will reach the same degree of churchliness as their parents and grandparents. In contrast, four in ten people can be counted among the ‘core members’ in the countries of the former communist Eastern Bloc, whereby “no strong age trend is observable” (Wolf 2007, 10). However, a clear differentiation can be made within the Western and Eastern European countries according to the frequency of churchgoers, and even in the two countries with the highest frequency of churchgoing – Ireland and Poland – there is momentum in this ecclesiastical practice. Meanwhile in Ireland, where attending church service on Sunday has already declined from 81 percent (1990) to a comparatively still extraordinarily high level of 57 percent in 1999, religion is becoming “a personal choice within a certain social system instead of an unequivocal affiliation with an institution dominating individuals and the community”, as the Irish sociologist Raphael Gallagher writes (quoted in Hill 1999, 88; cf. Szawiel 2003, 23). And also in Poland “the inclination to develop private and selective belief systems in which unacceptable components of church doctrine will be discarded or reinterpreted” (Zarzycka 2009, 226) is becoming evident. After Ireland, Italy, Switzerland, Portugal, Spain and Austria are among the countries in Western Europe with above-average church attendance rates; and The Netherlands, Great Britain, West Germany, France, Cyprus, Sweden, Denmark and Norway are to be counted among the countries with below-average church attendance rates. After Poland, Slovakia is among the countries in Eastern Europe with above-average church attendance rates; and Slovenia, Hungary, Latvia, Czech Republic and East Germany are among the countries with below-average church attendance rates. If it would also be compiled only in a smaller selection of European countries, the current data of the Bertelsmann Religion Monitor, which also asks about the subjective importance of participation in church service, largely confirm this distribution and what has been said thus far about the ecclesiastical core members (cf. Fig. 2).
**Fig. 2: Attending church service in selected European countries**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>in %</th>
<th>WG</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How often do you attend a church service? (weekly)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you attend a church service? (1-3 times a month)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How important is participation in a church service to you? (quite important + very)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Bertelsmann Religions Monitor 2008, own calculation*

Despite declining behavioural validity of ecclesiastical norms regarding personal lifestyle, a general insignificance of ecclesiastical matters cannot be concluded (cf. also Ebertz 2003). On the level of the individual and personal self-image, a blatantly obvious majority of the population, e.g. in Germany (73%)–77% in West Germany and even 54% in East Germany – also reject the statement that “church and religion have no importance for me” (Ebertz 2004a, 18ff). Yet the churches remain an important means of Christian and religious aspects, certainly under the situational preconditions of the individual's liberal logic.

**Abb.3: Christian affiliation and meanings in selected European countries**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>in %</th>
<th>WG</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Which religious community do you belong to (Christianity): all</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which religious community do you belong to (Christianity): 60+</td>
<td>All of Germany: 77</td>
<td>All of Germany: 77</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which religious community do you belong to (Christianity): 18-29</td>
<td>All of Germany: 68</td>
<td>All of Germany: 68</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“There is a God who deals with every human being personally”: agree fully + more likely: all</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“There is a God who deals with every human being personally”: agree fully + more likely: 60+</td>
<td>All of Germany: 43</td>
<td>All of Germany: 43</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“There is a God who deals with every human being personally”: agree fully + more likely: 18-29</td>
<td>All of Germany: 34</td>
<td>All of Germany: 34</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Bertelsmann Religion Monitor 2008, own calculation*
On the one hand, it is conspicuous that most people in the European countries still ascribe to Christianity, but in the data of the Religion Monitor it is also clear that this attribution is declining in the succession of generations, in some countries – such as France or Great Britain – massively (cf. Fig. 3). It is also clear that the attribution to Christianity heralds does not have to be associated with an affiliation with the church or regular church service attendance, and does not even have to be associated with the belief in a personal God as Christianity proclaims.

A ‘belonging without believing’ and a ‘believing without belonging’ refers to a largely institutional liberation also and particularly in terms of Christian beliefs. Clear differences within a religious community are also shown among the countries. For instance, the level of rejection of a theistic belief in God among German Catholics remains not only far behind the extent that is shown among German Protestants, but also behind the rejection of French Catholics.

Although the majority of people in Europe still ascribes to Christianity, believes in ‘God’ – even if increasingly less in a personal God, as the churches describe him and Christian tradition conveys (together with Judaism, but also Islam) – in view of the individual orientations of the European population one can actually say that an increasing number – also and particularly young people – show a tendency towards ‘non-religiosity’ in an at least empirically recognisable sense, certainly not in equal measure in all countries, and there also emanating from varying historical levels. Aside from the mentioned exceptional countries (Poland, Italy, Ireland), roughly only every fifth person tends to assess themselves as particularly religious, although roughly every third to fourth personal perceives ‘religiosity’ as relatively important and expresses thinking about religious themes (cf. Fig. 4a–d). Theistic orientations which are already no longer supported by majorities in the young generations of Europeans will be replaced, as seen – neither through pantheistic nor, as can be seen in Fig. 4g – by syncretistic orientations: only up to one third reveals that for themselves it harks back to teachings of various religious traditions, although the majority – also in countries with a monopolistic religious situation and even in East Germany – is open-minded and tolerant towards all religions and presumes a veritable core in every religion (cf. Fig. 4e, f). However, such statements from population majorities speak less for irreligiosity or individual syncretism than for a relativising and distant friendliness towards religion. This thesis is also supported due to the fact that all items which refer to a rather intact exclusionist understanding of religion – for which it could be worthwhile to make sacrifices and to win over other people for the sake of their salvation – will more than likely be rejected (cf. Fig. 4h–k). What some religious heads and leaders may lament as relativism because it is perceived as a loss of the missionary claim to truth, others may be capable of interpreting as achievements of civilisation, which is compatible with the ideas of freedom of religion and peace in Europe and is a good prerequisite for the religious hospitableness of this continent.
Fig. 4: Aspects of personal religiosity in selected European countries

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<th>in %</th>
<th>WG</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Religious self-assessment:</td>
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<tr>
<td>fairly + very religious</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>b) Sphere of religiosity is:</td>
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<td>fairly important + very</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>33</td>
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<td>important</td>
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<td>c) Thinking about religious</td>
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<tr>
<td>themes: often + very</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>37</td>
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<td>often</td>
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<td>d) Interest in religious</td>
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<tr>
<td>themes: fairly + very</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
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<td>strong</td>
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<td>e) Every religion has a</td>
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<tr>
<td>veritable core: agree fully</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>52</td>
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<tr>
<td>+ more likely</td>
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<tr>
<td>f) Open to all religions:</td>
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<td>agree fully + more likely</td>
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<td>g) Own recourse to teachings</td>
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<td>of various religions: agree</td>
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<td>h) Willingness to make</td>
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<td>sacrifices for own religion:</td>
<td>24</td>
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<td>agree fully + more likely</td>
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<td>i) Win people for my religion</td>
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<td>j) Only my religion is right:</td>
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<td>agree fully + more likely</td>
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<td>k) Only my religion leads to</td>
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<td>salvation: agree fully +</td>
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<td>l) Belief in the efficacy</td>
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<td>of angels: fairly +</td>
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<td>very much</td>
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<td>m) Belief in God:</td>
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<td>fairly + very much</td>
<td>52</td>
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<td>n) Belief in life after</td>
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<td>death: fairly + very</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>o) Life only has a meaning</td>
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<td>if one gives a meaning</td>
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<td>themselves: agree fully +</td>
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<td>p) Life ultimately follows</td>
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<td>the laws of nature: agree</td>
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<td>q) God is merely an idea:</td>
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<td>r) Have the feeling God wants</td>
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<td>to show something: often +</td>
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<td>s) Have the feeling God</td>
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<td>intervenes in life: often +</td>
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Source: Bertelsmann Religion Monitor 2008, own calculation
Most Europeans – also in Poland and Italy – have an extremely naturalistic basic orientation (cf. Fig. 4p), but therefore do not allow themselves to be ‘deluded’ into an enlightenment-atheistic certainty of comprehending God merely as an idea and projection (cf. Fig. 4q). In terms of religion, more and more Europeans appear to be in a limbo situation of the inextricable melee of approval and doubt, certainty and uncertainty, security and insecurity in which one cannot say ‘yes’, because they can no longer understand the assumption of certain doctrines, and in which one does not want to entirely say ‘no’ in order not to definitively truncate the future (cf. Splett 1986, 8; Ebertz 2002, 40). What tendentially interlinks all Europeans – Catholics with the Protestants and with the Orthodox, indeed with the nondenominational – is the consensus in an autocratic attitude that “life only has a meaning if one gives it a meaning themselves” (cf. Fig. 4o). Meaning can apparently be assumed for fewer and fewer Europeans in nomocentric terms, but only developed in autocratic terms.

However, this religious consensus formula has also gained a high degree of acceptance in the USA (65%), and even stronger acceptance in Brazil (78%). Therefore the suspenseful question is why the implementation of freedom of religion in Europe – roughly speaking – led to the fact that the ties to religion and church have become increasingly weaker, whereas the programmatic freedom of religion in the USA and the dissolution of state church monopolies such as in Brazil led to very different ramifications.

Attempts at explanation and interpretation

The frequently mentioned explanation for the change of religious, Christian and ecclesiastical attitudes in modern society such as urbanisation, industrialisation (workforce) and increased education, for instance in the USA, appear either not at all or only weakly as debilitating to ‘religiosity’. And even farmers in the Scandinavian countries or in Great Britain or in Hungary are able to show below-average churchliness (cf. Höllinger 1996, 265; Máté-Tóth 2004). The competition of religions and world views or – the contrary – the monopolistic position of a religion also seem to be less debilitating in terms of religiosity and churchliness. In contrast, the more recent religious-sociological discussion essentially initiated by David Martin and international comparative research more likely following reasons for the level of churchliness, Christianity and religiosity and their effective change, formulated as follows in theses:

1. Above all, a “unique plexus of historical features and circumstances” (Szawiel 2003, 24; cf. Höllinger 2009, 461) specific to each country determines the level of churchliness, Christianity and religiosity.
2. In this respect, Europe has a special position in the transition to modernity; since this transition which “made the disruption of the plexus of religion and society inevitable over the course of centuries” (Martin 1996, 170) started here. Last but not least, “the religious institutions in Europe were so strongly anchored in a monopoly position and so extensively integrated in the plexus of old societal structures that a seamless continuity of religion was impossible with the upheaval of these institutions and structures” (Martin 1996, 170; cf. also Casanova 1996, 185f).

3. In Europe, particularly Western Europe, forms of ‘mythical’, ‘mystical’ and ‘magical’ religiosity were combated quite early (cf. Fögen 1997) – unlike in Brazil, for instance – through Christianity, which Augustine already understood as a doctrine, in which cognition and enlightenment became religion (cf. Ratzinger 1954, 265ff), also in cooperation with the political powers, or transformed on the part of the church and monopolised through the priests and eventually consistently marginalised through the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, if not eradicated, so that a largely de-sensualised, “austere, purified” format of religion emerged, which lacked something wherein “the actual source of religiosity lay for many people” (Höllinger 2009, 468).

4. The significance of the Enlightenment, especially anticlerical enlightenment movements, which were only weakly pronounced in the USA, for instance, then appears to be important: “The antithesis of secular humanism – fundamentalism in the USA – is a harmless matter in comparison with the downright war between church supporters and church opponents in France or Spain” (Martin 1996, 163, 176).

5. Anticlerical socialist movements, which were likewise only weakly pronounced in the USA, also have great significance. Unlike there, “a continuous struggle between the supporters of the monopoly of the established church and their opponents came about. In general, a withdrawal of large societal groups from ecclesiastical life came about on a massive scale in Europe with the consequences of the Industrial Revolution, first and foremost among the radical middle classes and the working class massed-together in the industrial cities, but also in parts of the rural population” (Martin 1996, 161f).

6. Where “the classic conflict of the Romance countries of Europe between clerical and anticlerical forces” (Martin 2007, 446; also with reference to Mexico) brought the latter to power as “counter-elites”, this had resulted in “antireligious measures”: “In the relatively small and centralised countries of Europe
this brought about more than would have ever been possible in the United States. Since the media and the educational system were just as centrally controlled as the apparatus of state, an anticlerical elite coming to power was able to bear arms which were once at the disposal of the religious establishment” (Martin 1996, 163) — one reason which can also be cited historically later, in the 20th century, as an explanation of the en masse de-ecclesiasticalization in some Eastern European countries, particularly in the GDR and in Czechoslovakia. “So an enlightened state leadership was in a position to seriously construct ecclesiastical life – or at least, as in Scandinavia, to take over the existing state church system … In Protestant countries … the church can be co-opted by friendly or culturally contiguous semi-secular elites so that it will be hollowed out from within, while it renders the most varying services for the state and the community — until one day it has to recognise that it no longer has any active members or its own content” (Martin 1996, 163).

7. The possibly decisive factor is “apparently whether a pre-existing religious institution will be officially included in the central power complex” (Martin 1996, 164), i.e. the “conjunction of a central religious institution with the core areas of the societal power” (Martin 1996, 165). This thesis is also indirectly corroborated through the European exceptional countries Italy, Ireland and Poland (cf. Kriedte 1997).

Variants of ‘secularisation’ in Europe

Of course, further differentiations must be made according to culturally specific variants of secularisation, De-Christianisation and de-ecclesiasticalization in the various European countries. One thesis to be examined in the international comparative sociology of religion and still hardly taken up is advocated by Franz Höllinger and is “that the change of Christian religiosity in modern Western societies essentially depends on which societal position the Christian churches took in the course of history in a certain country or society and which experiences individuals and collective groups have had with institutionalised Christian religion” (Höllinger 1996, 249). For instance, this experience appears more favourable in such countries where churchliness is also relatively strongly pronounced to this very day (such as in Ireland or in Poland) than in the countries where churchliness is relatively weaker or weak. Franz Höllinger (1996, 250ff) assumes that the fundamental decisions for the relations of a country with the church were already made in the phase of Christianisation and the centuries afterwards. The Christianisation of the Irish Celts is said to have proceeded quite peacefully and successfully, which is also due to the fact “that in the druids
these people had a priesthood whose lifestyle had similarities with that of Christian monasticism”. In contrast, the Anglo-Saxon mission among the German and Nordic Germanic tribes used “the strategy of Christianisation from above”, and left behind a “collective trauma” with these people “that was reflected in the long term, if not in an antipathy towards the Christian religion generally, then in a reserved attitude towards the Roman Catholic Church”. Similarly late as in Norway, namely in the 10th century, but not per royal decree and use of force, but rather due to the far-reach work of Iro-Scottish monks, “the Poles converted to Catholicism”.

According to Höllinger (1996, 255), even more decisive than the process of Christianisation was the compatibility with and the linkage of the Christian religion and ways of life to the religious and cultural traditions of the Christianised people, for example whether the “European people (were) willing and able in varying degrees to adopt the medieval monastic way of life in its full consequences, i.e. under actual adherence to the demand of celibacy, on account of their own cultural traditions”. While doing so, the Irish monks could have positively continued the tradition of druidism, whereas celibacy was “completely contradictory with the previous religious traditions in the German regions and in the other Central and Western European Germanic regions”, which led to credibility losses of the clergy, since it increasingly concealed its sexual relationships before the eyes of the general public. According to Höllinger (1996, 252f), the sexual morals of the Italian clergy “could have hardly differed from those of the German clergy if one acts on the assumption of Boccaccio’s narratives.”

Whether or not the population of a country was able to establish a rather trusting relationship with the church also depended on the church’s relationship with the political power: the position of the church in the political system, the relationship between ecclesiastical and secular sovereignty, and the manner in which the church itself wielded power” (Höllinger 1996, 255). Indeed, the church was “a rich sovereign church” in Italy as well as in Germany. According to Höllinger (1996, 257f): “But in contrast to Germany, in Italy there was a stronger separation of ecclesiastical and secular sovereignty. As foreign people lured by the country’s wealth invaded Italy after the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, destroyed and plundered the land and established short-term political dominions, the church was the only institution which could provide the resident population with protection and give the country a certain degree of stability. In search of stable structures, the papacy replaced the Roman emperors [...], acknowledged as moral and political authority among the people.” Due to the “conflicts of interest and the field of tension between church and secular sovereignty, neither such a far-reaching identification with church and state as in Germany nor a unilateral identification with one side or another, as this was the case since the Enlightenment in France, came about in Italy”. In contrast
to France or Spain, the relationship in Italy between the church and its ideological opponents was “more amicable, as the films about Don Camillo and Peppone show in a more humorous way” (Höllinger 2009, 466). Similar to Italy, the church in Poland constituted “an autonomous countervailing power to secular sovereignty”, established a close relationship … with Rome”, which strengthened the ecclesiastical “independence from the Polish kings and princes”. The “societal position of the church in Ireland, Poland and Italy … in the Middle Ages differed in essential points from the churchdom in the Germanic regions”, while the church established itself as an institution “which cooperated with the secular sovereignty, but maintained a critical distance to this dominion” (Höllinger 1996, 258f). In those Catholic countries where the church is not – as in Poland or Ireland – “the symbolic institution of national integration vis-à-vis an illegitimate external power”, but – as in France or Spain or also the Czech Republic – was an “institution which was associated with an illegitimate national state” (Casanova 2007, 331), churchliness, Christianity and furthermore also religiosity is largely discredited.

Another point has to be followed in the ensemble of socio-historical explanatory variables, namely the relationship of the Catholic Church with popular religiosity. Unlike Central, Northern and Northwest Europe, the connection between popular and ecclesiastical religion is more strongly maintained to this day in Ireland, Italy and Poland (cf. Höllinger 2009, 468; Ebertz/Schultheis 1986). So the level of churchliness, Christianity and religiosity in Europe can only be understood from the historical dynamics of state, church, nation and popular religiosity specific to each country, i.e. from a constellation of conflict and sovereignty continuing to have a mental effect in the historical memory.

Certainly the topic of religion in Europe in the future will arguably be less and less “comprehensible if one merely considers it in the light of its own religious and cultural traditions” (Hahn 1997, 30). The growing number of migrants is indicative in a double sense of the religion imported by them. “At one point it is the culturally specific form in which an interpretation can be formulated for the immigrated groups and transcendence can be experienced. But on the other hand, it is at the same time an expression of the different cultural identity and thereby also a sign of unfamiliarity for the outsiders. This is particularly valid whenever new claims will be articulated or demands for integration will be rejected with this demonstration of foreign identity” (Hahn 1997, 30). However, Europe will probably also be no longer constructively configurable through the mere assertion of the respective national cultural format of the alloy comprised of religion and politics as well as religion and society. In my opinion, the new European cultural challenge and perspective pertaining to the alloy comprised of religion and politics as well as religion and society lies rather in the acknowledgment of the peaceful coexis-
tence of various religious (and non-religious) identities which respect the integrity and freedom of all human beings, the religiously committed and uncommitted, and serve these. Capuchins as well as Dominicans can provide a valuable contribution for this purpose.

Ich möchte eingangs zur Wiederholung die Begriffe definieren, mit denen wir uns beschäftigen werden. Anschließend beschreibe ich einige wichtige Aspekte unserer religiösen Situation. Schließlich gebe ich eine Antwort auf die Frage, die den Titel meines Beitrags darstellt: Bewegen wir uns – paradoxerweise im Bezug auf die Säkularisierung – auf mehr Anerkennung der Religionen zu?

Ich spreche dabei hauptsächlich von Westeuropa, aber bestimmte Fakten gelten für religiöse Entwicklungen weltweit: Man darf nicht aus den Augen verlieren, dass die Globalisierung auch nicht vor der Religion hält.

Säkularisierung und Laizität

Die „SÄKULARISIERUNG“ ist ein gesellschaftlicher Prozess, der vor ungefähr drei Jahrhunderten in Europa begann.


französischen Revolution hervorgegangenen Republik und der katholischen Kirche wiederherzustellen, und seiner Ansicht nach war dieser Frieden umso besser gewährleistet, je mehr die Interessen des Staats und die der Kirche voneinander getrennt sind, und je weniger somit beide Instanzen miteinander konkurrieren. Die in Frankreich erfolgte Trennung wurde schon lange vor dem Laizitätsgesetz von 1905 durch einen berühmten Satz von Victor Hugo auf den Punkt gebracht: „Der Staat für sich, die Kirche für sich“.


sich die europäischen Denkweisen erst in den letzten 30 bis 40 Jahren. Auf diese Änderungen möchte ich jetzt zu sprechen kommen.

Die Änderungen der letzten Jahrzehnte des 20. Jahrhunderts

Ich werde jetzt einige Aspekte unserer Gesellschaften beschreiben, die – sei es direkt oder indirekt – einen starken Druck auf die religiösen Veränderungen ausüben, da sie letzten Endes auch gesetzgeberische und rechtliche Entscheidungen auf der Ebene des Staates nach sich ziehen.

**Individualismus**

Ausgehend von den Vereinigten Staaten, wo die Bewegung bereits in den 50er und 60er Jahren ihren Anfang nahm, erstarke der Individualismus auch in Europa als eine Form der gesellschaftlichen, politischen, wirtschaftlichen und ethischen Eigenständigkeit zunehmend, um sich schließlich fulminant durchzusetzen – jedoch ohne die „zivile Religion“, welche die Vereinigten Staaten so stark durchdrang und zusammenschweißte (das ist heutzutage sicherlich weniger der Fall, siehe Vortrag von Robert Schreiter). Er ist die offensichtlichste Erklärung für viele soziale Verhaltensweisen, darunter auch für religiöse Verhaltensweisen. Achtung: Dieser Individualismus darf jedoch nicht als Egoismus des Einzelnen betrachtet und somit nicht als eine zuvor erst moralische Verhaltensweise verstanden werden. Er ergibt sich aus den äußerst tiefgreifenden gesellschaftlichen und wirtschaftlichen Veränderungen, die dazu führen, dass die modernen Gesellschaften und selbst die Strukturen der Modernität (der Arbeit, der Gesundheit, des Konsums, des politischen Lebens etc. ...) für den und gemäß dem Einzelnen erschaffen werden.

Eltern war, hält ein Kind heute seine Eltern nicht mehr davon ab, sich zu trennen und ihre eigenen Wege zu gehen. Mir reicht die Zeit nicht, um in dieser Hinsicht die Analysen der Gesellschaft weiterzuentwickeln, denn mein Thema ist vor allem die Entwicklung der Religion in diesem Kontext.


Man muss jedoch auch einen weiteren Aspekt dieser Entwicklung berücksichtigen, nämlich das hinsichtlich der Religion vorherrschende Nichtwissen und die diesbezügliche mangelnde Bildung ... aber auch, und das wird zu wenig wahrgenommen, die Krise des Atheismus: „echte Atheisten“ gibt es nur wenige, „positive“ Agnostiker (die „am Ende vielleicht ... ja“ sagen) hingegen in Hülle und Fülle. Die politisch-religiösen oder sozioreligiösen Folgen sind deutlich zu erkennen: Viele unserer Zeitgenossen kennen die Bedeutung und die Grenzen der Trennung von Religion und Staat nicht. Sie erkennen nicht mehr, wo die Trennung zwischen Politik und Religion verläuft, und auch nicht, was auf die Kultur und was auf die Tradition zurückzuführen ist, weshalb es in mehreren Ländern bezüglich der Sichtbarkeit der Religion im öffentlichen Raum des Staates oder außerhalb des Staates zu zahlreichen Streitigkeiten kam (Streit um das Kopftuch oder den Schleier, um das Kruzifix im Klassenzimmer oder im Gerichtssaal, Urteile in Familiensachen, welche kraft religiösen Rechts von öffentlichen Gerichten erlassen werden ...), oder auch umgekehrt der Streit um das Kreuz als religiöses Symbol im Klassenraum sowie vor kurzem das Verbot des Baus von Minaretten in der Schweiz). Auch die lange Zeit akzeptierten Grenzen zwischen der Wissenschaft in der Form, wie sie in der modernen Zeit entstand, und der Religion im weitesten Sinn werden unscharf (man kann gleichzeitig, und ohne dies als Widerspruch zu empfinden, chemisch im Labor hergestellte Medikamente einnehmen und für seine Heilung beten).


Ich komme auf das eben erwähnte Beispiel zurück: Der Streit um den muslimischen Schleier in der Schule, von dem mehrere Länder betroffen waren. Als erstes halte ich fest, dass die französischen, deutschen, niederländischen etc. Muslime den Sinn der Trennung von Religion und Staat kaum begreifen – vielleicht deshalb, weil

**Pluralismus und Vielfalt**

Es war schon viel von den verschiedenen Landesküchen der ganzen Welt die Rede, die man heutzutage zumindest in den großen Städten überall finden kann. Doch das gilt genauso für die Religionen. Die Religionen der Welt sind überall präsent, was sie dazu zwingt, sich zu begegnen, und wenn sie sich nicht tatsächlich begegnen, dann kann man ihre Begegnung am Fernsehbildschirm oder im Internet verfolgen, und man kann ihre Texte in allen Buchhandlungen lesen und ihre Zeremonien und Riten im Fernsehen ansehen. Gewissermaßen kann heutzutage niemand mehr vermeiden, eines Tages dem Gott der Anderen zu begegnen. Und diese Begegnung ist nicht immer unproblematisch, denn zwangsläufig relativiert die stets schwierige Begegnung mit dem Anderen die Wahrheit, die man selbst zu besitzen glaubt.


**Die neue Präsenz der Religionen im öffentlichen Raum**

Die gerade erwähnten religiösen Entwicklungen sind kaum sichtbar, da die Säkularisierung ihr Werk still und beständig, aber ohne deutliche Brüche verrichtet. Heutzutage ist leider genau das am sichtbarsten, wovon ich eben sprach: die erneut vorgebrachten identitären, kommunitaristischen, „integristischen“ und fundamentalistischen, sektiererischen Identitätsbekundungen. Man kann in ihnen harte oder sogar heftige Reaktionen gegen die gerade vonstattengehende Säkularisierung und Laizisierung sehen (denken Sie an die Rolle, welche das Gesetz, das die Eheschließung von Homosexuellen in Kalifornien erlaubte, bei der Wahl von Bush im Jahr 2004 spielte). Das, was man von der Religion sehen kann, entspricht dem, was auch die Medien sichtbar machen, d. h. zwangsläufig Skandalen sowie überraschenden und unerwarteten Vorkommnissen. Auf die Religion (wie auch zum Beispiel auf die Politik) wird
man häufig nur dann aufmerksam, wenn sie in den Medien thematisiert wird, und dann kennen viele auch nur dieses Thema.


Häufig zeigt man übrigens in Frankreich und in Europa mit dem Finger auf die Muslime, insbesondere die Musliminnen, wenn es um ostentative Symbole geht: Man könnte aber genauso gut auf die jüdische Kipa oder das „wieder hervorgeholte“ religiöse Gewand der katholischen, insbesondere der jüngeren, Priester verweisen ... Man könnte die Besuche eines wie ein Superstar gehandelten Papstes sowie die ihm von den Fernsehsendern weltweit verliehenen Sichtbarkeit und natürlich die Sichtbarkeit der Pfingstler und protestantischen Fundamentalisten sowie die Sichtbarkeit der Muslime erwähnen (aus einer vor kurzem unter jungen Franzosen durchgeführten Untersuchung geht hervor, dass ihre Vorstellung von „Religion“ sich im Islam erschöpft bzw. dass der Islam das einzige Stichwort ist, das ihnen zu „Religion“ einfällt! In welchem Sinn diese Identifikation zu verstehen ist, wäre natürlich noch zu erläutern). All dies führt zu Verärgerung, Fragen, Anprangerungen und manchmal auch zur Gründung von politischen Parteien, um dieser Bewegung Einhalt zu gebieten, aber auch zu einer Neubelebung des Antiklerikalismus und ausgeprägten antiklerikalen und antireligiösen Haltungen. In Frankreich haben die Medien und die französische Öffentlichkeit heutzutage häufig eine verkrampfte Haltung gegenüber religiösen Fragen. Auch die geringsten religiösen oder parareligiösen Meldungen (z.B. über muslimische Frauen, die sich in der Öffentlichkeit oder auf der Straße ver-


Man kann jedoch zumindest festhalten, dass eine Religion, die gemäß Grundsätzen erschaffen wurde, die sich vom historischen Katholizismus und Protestantismus stark unterscheiden – im vorliegenden Fall der Islam – sich nicht leicht in unsere säkularisierten demokratischen Gesellschaften und westlichen politischen Strukturen „überführen“ lässt. Gleichzeitig hat aber auch ein Bevölkerungsteil ein Problem mit seiner Integration in die Arbeitswelt, die Wohnverhältnisse, die Erziehung, die Rechte ... von dieser Absonderung sind in hohem Maße Bürger muslimischer Herkunft betroffen – ich meine damit „eingebürgerte“ Personen, die in den verschiedenen europäischen Ländern Bürger des jeweiligen Landes wurden. Schließlich befindet sich der Islam auch weltweit in der Krise, was dazu führt, dass sich die Muslime nicht nur schlecht auf ein äußeres Modell beziehen können, sondern diese weltweite Entwicklung hat vielmehr sogar zur Folge, dass die in Europa lebenden Muslime schwer verunsichert sind. Man muss sich vor Augen halten, dass heutzutage kein einziges islamisches Land weltweit für die europäischen Muslime als „Vorbild“ gilt.

Zeichen der Laizisierung und Zeichen der Anerkennung der Religionen

Ich komme jetzt auf die drei Punkte zurück, von denen ich bereits sprach, und möchte Ihnen aufzeigen, dass wir sicherlich vor einer neuen Herausforderung der Präsenz der Religionen stehen.


Was kann man hier also feststellen? Die Religionen und die Kirchen, insbesondere die katholische Kirche, widersetzen sich dieser Entwicklung zuweilen sehr heftig. Andererseits haben die Staaten, mehrere Staaten, die den Opfern gegenüberstehen und von diesen fast in Geiselhaft genommen werden, bereits neue Rechte eingeführt, als sie die hierfür erforderlichen politischen Mehrheiten hatten: Recht auf Eheschließung von Homosexuellen, Euthanasie unter bestimmten Bedingungen.
etc. Von dieser Entwicklung sind nicht nur die säkularisierten Länder Europas betroffen: Diese Fragen betreffen auch lateinamerikanische Länder, die weit weniger als die europäischen säkularisiert sind.


Aber das ist nur ein Aspekt. Der andere besteht, wie bereits erwähnt, paradoxerweise darin, dass die Staaten, welche diese „erlaubenden“ Gesetze erlassen, die den Kirchen (insbesondere der katholischen Kirche) missfallen, sich nicht oder nicht mehr in einer Phase der Ablehnung der Religionen befinden. Vielmehr bewegen sie sich auf eine stärkere Anerkennung der Religionen im öffentlichen Raum, oder der Religionsfreiheit im öffentlichen Raum, zu; häufig neigen sie dazu, den in ihren Augen legitimen alten und neuen Religionen materielle Vorteile zu gewähren. Die Staaten bekräftigen die Bedeutung der Religionen in der öffentlichen Debatte, ohne dabei jedoch eine bestimmte Religion zu bevorzugen – insbesondere ohne dabei die historischen Religionen und somit die christlichen Kirchen zu bevorzugen oder


Stronger laicisation resp. Secularisation of the Countries, more Recognition of the Religions?
A critical reflection

I would like to share with you a few recent critical studies put forward by religious sociologists on the religious situation of our time. While Michael Ebertz gave a very precise and much differentiated presentation, I am offering a view of the bigger picture, a more general issue. We are in a situation that is part contradictory and also very progressive. And so any unilateral and definitive speech must be avoided.

First of all, I am proposing to define, as a reminder, the words that we are going to speak about. I will then describe a few important aspects of our religious situation. Lastly, I will respond to the question on my intervention: are we, paradoxically to secularisation, moving towards a greater recognition of religions?

First of all, I am going to talk about Western Europe, but certain facts apply to religious developments across the entire world: it must not be forgotten that there is also globalisation taking place today in terms of religion.

Secularisation and “laïcité”

“SECULARISATION” is a social process that began around three centuries ago in France. It means that the different areas of society – politics, the country, social and economic institutions, law and administration, education, art and culture – separate themselves from religion or are removed from the influence of religion. These domains of reality separate themselves from the religious image of the world in which they were “taken” up until then and become “autonomous”, i.e. that they develop according to their own laws and according to purely profane criteria. The philosophical concept that corresponds to the sociological concept of secularisation is precisely the word “autonomy”. This process continues today. For example, the recent opening of shops on Sundays, in several countries in Europe, is part of the process of secularisation. Today, it is the consumer society that “pushes” or accelerates secularisation, whereas in the 19th century it was mainly the industrial society, asset production, urbanisation.
“Secularisation”, which is a social process that is often invisible or barely visible, must not be confused with “secularism”, an “-ism” word that is an ideology, a desire to actively promote secularisation. In French, the word “sécularisme” is used (often by religious leaders) to condemn “secularisation”. It implicitly assumes that there are enemies to religion, “secularists” that fight to remove society and individuals from faith in God – which is a mistake. In reality, the word secularism in English is generally the equivalent of the French word “sécularisation” (or Säkularisierung in German), and many translations are incorrect (I would like to point out that when a French translator sees the word “secularism”, they should nearly always translate this with “sécularisation”). In sociology in any case, secularisation is a “neutral” process that has been occurring and moving forward, even without opponents to religion, since the beginning of modern society in Western Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries.

On the other hand, secularisation, a social phenomenon, is not the same as “laïcité”, a political concept. Laïcité is above all a French word and it means the legal separation, institutionalised, constitutional, of religion and the State (in general, in Europe, this refers to the separation of the Churches from the State). In many European countries, especially the protestant countries of Northern Europe, the separation is carried out “smoothly”, without any significant conflicts. In France, however, this separation (since 1905) has been very contentious, almost seen as a State persecution against the Church, even more so after the 1905 law; as a result France’s neighbours – Germany, Italy, Spain – have used more “-ism” words to describe this French laïcité and underline its controversial overtones. (Laizismus, laicismo). It is only recently that we have heard words like Laïzität, laicità, laicidad being used. However, even if the French separation in 1905 gave rise to a lot of conflict between the Catholic Church and the State, and even if the line of separation is particularly significant, French legislators did not want to make laïcité an anti-religious ideology. On the contrary, they wanted, after a very long conflict, to re-establish “religious peace” between the Republic, arising from the French Revolution, and the Catholic Church – and they thought that the more the interests of the State and the interests of the Church were separated, the less often these two institutions would come up against each other –, and religious peace would be more likely to reign. The separation in France was expressed well before the 1905 law on laïcité by a famous expression from Victor Hugo: “The State in their home, the Church in their home” (“L’Etat chez lui, l’Eglise chez elle”).

In the traditionally protestant countries, as I said, the separation was generally made earlier, without any conflict, but while also instilling a strong religious freedom, it has often remained as it were incomplete in the eyes of the French. For example, in England, the Queen is also “Head” of the Anglican Church. Or in Denmark,
the People's Church (Folkekirche) is practically the Church of the State. In Sweden, the Church of the State was only removed in 2000. In the traditionally Catholic countries, where separation exists, the separation is often both more evident and more contentious. As you know, *stricto sensu*, the separation was only made in Italy and Spain in the 1970s and 1980s.

“Laïcisation”, is another thing altogether. These are the legal and political decisions made by States that have promoted and promote secularisation and the separation of religion from the State. It should be noted, once more, that *I am not talking about anti-religious or anti-Christian states here*. Here is an old example of “laïcisation”. In the 16th Century, Luther granted to civil authority, i.e. political authority, handling divorces, the right to live apart for spouses and remarrying. From this moment on, it was the State that was responsible for deciding who could divorce or not and under what conditions; the Church was just consulted. Luther had no doubt that it was a laïcisation measure, that would further cause matrimonial questions to be completely transferred to the State – while religious marriage and possible divorce would become a completely private decision to be taken by the couples. In fact, what did we really see happening? Two centuries later, in the 18th century, civil marriage became compulsory before religious marriage in several European countries. The States where today the civil state is still held by the Church it appeared as though anarchy reigned. Here is another, very current, example. Several European States have recently legalised marriage between homosexuals. We can consider this as a form of laïcisation in that religions in Europe, and in particular the Catholic Church, remain opposed to this legislation.

This very recent example gives us food for thought. Are we looking at a new era in religious and political relations? To this question, we can say this: since the 19th century, European States and all democratic States across the world have established, as I said, forms of separation from religion (incidentally, above all from Christian Churches), but, as I said, there are significant differences depending on the regions and the countries – in particular, differences between the countries in the South dominated by Catholicism and the countries in the North dominated by Protestantism. The 19th century and the 20th century were largely occupied by this above all political separation. Today, all European States, as well as the democratic countries that have European roots (USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand...), and also other democracies in the world have instilled forms of political separation between religion and the State. I will say it again, “forms of separation”, and so depending on their traditions and their history, each country has kept their own characteristics. For example, of the significant differences consists of the use, or not, of a private confessional teaching system or the teaching of the religion that is promoted, or not, in State public teaching.
However, despite this separation, up until recently, say the middle of the 20th century, the same fundamental values were shared by the State and religions. For example, the same concept of marriage, the same “marital ethics”, were shared by the Churches and the States. Take divorce in France. Since the French Revolution, divorce and thus remarrying was permitted by law. But until the 60s, even the laïque State, and even the supporters of laïcité in France, shared with Catholics the idea that divorce was not a good thing, and that on the contrary marriage derived to be supported as it was, at the end of the day, an important institution for the State. Marriage, or even the simple couple, basic cornerstone of society, couldn’t be indifferent to the State (especially as they ensure the existence of future generations of a country). For a long time, adultery was pursued by the State justice, and considered as a crime with penal sanctions if it could be proven. Why? Because the well-being of the family was of primary importance, and that the hypocrisy of a sustained marriage seemed preferable to couples getting divorced. It was better to live a lie, to keep up a false loyalty for the children, rather than separate. Overall, in the country, believers and non-believers shared these values: there was a certain consensus over what was just and good. We could make the same analysis with abortion, severely condemned by law up until around the 60s and 70s. It is only in the last thirty-four years that European mentalities have changed on this issue. It is of these changes that I would now like to talk about.

Changes in the last few decades of the 20th century

I am now going to describe a few aspects of our society that exercise strong pressure over religious changes, whether directly or indirectly, because they end up leading to legal and legislative decisions at State level.

Individualism

After the United States of America, where the movement started in the 50s and 60s, individualism, in social, political economic and ethical autonomy, has not stopped growing in Europe to strongly impose itself – but without the “civil religion” that immersed and consolidated itself in the USA (without doubt less so today, see presentation…) This is the most obvious explanation for a lot of social behaviour, and thus religious behaviour. Note: this individualism must not be considered as individual selfishness, and so should be taken as behaviour which is above all moral. It raises very deep social and economic changes that make societies more modern, the very structures of modernity (work, health, consumption, politics, etc.) are built for and in accordance with the individual.
We live in elaborate societies, if we consider (in a not very “separated” manner) their deep values, its concerns, its achievements, personal success, physical and mental health, with often, in our societies of hyper consumption, the idea that anything can be obtained and bought. Everything must be done to have a happy life in that, as they say, you only live once! For example, a real “objective”, received externally (from nature, tradition, authority) lost its credibility. What is important is staying true to yourself, being sincere, real. As such, marital fidelity, if it doesn't make you happy, is pointless (we could even say the same about religious life). And whereas before, the well-being of the children was more important than the well-being of the parents, today having children no longer prevents parents from separating to lead their own life. I do not have the time to develop these analyses of society on this issue, as I must above all speak about religious evolution in this context.

Religions have also been affected by this individualism. For three or four decades, the new advances in secularisation are called religious individualism, which means “bits of religion”, “à la carte religion”, “DIY religion”, incessant self-quests in new religions that have just recently been introduced, or rediscovered from old esoteric beliefs, that had been repressed by modern science. Peter Berger, a leading American sociologist in religion, has even spoken on this issue of a desire to “re-enchant the world”. All over the world we also see “reformations”, to new religious configurations, to the multiplication of personal itineraries. To the point where “religion” (its rituals, spirituality, etc.) is itself part of the “ingredients”, the resources used to find itself, to find personal happiness, this internal harmony, this self-healing that we look for. And so it is about finding well-being through religion! The Catholic Church itself is crossed by many currents; it is plural in fact, if not in law. The phenomenon of religion à la carte is not absent either. We can make our choice, even as a Catholic, in what the Church proposes or what it would like to “have” and what it would like to impose. Without being huge in number, adult converts are not unheard of and they are also linked to this hope of building or rebuilding oneself through faith. In this context, there are many “non-belonging believers” (i.e. those that do not belong to any particular Church or institution).

The consequence, or one of the consequences, of this religious individualism, is the difficulty in the transmission of the religious tradition: tradition no longer makes law, each person must one day decide to remain a believer, and the faith of those that remain is a personal decision and eventually a personal choice of their religion. Believers today are perhaps greater and greater in number, in this sense “converted”: the automatic transmission through families is (almost) at an end (there would be a lot to say on the “internal secularisation” of Christian families, as well as Jewish or Muslim families). Catholicism and Protestantism, and in general the so-called “sociological” religion is over – in France and part of Western Europe anyway.
To tell the truth, another side to this evolution must also be looked at, i.e. the
great ignorance and lack of education on religion. But also, we don’t see enough of
it, the crisis of atheism: “true atheists” are rare, the “positive” agnostics (those that
say “maybe although …yes”) proliferate. We see the political-religious, or social-religious,
consequences: many of our contemporaries ignore the sense and the bounda-
ries of the separation between the religion and the State. We no longer see where
the separation between politics and religion is, or what is picked up by culture and
tradition, from which many issues arise, in several countries, on religious visibility
in public places of the State or out with the State (issues concerning religious veils
or head scarves, crucifixes in classrooms or court rooms, matrimonial judgements
– in public tribunals – brought forward in virtue of religious law …, or, on the other
hand, cases of crucifixes in classrooms, and just recently the ban on building mina-
rets in Switzerland). Similarly, long accepted boundaries between science as it has
been constructed in the modern era and religion in the large sense are being taken
down (we can also refer to, and without any sense of contradiction, the chemical
medication in laboratories and … healing through prayer).

Sociologists and others talk of the “post-modern” or “ultra-modern” era. Mo-
dern, was the time of separations, limits. Post-modern or ultra-modern, or “hyper-
modern” …, is the time where everything becomes fluid, where space and time come
together and mix, where all differences are possible and at the same time where they
don’t stop passing, disappearing like successive fashions, and being born again in
another way.

Today, separations between public and private, between politics and privacy
are constantly transgressed by media, and even more so by media such as the In-
ternet, but also in reality. The philosopher Zygmunt Bauman spoke on this issue
of a liquid society, to talk of the general flow that marks our time and thus defines
what is the typical mark of our societies. In the same way, we could also talk of
“liquid religions”.

An example that we have just mentioned: the case of the Islamic veil in schools,
which has affected several countries. I note first of all that French, German, Dutch
Muslims etc. have difficulty in accepting the sense of separation between religion
and the State – perhaps because in the majority of European States this we feel it is
such a “given” that we feel we no longer have to explain it. Or, because this modern
separation has become so blurred that we can no longer see it. In France, in any case,
the case of the veil hit its peak in 2004, when a special law was passed to ban “con-
spicuous” symbols in schools (ban on head scarves and the veil in primary and se-
condary schools). I do not think that, at the outset, young Muslim pupils were aware
that they were breaching a principle of the Republic, or that they wanted to question
French laïcité: it was above all, in my opinion, an expression of identity of female
Muslims struggling to integrate and that did not see what the issue was. However, in 2004, the French State solemnly stated, in a special law, that religious symbols were banned in classrooms because places of teaching of the French Republic were public spaces belonging to the State. Above all they wanted to remind those that had forgotten what laïque separation à la française meant: in the name of laïcité, in fact, no religious symbol must appear in public spaces belonging to the State. Yet, while this law on head scarves was voted, it was the young French people in general that understood it the least. They did not understand as they simply did not see what the problem was, in a society where all sorts of things are allowed, and especially the freedom to wear what you want. “It is forbidden to forbid”: this is what the young generation of 20 year olds have remembered from May ’68.

Pluralism and diversity
What I have just said relates to my second point. The post-modern era is by definition pluralist, diversified, multiethnic, multicultural, multi-ethical: as Max Weber said, we are in the era of the “polytheism” of values. But a pluralist society, that is no longer dominated by a single ideology, a single religion, a single ethic, is also by definition faced with relativism, multiculturalism and collision or competition with other cultures. Globalisation has increased this pluralism, by accentuating the “determinisation” of languages, cultures and religions. Languages, cultures, religions, that were attached to a continent, a region of the world, to a country have emigrated elsewhere, created communities elsewhere. Where this has not occurred through physical journeys, they have been exported by the Internet.

We have spoken a lot about food from the entire world, food that we can find everywhere nowadays, or at least in large cities. But it is the same for religions. The religions of the world can be found everywhere, so they are forced to come together, and when they don’t physically come together, they come together through television and the Internet, and we can read their texts in any library and see their ceremonies and their rituals on television. In a certain way, no-one can no longer avoid meeting other people’s God. And this meeting does not always go well, as meeting another person, always difficult, puts into perspective the truth that each person thought they had.

Or rather, it has two extreme effects that are exact opposites. On the one hand it can blur religious identities, make them waiver, or lead to all the phenomena of “à la carte religion”, which I have just spoken about: Everyone takes what they like from the choice of all religious traditions. It is deep down a “liberal” relationship with religions: It promotes religious belief and search without belonging. But, the other effect – that we see every day – is the self-retraction, the affirmation of identi-
ties, communities in the worst sense of the word – i.e. communitarianism. To the global liberalism that defeats communities and identities, corresponds the search for identity at all costs, including through violence, in certain fundamentalisms. Personal and collective identity: It is today’s great problem (at the time of writing, a large debate was launched on this by the government itself!), and the responses that are given do not match up.

The new presence of religions in public

The religious evolutions that I have just spoken about are not very visible, as secularisation works in silence and continuously with no significant gaps. The most visible today, is unfortunately what I have just spoken about: the reaffirmations of identity, community, fundamentalists. Here we can see hard reactions, violent reactions, against secularisation and laïcisations (bear in mind the role played in the election of Bush in 2004, by the law that allowed gay marriages in California). What is visible in religion, is also what media make visible, i.e. the scandals, the surprising, unexpected things. What emerges from religion (like politics for example) is often what emerges from the media, and it is also the only thing that lots of people know about.

On these phenomena, we talk about the “return of religion”, of the desire of religions to take power again, influence politics, etc. It is true that this exists, especially among radical and fundamentalist groups. And today, there is clearly the sense of “identity” and “communitariasm”. But this is not the most important thing. The most important thing is the return of religion in public places, the religious visibility in public places, the visible expression that there are still believers in this society that don’t believe in anything. What is important, is the new presence of religions in public places, in particular with the visibility of religious habits and symbols, with the large gatherings, with the desire to speak in public, to exist in public, to not leave your land for others. Inevitably, this creates all the ambiguities that I have spoken about earlier: crossing limits between religion and politics, clothing, ritual visibility, etc. often perceived as aggressive by non-religious people and non-believers, and often also by believers. We also see unacceptable demands (for example those of Muslim women to be examined by female doctors only) – or at least unacceptable for a French laïque tradition that wants radical separation.

In France and in Europe, we also often single out Muslims, and especially Female Muslims, about conspicuous symbols: but we can also talk about, after all, the Jewish kippah, the religious robe of Catholic priests, especially the youngest ones … We could talk about the “superstar” Pope visits and the visibility that global television gives him, and of course the visibility of Pentecostalism worshippers and Protestant fundamentalists, and of course the Muslim visibility (a very recent survey of young
French people showed that the idea they form of a “religion”, the example that they have in their head when we talk of “religion”; is Islam! In which sense this identification must be understood, remains to be specified. All this causes irritation, questions, denunciations, sometimes the creation of political parties to resist this impact, regain anti-clericalism and strong anti-clerical and anti-religious attitudes. The smallest religious or pro-religious event (for example, Muslim women wearing the veil in public places, in the street) sparks outrage and anti-religious generalisations. Today in France, the media and French opinion are often tense when it comes to religion. In France, in any case, we talk of laïque “conservatism” (which perhaps corresponds to the radicalisation of “new-atheists” in the USA, the UK or Germany).

And on this issue, we must mention Islam in particular. I will just say a few words on this. It is an essential change in the religious landscape of several European countries. Is it because Islam poses problems? Is it because it is Islam, with its beliefs, its rules, its own customs? Or is it because Muslims are not well integrated in our society? I am leaving this debate – between “essentialists” and “historians” or culturalists to the side. We can at least admit that a religion built on principles that are very different to those of Catholicism and Protestantism – in this case Islam – is not easily integrated into our secular democratic societies and our Western political models. On the other hand, and at the same time, there is an integration problem of a population segregated in terms of work, housing, education and rights all at the same time. This is a segregation that largely concerns citizens of Muslim origin – i.e. “naturalised” individuals that have become citizens of these countries – in the various European countries. Lastly, there is a global Islam crisis which means that not only Muslims find it difficult to relate to a foreign model, but on the contrary this global development of Islam is causing deep concern for Muslims living in European countries. It must be remembered that, today, no Islamic country in the world really represents an enviable “model” for European Muslims.

Among others, Islam in general lacks an essential element for our modern states that have made the separation between religion and the State: qualified religious representatives to represent them against the State. This is such a huge problem in France that the Home Secretary (Nicolas Sarkozy), therefore, the French laïc state, has almost forcibly created an institution to represent Muslims: Conseil Français du Culte Musulman, which has been in place since 2004, but which does not work well at all. I would like to stress the following: “separated” from the State does not mean “unknown” to the State. Paradoxically, the more the religions are separated from the State, the more they have a need for “representation” and representativeness at State level. “The State in their place, the Church in their place”, pronounced by Victor Hugo, is an utopia or an impossible dream … and without doubt undesirable.
Signs of laïcisation and signs of recognising religions

I am now going to cover the three points that I have just spoken about, and to show that we are without doubt facing a new course in the presence of religions.

Contemporary individualism poses significant problems for the State, political parties, trade unions, Church groups; in reality all institutions of society that can no longer count on the commitment of citizens. All institutions suffer from this lack of commitment, or from the fact the commitment from those that are committed has become limited, limited in time. Even the “symbolic” institutions are suffering, like the family as everyone, not only women in relation to men, but children in relation to parents, claim their autonomy, their rights and their individual identity very early. This is one aspect. Another aspect is the very high demand for rights, new rights and, accordingly, the denunciation of all discrimination due to nature or history, I was going to say: to the fact of having been dealt a bad hand in life.

But the thing that is claimed above all, is the right to be different, equality in being different: All minorities and all persons belonging to minorities – whether they are natural (sexuality for example), historical (life accident, such as sterility) or cultural (belonging to a minority religious group, for example) claim for the same rights as the majority. In this context, especially the sexual minorities but, also, for example, couples that for one reason or another cannot have children, or people who are nearing the end of their life and wish to end their suffering, demand new rights from the State, “laws that permit” (I do not even cite the right to abortion, while this question is still current in Spain and Italy). We see it clearly: On the one hand, no “fatality of suffering” is acceptable anymore. On the other hand, we have moved on from “man’s rights” (or “human rights” Menschenrechte) to individual rights (Rechte des Einzelnen, Einzelrechte).

And so, what do we see? Religions and churches, in particular the Catholic Church, sometimes strongly resist this evolution. But, of the other States, several States, faced with victims, almost hostages of victims, have already instilled new rights when they had the political majorities to do so: the right to gay marriage, euthanasia in certain circumstances, etc. This evolution does not just concern the secularised countries of Europe: Countries in Latin America infinitely less secularised than Europe, are concerned by these questions.

Here I am talking above all about ethical questions. But this could also be an issue like the Sunday issue, with the shops open or closed. When the States make laws in this sense, thus when they change the right to respect the freedom of the conscience of all and the equality for all in terms of religious freedom, they are carrying out a “laïcisation” of law and politics. It is an act that goes in the way of the laïcité of the pluralist State, i.e. in the sense of its autonomy in relation to religious
regulation, the standards and laws of this or that religion, in particular the dominant religion (in Europe, its clearly Christianity or one of the Christian Churches). We could almost say that things are thus: apparently, the rights of man, understood as the rights of the individual, relate to religious roots, the religious passed. In fact, the States that do not have the French *laïcité* thus come close to the French *laïcité*, that gives equality to all religions, does not support any religion, and legislates without considering the religious past or present. This is one of the reasons, I think, for the misunderstanding and even the disagreement between the evolution of the European Union, that defends autonomy of the political and legal sector at the same time as supporting religious plurality, and on the other hand, the position of Jean-Paul II and Benoît XVI, who consistently defend the “Christian roots of Europe”. While here Europe is supporting a liberal and post-metaphysical position on policy and law, based on the rights of the individual and opposed to all discrimination, the Popes are defending a concept that refers to the cultural and religious past and the historical continuity of Europe, almost to the metaphysical destiny of Europe and its role in global history.

But this is just one aspect. The other, as I have already mentioned, is that paradoxically the States that make these laws that “permit” and that make the churches (in particular the Catholic Church) unhappy are no longer or are not in a period of rejection of religions. On the contrary, they are moving towards a rising recognition of religions in public places, or of the religious freedom in public places. They have a tendency, often, to grant material advantages to old religions and new religions that are legitimate in their eyes. The States state the importance of religion in public debates, but without emphasising any religion – in particular without emphasising and without giving advantages to historical religions, and so the Christian Churches (they even sometimes ask the Christian Churches to give up their privileges). It is true that they consider religions more like “spiritual families” than “roots” or “pillars” of the country. In counter to these advantages they are granted, the State also requests the religions to be “loyal” and to respect the legislative decisions that are taken.

The consequences of all this are paradoxical: in France in particular we reach the idea of “positive laïcité”, defended by President Sarkozy (but of course, vehemently refused by what we call in France the “laique camp” of the “laique tradition”, which includes the political left wing as well as part of the “republican” right. NB: *laique* here should be translated as “*laïzistisch*”, “*laïcisto*”, etc.). Inversely, States that have a recognised cult system – such as Germany – can relate to certain aspects of the French *laïcité*. Since 2004, an important German Catholic academic said that Germany was under a system of “positive *laïcité*”. From the Churches and religions in general, we are delighted with these good relations with the democratic State, but we are worried, especially on the Catholic side, as there is a compensation that I stated:
the State asks religions to accept the verdict of elections, and, therefore, to also accept political decisions that go against their known doctrine. In other words, the State asks them to accept “permissive” legislation or new legislation that go against their traditions: gay marriage, gay adoption, euthanasia, pregnant women. Basically, the Church is saying to them: that Catholics, Protestants, Jewish, Muslims speak for themselves, that they behave according to their own instructions, but that they accept the freedom to act otherwise. When all is said and done, this means the following: the Churches are respectable and respected, but we are of a Christian religious culture, and they can no longer try to regulate society, including their fundamental values. The Catholic Church is clearly first in line here, the Church that for years has been rejecting legislation on abortion, deeming that we are heading for “death culture” (Jean Paul II).

I conclude. What I have just said on the political-religious evolution in Europe, i.e. the evolution of relations between democratic States and religions, is one thing. The evolutions of society, is another thing altogether. What are we witnessing in 2009? We are in no way heading for or in a state of non-believing, but in the diversity of beliefs, we are in no way heading for the emptying of feelings, but facing the infinite multiplicity of sense, the “too filled” with multiple “senses” offered. This situation promotes a sort of religious anarchy – which means that we are living in a period of incredible religious effervescence. I did not talk about fundamentalists of Protestant, Evangelical or Pentecostal origin in particular, in the southern countries – Latin America, Africa Asia. Nor did I speak about the “Gospel of prosperity” that submerges countries like Brazil. It is an extraordinary phenomenon that will without doubt change the religious map of the world.

Without wanting to explain everything through social determinants, it is likely that this religious effervescence is deeply linked to the status of the world, a situation of our present culture. My presentation was just an invitation to continue, where we are, this work on understanding situations, which has always been a specific mark of grand Christian missionaries who wanted to spread the word of the Gospel. It is a way of participating in this “Logos” already present in the Gospel according to John, which the current Pope has praised so often.
Säkularisierungen im Vergleich: Europa und die Vereinigten Staaten

In dieser kurzen Stellungnahme möchte ich einige der Meinungen skizzieren, die vorgelegt werden, um zu erklären, warum die Säkularisierung in den USA nicht die gleichen Formen angenommen hat oder sich in dem gleichen Maße entwickelt hat, wie in Europa. Für ein reiches und fortschrittliches Land sind die USA nach traditionellen Maßstäben noch immer ein relativ religiöses Land mit einer dominanten Kultur, die von Religion und religiösen Diskursen durchzogen ist. Nur sechzehn Prozent der Bevölkerung bezeichnen sich selbst als Atheisten, mehr als vierzig Prozent nehmen Berichten zufolge jede Woche an religiösen Zeremonien teil, und neunundsechzig Prozent geben an, dass sie keinen Atheisten zum Präsidenten wählen würden. Tatsächlich sind die Religionszugehörigkeit und -Ausübung im Wahlkampf um das Amt des Präsidenten öffentliche Themen.

Sicherlich findet man bei den Eliten (vor allem an Universitäten) eine Kultur des Agnostizismus oder sogar des Atheismus, aber die Religion bleibt in der allgemeinen Kultur stark verhaftet.

Mein Beitrag besteht aus drei Teilen. Im ersten Teil werde ich die Gründe darlegen, die normalerweise dafür angegeben werden, dass die USA ihre Religiosität beibehalten haben, während dies bei anderen entwickelten Ländern (einschließlich dem benachbarten Kanada) nicht der Fall war. Dabei werde ich auch auf Unterschiede in Europa eingehen. In einem kürzeren zweiten Teil werde ich besonders darauf eingehen, warum der Römische Katholizismus in den USA eine relativ lebendige Institution geblieben ist. Der dritte und letzte Teil bietet einige Vorschläge dafür, welche Implikationen die Erfahrungen aus den USA für Europa haben können.

Warum sind die Vereinigten Staaten so religiös?

In der Regel werden fünf Gründe dafür angeführt, dass die USA eine lebhafe religiöse Atmosphäre aufrecht erhalten haben.


Die Religion stand nicht in einer gegnerischen Position zum Staat, wie es an vielen Punkten der europäischen Geschichte der Fall war.


Drittens wird die Religion in Amerika regelmäßig durch „Great Awakenings“ („Große Erweckungen“) erneuert. Historiker geben an, dass es in den USA vier Perioden der religiösen Neubelebung gab, wobei jede davon mit anderen kontextuellen Herausforderungen konfrontiert war, aber alle zur Folge hatten, dass man neue Formen der Religiosität fand, die an die Veränderungen in der übergeordneten Kultur angepasst waren und sich sogar auf die soziale und politische Kultur auswirkten. Alle waren durch eine emotionale Wiederbelebung des Glaubens gekennzeichnet. Die erste Erweckung in den 1730er Jahren machte die Methodisten zur größten individuellen Glaubensgemeinschaft und trug dazu bei, die Mentalität zu formen, die zum Unabhängigkeitskrieg führte. Die zweite in den 1840er Jahren brachte apokalyptische Glaubensgemeinschaften wie die Siebenten-Tags-Adventisten hervor und verschärfte die Debatte über die Sklaverei. Aus der dritten, die während der großen Depression und des 2. Weltkriegs stattfand, gingen die Evangelikalen hervor, die noch heute vierzig Prozent aller Christen im Land ausmachen. Die vierte schließlich, die in den späten 1990er Jahren begann, hat die „Megachurch-Bewegung“ hervorbracht, sowie neue Formen, wie die „Emerging Church“.

Diese periodische Erneuerung des religiösen Glaubens und der Glaubensausübung erfolgt in der Regel in Schlüsselmomenten sozialer Veränderungen in der Gesellschaft der USA und sorgt so dafür, dass die Religionsausübung sich ständig an die übergeordnete Kultur anpasst, in die der religiöse Glaube eingebettet ist.

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Fünftens und letztens sind die sozialen Werte der Amerikaner konservativer geblieben als die der Europäer. Mithilfe von Daten, die der Längsschnittstudie zu den europäischen Werten entnommen und mit den USA verglichen wurden, fand der Soziologe Wayne Baker heraus, dass die sozialen Werte in den USA sich in den letzten dreißig Jahren relativ wenig verändert haben, während sie in Europa sich beachtlich verschoben haben. Dies scheint der Fall zu sein, obwohl die Kirchenoberhäupter von einem starken Verfall sprechen. Diese Daten suggerieren, dass die Religion in den Vereinigten Staaten in einer Art und Weise beständig ist, die in Europa nicht gegeben ist. Das kann dabei helfen, besonders die dramatischen Rückgänge beispielsweise in Spanien und Irland in der letzten Zeit zu erklären.

Was man diesen verschiedenen Faktoren – historischen und soziologischen – entnehmen kann, ist, dass die USA eine Kultur entwickelt haben, die sich gegenüber der Religion freundlicher – und sogar ermutigend – gezeigt hat. Die Beziehungen zwischen Kirche und Staat und deren Folgen, die Erneuerung der Religiosität durch

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Die Katholische Kirche
Die römisch-katholische Kirche ist die größte einheitliche christliche Vereinigung in den Vereinigten Staaten; ihr gehören etwa vierundzwanzig Prozent der Gesamtbevölkerung an. Ihre Grade der Religionsausübung liegen mindestens im Durchschnitt der allgemeinen Bevölkerung und in einigen Instanzen darüber.


In dem dazwischen liegenden Zeitraum von 1924 bis 1965 erfolgte eine grundlegende Veränderung in der sozialen Zusammensetzung der Kirche. Nachdem die USA nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg, dank der G.I. Bill of Rights, die finanzielle Unterstützung für die universitäre Ausbildung ehemaliger Soldaten bot, erreichten die Söhne und Töchter vom Einwanderern einen Bildungsstand, der es ihnen ermöglichte, sozial und wirtschaftlich aufzusteigen. Der Wendepunkt des weitverbreiteten...


Zweitens stellten die katholischen Bischöfe interne Systeme auf, die sicherstellten, dass ankommende Katholiken nicht ihren Glauben in einer protestantischen Kultur verloren. Ansiedlungsgesellschaften begrüßten die Einwanderer an den Docks in New York und halfen ihnen dabei, ansässig zu werden, Arbeit zu finden und sie von der übergreifenden Kultur abzuschirmen. In den Städten wurden die Kirchengemeinden zu Sozialbehörden für die Neuankömmlinge und boten kulturelle Aktivitäten an, die ethnischen Gruppen zusammenhalten und halfen dabei sicherzustellen, dass ihre Kinder innerhalb des gleichen Glaubens (und innerhalb der gleichen ethnischen Gruppe) heirateten. Überall in den Städten gab es ethnische Kirchengemeinden – Gemeinden, die eher durch ethnische Zugehörigkeit als durch das Territorium voneinander abgegrenzt waren.

Indem die Katholiken auf der sozialen und wirtschaftlichen Leiter aufstiegen, wurden sie zunehmend in die allgemeine Bevölkerung integriert und sind in ihrer Politik oder nach anderen sozialen Maßstäben nicht mehr von der Mehrheit der Bevölkerung zu unterscheiden. Sie verlassen die Kirche oder entfernen sich davon in etwa dem gleichen Maße wie Protestanten der großen Glaubensgemeinschaften – entweder zu evangelikalen Kirchen oder Megachurches oder zu keinerlei Religionsausübung.

In der aktuellen Welle der Einwanderung sind ethnische Kirchengemeinden nicht mehr relevant, und die Populationen der Einwanderer sind oft viel weniger

ROBERT SCHREITER


Der katholische Soziologe Andrew Greeley stellte fest, dass dies der wichtigste Grund dafür ist, dass die katholische Kirche heute in den USA noch so lebendig ist. Sie hatte ein Sozialisierungssystem, das von der Vorschule bis zum frühen Erwachsenenalter reichte. Nicht jeder Katholik war Teil dieses Systems, aber eine ausreichende Anzahl machte es zu einem effektiven Weg, dass viele Menschen katholisch blieben.


Lehren für Europa

Gibt es Lehren für Europa, die es für den Umgang mit seiner eigenen Säkularität von den Erfahrungen der USA lernen kann? Lassen Sie mich einige Gedanken wagen:


Ein proaktives Priestertum unter katholischen Einwanderern ist eine weitere Möglichkeit für den Umgang mit der Säkularisierung.


Gleichzeitig werden konservative Formen der Religion typischerweise mehr Menschen anziehen, als fortschrittliche. Das liegt daran, dass sie Identitätsbedürfnisse ansprechen. Eine Religionsausübung, die Identität schafft, funktioniert im Grunde eher auf der Ebene der Durchführung (also dessen, was die Menschen tun) als auf der Ebene der Ideologie (also dessen, was sie glauben). Für die meisten Menschen ist die Religion eher eine Lebensart als eine Weltanschauung.

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Eine Religion, welche eher die Emotionen anspricht, ist typischerweise lebendiger, obwohl sie Gefahr läuft, kurzlebig zu werden.

Secularizations Compared: Europe and the United States

In this brief statement, I want to sketch out some of the opinions that are presented to explain why secularization has not taken the same forms or developed to the same extent in the United States as it has in Europe. For a wealthy and developed country, the U.S. is still, by traditional measurements, a relatively religious country, with a dominant culture that is suffused with religion and religious discourse. Only sixteen percent of the population consider themselves atheists, some forty percent reportedly attend religious services every week, and sixty-nine percent maintain that they would not vote for an atheist as president. Indeed, religious adherence and practice are public matters in presidential electoral campaigns.

To be sure, among the elites (especially in universities) one finds a culture of agnosticism or even atheism, but religion remains remarkably resilient in the wider culture.

What I present here is in three parts. The first part will set out the reasons usually given for why the U.S. has maintained its religiosity when other developed countries (including neighboring Canada) have not. In doing so, I will also allude to differences in Europe. In a briefer second part, I will look especially to why Roman Catholicism has remained a relatively vibrant institution in the U.S. The third and final part will offer some suggestions of what implications the U.S. experience might have for Europe.

Why is the United States so Religious?

Five reasons are usually given as to why the United States has maintained a vibrant religious atmosphere.

First of all, the experience of the European Enlightenment took a different form in the United States than it did in Europe, especially continental Europe. The history of the impact of Enlightenment thinking in Europe is complex. But a number of authors –Peter Berger and Grace Davie among them –have noted that continental Europe was heavily influenced by the French version of the Enlightenment, whereas

the United States was shaped more by the Scottish Enlightenment. The French Enlightenment, with Voltaire among its most prominent proponents, was more anti-ecclesiastical and anti-religious in tone. Religion and the Church were direct targets of their polemic as places of superstition and autocracy. This culminated socially in the French Revolution in 1789 and was reasserted in the French policy of laïcité in 1905. The Scottish Enlightenment, embodied in such figures as Locke, Hume, and Adam Smith produced a different stance toward religion (although especially Hume could be quite anti-religious). The general attitude toward religion was one of tolerance, with a Deist point of view on the existence of God and God's intervention in human history. This is reflected in the framers of the U.S. Constitution, many of whom were Deists (Thomas Jefferson chief among them). Rather than viewing religion in the new Republic as a matter of “écraser l’infame,” they developed in the Bill of Rights a separation between Church and State, wherein the State was to make no law about religion. There was no established Church and there was freedom of religious choice.

This created a different cultural dynamic in the United States regarding religion. With no established Church, a variety of religious forms and rhetorical discourses could take their places in the public forum. Religion was able to operate without state control. From the very beginning, the so-called “New World” conceived by the British immigrants had a strong biblical and eschatological patina. The “New” World was the New Israel, God’s elect people. It was a “city on a hill,” as Massachusetts Colony Governor John Winthrop put it in the seventeenth century. The “Manifest Destiny” ideology of the nineteenth century had eschatological overtones. Christian faith (of the Protestant variety) was completing interwoven with the founding narratives of the nation, and continues to inform public discourse about American identity (although since the 1950s, there is space for Catholics and Jews as well).

Religion has not found itself in an adversarial position with the State as has been the case at many points in European history.

Second, religion in America is more entrepreneurial than in Europe. Alexis de Tocqueville noted already in the 1830s how vibrant the religious landscape was in the new country. Rational-choice theorist Rodney Stark and others have noted that, since no Church could depend upon financial aid from the State, pastors had to find ways constantly to motivate their church members to worship within their churches and support them financially. As a result U.S. religion tends to be more sensitive to needs being expressed in the culture. This is especially evident in the proliferation of Protestant forms of Christianity: more than nine hundred organized denominations can be found, along with thousands of independent gatherings. The thinking here is that,

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if the churches have to support themselves directly (paying their clergy and maintaining their buildings), pastors are less likely to seek out and sustain membership.

Third, **religion in America is regularly renewed by “Great Awakenings.”** Historians suggest that there have been four periods of religious revival in the United States, each prompted by different contextual challenges, but all resulting in finding new forms of religiosity to suit changes in the larger culture, and even having an impact on the social and political culture.⁴ All have been marked by emotional revival of faith. The First Awakening, in the 1730s, made Methodism the largest single denomination and helped shape the mentality that led to the War of Independence. The Second, in the 1840s, produced apocalyptic denominations such as the Seventh-Day Adventists, and sharpened the debate on slavery. The Third, occurred during the Great Depression and World War II, and gave rise to the Evangelicals, who even today constitute forty percent of all Christians in the country. And the Fourth, beginning in the latter 1990s, has spawned the megachurch movement, as well as new forms, such as Emerging Church.

This periodic renewal of religious faith and practice usually comes at key moments of social change in U.S. society, and therefore keeps religious practice attuned to the needs of the larger culture in which religious faith finds itself.

A fourth factor is **immigration.** The U.S. is a land of immigration. This has had an impact on the religious culture in two ways. First of all, in the early period, a disproportionate number of immigrants were religious dissenters from Europe. They came, therefore, with high religious profile that led, in the U.S., to vigorous debates about religion in the public forum. These contributed to the Great Awakenings, just mentioned. Second, religion is a thread of continuity for immigrants that maintains their connection to their country of origin and their new home. Religion and ethnicity often became, in this new setting, intimately intertwined. The U.S. historian of religion Martin Marty has opined that “religion is the skeleton of ethnicity” in America.⁴ Although second- and third-generation American immigrants gradually lose this high profile and take on the level of religious practice of the general population, the constant flow of immigrants (now most notably from Latin America and Asia), renews this source of religious profile in the general culture. A rising interest in religious immigration in Europe is an opportunity to study the potential impact of religion on immigration in that setting.⁵

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⁵ The Relemerge Project in Europe, encompassing researchers from sixteen countries, is an important
Fifth and finally, Americans’ social values have remained more conservative than those of Europeans. Using data gleaned from the European Values’ longitudinal survey and comparing it with the U.S., sociologist Wayne Baker notes that U.S. social values have changed relatively little over the past thirty years, while those in Europe have shifted considerably. This appears to be the case despite the rhetoric among church leaders of precipitous decline. These data suggest that this contributes to the persistence of religion in the United States in a way that is not the case in Europe. This might help explain especially the recent dramatic drops in Spain and Ireland, for example.

What might be proposed from these various factors—historical and social—is that the U.S. has developed a culture that has remained more friendly—and even encouraging of—religion. Church-state relations and their consequences, renewal of religiosity by immigrants and periodic revivals, and relatively stable configurations of social values all contribute to a vitality of religion in the United States. Undoubtedly no one of these three factors by themselves can account for this vitality. The U.S.’s neighbor to the North, Canada, shares many cultural commonalities and an immigrant history. But its long-standing political ties to the United Kingdom make its religiosity look more like Britain than the U.S. Even Catholic Quebec, beginning in the 1960s, experienced steep religious decline, so much so that it looks today more like Europe than the U.S.

The Catholic Church

The Roman Catholic Church is the largest single Christian body in the United States, constituting about twenty-four percent of the total population. Its levels of religious practice are at least on the average of the larger population, and in some instances higher.

Are there specific factors that have contributed to their situation? – Two are most commonly cited. The first is its rootedness in immigration and U.S. history. These two factors are so intertwined have to be considered together. Maryland was the only colony of the original thirteen that came to make up the United States that was predominantly Catholic. In a number of the pre-revolutionary colonies, Catholicism was not permitted at all; only in Rhode Island and Pennsylvania was there

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widespread toleration. This reflected the struggles against the Catholic Church in seventeenth and eighteen century Britain. As Catholic immigration began in the 1830s and steadily increased through the nineteenth century, anti-Catholic sentiment in the country was often fierce and violent, with convents and churches being burned down. The Catholic Church, by the 1840s was majority recent immigrant. Besides hostility from the larger culture, ethnic infighting within the Church almost led to the establishment of two hierarchies in the 1880s—one English-speaking and one German-speaking. Immigration was largely stopped in the 1920s and did not resume until 1965.

In the intervening period between 1924 and 1925, there was a substantial change in the social makeup of the Church. After the Second World War, thanks to the G.I. Bill that provided financial support for ex-soldiers to get a university education, the sons and daughters of immigrants attained a level of education that allowed them to move upward socially and economically. The turning point of the end of widespread anti-Catholic feeling was the 1960 presidential elections when John F. Kennedy, a Catholic, became president. By the 1980s, Catholics had on average the highest level of education and income of any Christian group in the country (a space earlier occupied by Episcopalians and Presbyterians).

The renewal of immigration in 1965 let large numbers of people from various Latin American countries and the Caribbean into the country — majority Catholic countries in most instances. For the first time large numbers of Asians entered the country. That has meant immigration from the Philippines, Vietnam, and South Korea, all of whom have significant Catholic populations. Indeed, Christians from Asia are more likely to immigrate to the U.S. than non-Christians.

What has this intertwined history meant for the vitality of the Catholic Church in the U.S.? First of all, unrelenting anti-Catholicism from the 1830s to the 1960s created high profile and identity for Catholics there. Elements of Catholic identity gave a relative secure place to stand in an uncertain and sometimes threatening environment. Well into the 1950s, Catholic children could tell you which icons of the culture—movie and television stars or baseball players, for instance—were Catholics.

Second, the Catholic bishops set up internal systems to make sure arriving Catholics would not lose their faith in a Protestant culture. Immigration settlement societies would welcome immigrants at the docks in New York, and would help settle them, get them jobs, and shield them from the larger culture. In the cities parishes became social service agencies for the new arrivals and provided a host of cultural activities that keep ethnic groups together and helped assure that their children would marry in the faith (and in the ethnic group). Cities were dotted with ethnic parishes—parishes marked by ethnicity more than territory.
As Catholics have moved up the social and economic ladder, they have become more assimilated into the general population and are no longer distinguishable from the majority population in their politics or by any other social measure. They leave or drift away from the Church at about the same rate as mainline Protestants—either to Evangelical churches or megachurches or to no regular practice at all.

In the current wave of immigration, ethnic parishes are no longer used, and the populations of immigrants are often far less stable. So-called ethnic “minorities” make up about forty percent of the Catholic population. Their faith has revived the settled Catholic population. Until the last two years, Catholicism has continued to grow in net numbers even as all mainline Protestant denominations have declined. The reason for the growth has been the influx of immigrants. The number of vocations to the priesthood and religious life are disproportionate to their numbers in the Catholic population. Eight percent of all priests are of Vietnamese descent, even though Vietnamese constitute only two percent of the Catholic population.

Another distinguishing factor for Catholics has been its school system. The Third Council of Baltimore, held in the 1990s, mandated that every parish have a school. While this idea was never met, it spawned a huge network of parochial schools at the primary and secondary level. At its peak, it was a formidable force for socialization. In the 1950s, the Chicago Catholic school system was the second largest school system in the country—public or private. Only the New York City public school system was larger. There was also a development of a huge tertiary educational effort. Today there are still 230 Catholic colleges and universities in the country, certainly more than can be found in any other country.

Catholic sociologist Andrew Greeley has maintained that this is the single most important reason for why the Catholic Church is still so vibrant in the U.S. today. It had a socialization system that reached from the pre-school years through early adulthood. Not every Catholic participated in this system, but a sufficient number did to make it an effective way of keeping people Catholic.

To be sure, there has been Catholic religious instruction in European school systems as well. The school system in the U.S. by itself has not been enough to insure Catholic fidelity. But coupled with a history of anti-Catholicism and immigration, it has been a powerful force.

The immediate future of the Catholic Church in the U.S.? As always, this is much debated. Statistics would indicate that many young people drift away from the Catholic Church. Some return when they have children of school age, but an increasing number do not. At the same time, there is a high interest in more traditionally minded religious orders, and a huge network of volunteer programs that provide an outlet for young adult Catholics to engage in work of social justice.
Lessons for Europe

Are there lessons for Europe as it deals with its own secularity to be learned from the U.S. experience? Let me hazard a few thoughts:

¶ The atmosphere toward religion in the larger culture is perhaps the most important factor in the practice of religion. Pope Benedict’s preoccupation with Europe rediscovering its Christian roots is an important step in trying to change anti-religious sentiments in the U.S. To what extent he will succeed is another matter.

¶ How Europe is viewed is shaped by the narratives in which European experience is recounted. Heretofore, the Weberian hypothesis about secularization shaped the twentieth-century narrative. Now others are starting to emerge: notably Habermas’ idea of a “post-secular” society (in which a secular society has to recognize its religious roots rather than discounting them); or Charles Taylor’s tripartite view of secular society as comprised of a secular narrative, a religious one, and a third one deriving from the roots of the Romantic reaction to the Enlightenment.

¶ A proactive ministry among Catholic immigrants is another avenue in dealing with secularization.

¶ A religion that is exercised in non-institutional forms has a chance of offering more opportunities in a culture of choice. This is especially important for reaching adolescents and young adults. Here the new religious movements are indicative of possibilities.

¶ At the same time, conservative forms of religion typically will attract more people than progressive ones. This is because they address identity needs. Religious practice that gives identity works basically at the level of performance (i.e., what people do) more than at the level of ideology (i.e., what they believe). Religion for most people is more a way of life than a view of life.

¶ Religion that appears to appeal more to the emotions typically is more vibrant, though it runs the risk of becoming ephemeral.

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7 J. Habermas, Zwischen Naturalismus und Religion, Frankfurt/M. 2005, as well as his lecture upon receiving the 2005 International Holberg Memorial Prize. „Religion in the Public Sphere” (www.holbergprisen.no/en/juergen-habermas/holberg-prize-symposium-2005.html [Zugriff: 25.05.2010])

The United States and Europe have drawn upon different emphases in modernity (differing forms of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment) that have produced somewhat different public cultures. The U.S. has found its religious landscape periodically renewed by immigration and religious revivals. Clergy have, on the whole, been more energetic in outreach than has sometimes been the case in Europe. The United States, too, does not have the history of periodic bouts of anticlericalism. All of these factors help account for the differences between the secularizations of the two continents, yet at the same time suggest new avenues for thinking about Christian faith in a secularized Europe.
II. URTEILEN ~ JUDGING
Die immanent „schwache“ Präsenz des Gottes, von dem das Christentum spricht

Die Theologie muss ihre Wahrheit nicht in einer abgetrennten Sphäre, einer versteckten Ecke der Menschheit finden, sondern mitten darin und in der offenen Konfrontation mit der Vielzahl von menschlichen Ansichten. Das ist es, was Marie-Dominique Chenu das ‚loï d’incarnation‘, das Gesetz der Inkarnation, nannte. Dies war der Ausgangspunkt für seine Theologie der Zeichen der Zeit.1 In diesem Beitrag möchte ich untersuchen, warum dieser inkarnatorische und sogar kenotische Gedankengang für eine Theologie in unserer Situation fundamental wichtig ist. Nicht nur, weil es bedeutet, der Situation gerecht zu werden, sondern letztlich, weil es bedeutet, der christlichen Offenbarung treu zu bleiben. Um dies zu verdeutlichen, werde ich mich vor allem auf die Dokumente des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils beziehen.

Die Sakramentalität der Wahrheit

Das Nachdenken über die göttliche Präsenz im Sinne der Kenose, der Selbstaußerung Gottes, ist nicht neu. Obwohl zuweilen suggeriert wird, dass dies von postmodernen Theologen erfunden wurde, die der neuesten philosophischen Mode folgen wollten und tatsächlich behauptet wird, dass es nicht mehr sinnvoll wäre, von Wahrheit zu sprechen, ist es ein Versuch, das wahre christliche Verständnis davon, was ‚Wahrheit‘ bedeutet, wiederzufinden. Dem christlichen Verständnis zufolge ist Gott selbst die Wahrheit und über die Wahrheit zu sprechen, heißt über Gott zu sprechen. Und die christliche Tradition spricht von der Wahrheit im Zusammenhang mit der Inkarnation und der Kenose.

Wie Sie wissen stammt das Wort Kenose, Entäußerung, aus dem Loblied, das der Heilige Paulus in seinem Brief an die Philipper zitiert (2, 6–11):

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Er war Gott gleich,
hielt aber nicht daran fest, wie Gott zu sein,
sondern er entäußerte sich
und wurde wie ein Sklave
und den Menschen gleich.
Sein Leben war das eines Menschen;
er erniedrigte sich und war gehorsam bis zum Tod,
bis zum Tod am Kreuz.
Darum hat ihn Gott über alle erhöht
und ihm den Namen verliehen, der größer ist als alle Namen,
damit alle im Himmel, auf der Erde und unter der Erde
ihre Knie beugen vor dem Namen Jesu
und jeder Mund bekennt: Jesus Christus ist der Herr
zur Ehre Gottes, des Vaters.

Gottes Höhe wird zur Niedrigkeit, Macht wird zu Unterwerfung, Herr zu sein be-
deutet, Diener zu werden.

Was das für eine christliche Vision der Wahrheit bedeutet, wurde bereits von dem
Mathematiker und Philosoph Blaise Pascal suggeriert, der in seinen Pensées schrieb:

So wie Jesus Christus unerkannt unter den Menschen wandelte, so erscheint seine
Wahrheit ohne äußerlichen Unterschied unter gewöhnlichen Denkweisen. So er-
scheint auch das Abendmahl als gewöhnliches Brot.

So bezeichnet Pascal die Selbstentäußerung der göttlichen Erhabenheit in mensch-
licher Verletzlichkeit, welche in der christlichen Tradition als wesentlich für Jesus
Christus gilt. Pascal zieht eine Verbindung zum sakramentalen Charakter der Of-fenbarung gemäß der christlichen Tradition. Die Wahrheit zeigt sich nicht massiv in
ihrem reinen Glanz, sondern ist in irdischen Zeichen versteckt, die unter uns und
in unserer Welt real und präsent sind. So wie die Präsenz Jesu im Abendmahl in der
Form gewöhnlichen Brotes verborgen ist.

Die Dokumente des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils (1962–1965) enthalten nun
eine gründliche Betrachtung des einzigartigen Charakters der sakramentalen Prä-
senz des Göttlichen, wobei sie teilweise frühere, innovative theologische Überlegun-
gen zusammenfassen. In Übereinstimmung mit der Tradition geht die Konstitution
über die Liturgie, Sacrosanctum Concilium, auf die sieben Sakramente zurück, wel-
che die katholische Kirche seit dem Mittelalter kennt, und auf Jesus Christus selbst
als deren Ursprung. Der Schwerpunkt in den Dokumenten des Konzils liegt jedoch
auf der ständigen Präsenz Christi, die von den Sakramenten verkörpert wird.

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2 B. Pascal, Pensées, L. Brunschvicg (ed.) no. 789; L.M. Lafuma (ed.) Nr. 225: ‘Comme Jésus-Christ est
demeuré inconnu parmi les hommes, ainsi la vérité demeure parmi les opinions communes, sans
différence à l’extérieur. Ainsi l’Eucharistie parmi le pain commun.'


Der englische dominikanische Theologe und ehemalige Ordensmeister des Dominikanerordens, Timothy Radcliffe, hat sich mit der Verbindung zwischen der Eucharistie und der Wahrheit beschäftigt.⁴ Zunächst, schreibt er, waren die Jünger, die das Letzte Abendmahl mit Jesus feierten, aus dem die Eucharistie hervorging, der Heiligen Schrift zufolge eine zerbrochene Gemeinschaft, in der Konflikte und Verwirrung herrschten. Eine sakramentale Vision der Wahrheit legt daher nahe, dass das Finden einer religiösen Wahrheit eine Verbindung mit der Zerbrochenheit, den Konflikten und der Verwirrung der modernen Menschheit voraussetzt. Die Kirche steht nicht über oder außerhalb der Geschichte. Wenn sie die Wahrheit wirklich finden und verkünden will, sollte sie damit beginnen, sich selbst in den Jüngern um den Tisch des Letzten Abendmahls zu erkennen, schreibt Radcliffe: verwirrt und ängstlich, sich fragend, was mit ihnen und denen, mit denen sie verbunden sind, mit der Welt um sie herum geschehen wird. Zweitens ist die Wahrheit über die Eucharistie, die von den Evangelien verkündet wird, Radcliffe zufolge an erster Stelle eine demütigende Wahrheit. Es gibt Betrug, Unverständnis und Missverständnisse, und es gibt eine starke Abneigung gegen den einzigen, der zu verstehen scheint, was geschehen wird: die Frau, die Jesu Füße salbt. Dennoch – und hier kommen wir zu

³ Vgl. E. Schillebeeckx, Christus, sacrament van de Godsontmoeting, Bilthoven 1959.
Radcliffes drittem Punkt – ist die Geschichte der Evangelien über das Letzte Abendmahl sehr direkt darin zu zeigen, dass in der Ungewissheit, Zerbrochenheit und Schuld das Ziel eine allumfassende Befreiung ist, welche die Beteiligten einschließt.


Die Revolution der fundamentalen Solidarität – Gaudium et Spes


Daher ist es diesem Dokument zufolge die Aufgabe der Kirche als Volk Gottes, 'ihre Achtung und Liebe gegenüber der ganzen Menschheitsfamilie, der dieses ja selbst eingefügt ist,' zu bekunden, indem sie mit ihr in einen Dialog eintritt über all diese verschiedenen Probleme, mit denen die Menschheit konfrontiert ist.

Kritisch an diesem Konzept ist die Idee, dass die Welt der theologische Ort der Jünger ist, die Christus versammelt, um die Kirche zu bilden. Tatsächlich wurde die gleiche Idee bereits in der dogmatischen Konstitution über die Kirche, Lumen Gentium, vorgebracht. Infolge der heftigen Diskussionen darüber während des Konzils wurde die Tatsache, dass in Lumen Gentium das Kapitel über die Kirche als das Volk Gottes dem Kapitel über die Kirche als Hierarchie vorangeht, in der Rezeption des Dokuments stark betont. Es ist jedoch genauso bemerkenswert, dass das Dokument, wie wir gesehen haben, aussagt, dass 'die Kirche (...) in Christus gleichsam das Sakrament' ist (Nr. 1). Gott, der sich selbst als Schöpfer und Erlöser der Welt offenbart, kann so von der und durch die Kirche erfahren und als in der Welt präsent entdeckt werden (Nr. 2–4). Die Kirche existiert nicht um ihrer selbst willen; sie ist Zeichen und Werkzeug der Mission Gottes, durch die Gott die Menschheit und die Welt in Gottes eigenem Leben akzeptiert. Gaudium et Spes radikalisiert diese Idee, indem die Welt ausdrücklich theologisch qualifiziert wird:

Daher konzentriert sich das Konzil auf die Welt der Menschen, das heißt die ganze Menschheitsfamilie mit der Gesamtheit der Wirklichkeiten, in denen sie lebt; die Welt, der Schauplatz der Geschichte der Menschheit, von ihren Unternehmungen, Niederlagen und Siegen geprägt; die Welt, die nach dem Glauben der Christen durch die Liebe des Schöpfers begründet ist und erhalten wird; die unter die Knechtschaft der Sünde geraten, von Christus aber, dem Gekreuzigten und Auferstandenen, durch Brechung der Herrschaft des Bösen befreit wurde, bestimmt, umgestaltet zu werden nach Gottes Heilsratschluss und zur Vollendung zu kommen. (Nr. 2)


Aus der Perspektive der Dokumente des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils offenbart die christliche Tradition eine Revolution fundamentaler Solidarität. In Jesus Christus ist Gott eng und ohne Vorbehalte mit der Welt und mit der Menschheit mit all ih-

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7 On the controversy surrounding the worker-priests, see F. Leprieur, Quand Rome condamne: Dominicains et prêtres-ouvriers, Paris 1989. This quote, meant critically, is from Pius XII’s encyclical, Humani generis (12 Aug. 1950), nr. 11–12.

in den Ereignissen, Bedürfnissen und Wünschen, die dieses Volk zusammen mit den übrigen Menschen unserer Zeit teilt, zu unterscheiden, was darin wahre Zeichen der Gegenwart oder der Absicht Gottes sind. Der Glaube erhebt nämlich alles mit einem neuen Licht, enthüllt den göttlichen Ratschluss hinsichtlich der integralen Berufung des Menschen und orientiert daher den Geist auf wirklich humane Lösungen hin. (Nr. 11)

Das ist es, was man bekanntermaßen als das „Lesen der Zeichen der Zeit“ und ihre Deutung „im Licht des Evangeliums“ bezeichnet (Nr. 4).


Ansprache an die Welt richten zu lassen. Er schlug einen Text dafür vor und zeigte seine Enttäuschung über die tatsächliche Stellungnahme, die herausgegeben wurde, indem er sagte, sie sei ‘mit Weihwasser getauft worden’.


Die theologische Wiedergewinnung der Moderne

Der vielleicht innovativste Beitrag von John Webster zu The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology, das er zusammen mit Kathryn Tanner und Iain Torrance herausgab, ist die Einführung der Kategorie ’Theologien der Wiedergewinnung’ (‘theologies of retrieval’). Die Bezeichnung ’theology of retrieval’ bezieht sich auf Theologien, die die Moderne als ambivalente Episode der menschlichen Geschichte ansehen, der sich die Theologen nicht einfach unterordnen können. Die Moderne, wie wir sie kennen und wie sie sich selbst versteht, kann nicht das verborgene norma normans non normata sein, das entscheidet, was in der zeitgenössischen Theologie gesagt und getan werden kann und was nicht. Es ist im Gegenteil die Aufgabe der Theologen, die Moderne zu kritisieren, indem sie Aspekte der christlichen

Tradition wiedergewinnen, die zuweilen vergessen und ignoriert werden, wenn die Theologie 'modern' wird. Selbst genug wird der offensichtlichste Kandidat für den Titel 'Theologe der Wiedergewinnung' (und der Theologe, dessen Arbeiten John Webster wohl am besten kennt), Karl Barth, von Webster nicht als solcher dargestellt. Bei seinem Schüler Eberhard Jüngel ist dies jedoch der Fall, ebenso wie bei den Befürwortern der Bewegung der 'Radical Orthodoxy'. Joseph Ratzinger wäre auch ein offensichtlicher Kandidat gewesen, wird jedoch in The Oxford Handbook nur einmal ganz beiläufig erwähnt.


Es gibt jedoch in jeder Theologie der Wiedergewinnung eine Forderung nach Autorität. Man zeigt auf das, was in der aktuellen Situation falsch ist und suggeriert, dass dies die Folge davon sein könnte, dass wir auf unserem Weg in die späte Neuzeit etwas Wesentliches aus der christlichen Tradition verloren haben. Dies wiederzugewinnen wird als notwendig für die Rettung unserer Zivilisation dargestellt.

Zusammen mit Jüngel und Milbank ordnet Webster auch Theologen wie Henri De Lubac und Yves Congar, welche die römisch-katholische Bewegung der sogenannten nouvelle théologie vertreten, in die Reihen seiner 'Theologen der Wiedergewinnung' ein. Es ist nicht klar, ob Webster versteht, wie gewagt diese Geste ist. Der Kernpunkt ist jedenfalls, dass die nouvelle théologie

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14 One may suspect the whole idea of 'theologies of retrieval' would not have been thought up had J. Milbank not published his Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason, Oxford 1990.


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verdeutlichte angeblich, dass die natürliche Welt, um gerettet zu werden, die offengebarte Wahrheit benötigte, die der katholischen Kirche anvertraut war.\footnote{Vgl. P. Thibault, Savoir et pouvoir: Philosophie thomiste et politique cléricale au XIXe siècle, Quebec 1972; É. Poulat, L’Église, c’est une monde: L’Ecclésiosphère, Paris 1986.}

Der \textit{nouvelle théologie} nach war dies keine wirklich katholische, sondern eine typisch moderne Denkweise. Basierend auf ihrer Auslegung des Aquinaten und dem, was sie als die Konsequenzen der Doktrin der Inkarnation ansahen, forderten die Vertreter der \textit{nouvelle théologie}, dass die Theologie die Art analysieren sollte, wie das Natürliche und das Übernatürliche, Natur und Gnade, die Welt und Gott bereits verbunden sind, als Folge von Gottes gnadenvollem Wirken in der beschenkten Welt, deren Teil die Menschen sind. Eine Verbindung zur Moderne zu kultivieren, bedeutet für sie keine Unterwerfung unter Dinge, die dem christlichen Glauben fremd sind. Sie begründet sich selbst auf der Tradition dieses Glaubens. Die christliche Tradition, so die \textit{nouvelle théologie}, hat ihren eigenen Blick auf die Autorität. Dieser Blick unterscheidet sich deutlich vom Blick auf die Hierarchie und die delegierte Souveränität in der frühen Neuzeit, mit welchem die katholische Kirche ihre Autorität bis in die 60er Jahre des letzten Jahrhunderts darstellte. Dieser Ansicht zufolge muss die Gnade nicht autoritativ zur Welt, wie sie ist, hinzugefügt werden. In der Auslegung der christlichen Tradition durch die \textit{nouvelle théologie} muss man, um die Welt richtig zu verstehen, ihre Verbindung zu Gott und ihre Abhängigkeit vom göttlichen Geschenk der Gnade erkennen.

So bringt die \textit{nouvelle théologie} ans Licht, dass Theologie auszuüben nicht bedeutet, von außen in die Welt, wie sie ist, eingreifen, sondern die Situation zu interpretieren, an der die Gläubigen in ihrem Glauben und die Theologen in ihrer Theologie teilhaben. Es gibt nicht zuerst grundlegende theologische Ansichten, Motive oder Themen, die dann in einem zweiten Schritt mit dem aktuellen Kontext verknüpft werden. Insbesondere zeigte Marie-Dominique Chenu, wie das Nachdenken über die Inkarnation des Göttlichen in Jesus Christus an sich eine Art des Nachdenkens über die und der Kritik an der aktuellen Situation in der Welt und der Kirche ist. Theologisches Denken bedeutet nicht, die Situation von einer Position außerhalb dieser Situation aus zu beurteilen, wie es die Neo-Scholastik auslegen würde. Auf diese Weise werden theologische Motive, Ansätze und Eingebungen nicht nur für die Moderne wiedergewonnen, sondern die Moderne selbst wird als theologisch relevante Ära zurückgewonnen. Man könnte daher argumentieren, dass die \textit{nouvelle théologie} der erste echte Versuch im Katholizismus war, nicht nur über die Moderne zu theologisieren, sondern das Theologisieren zu einem Aspekt der Moderne und der Selbstreflexion der Moderne zu machen. \textit{Gaudium et Spes} war mit seinen Auswirkungen wirklich das erste Dokument darüber, wie die Kirche wirklich an der modernen Welt teilhaben kann.
Fazit

In der abschließenden Analyse impliziert der Blick auf die Moderne, der von der nouvelle théologie entwickelt und von Gaudium et Spes bestätigt wurde, dass die Welt und ihre Situation – und die Debatte darüber, was der Fall ist und worum es geht, was unsere Situation ist und wie wir uns darin verhalten sollten – prinzipiell offen sind für Beiträge aus einem religiösen und theologischen Hintergrund. Die Welt ist Gottes Welt, weil sie geschaffen ist, egal ob die Menschen dies anerkennen oder nicht. Die Geschichte ist Gottes Geschichte, weil sie erlöst wurde und diese Erlösung ihre Spuren in den Leben der Menschen hinterlassen hat, egal ob dies offenbart wird oder nicht. Die öffentliche Meinung oder dominante Stimmen in der Öffentlichkeit mögen religiöse und theologische Beiträge nicht immer willkommen heißen, aber die Debatte darüber, wer und wo wir sind und wohin wir gehen, sollte Theologen dazu bewegen, ihren Beitrag dennoch zu leisten. Indem sie dies tun, machen sie nicht nur ihre theologischen Ansichten öffentlich, sondern bringen auch ans Licht, dass das, was in der Öffentlichkeit auf dem Spiel steht, letztendlich absolut religiös ist. Und dass eine Welt, die sich selbst als säkular betrachtet, dennoch Gottes Welt ist und dies in Jesus Christus für immer bleibt.
The Intrinsically ‘Weak’ Presence of the God about Whom Christianity Speaks

Theology has to find its truth not in some separated sphere, some hidden corner of human reality, but amidst and in an open confrontation with the plurality of human views. This is what Marie-Dominique Chenu called the ‘loi d’incarnation,’ the law of incarnation. It was the starting point for his theology of the signs of the times. In this paper I will explore why this incarnational and even kenotic thread is of fundamental importance for a theology in our situations. Not just because it means being true to the situation, but ultimately because it means being true to the Christian revelation. To make that clear, I will mainly draw on the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

The sacramentality of the truth

Thinking about the divine presence in terms of kenosis, God’s self-emptying, is not new. Although it is sometimes suggested that it was invented by post-modern theologians wanting to follow the newest philosophical fashion and in fact claiming that it does not make sense any more to speak of truth, it is an attempt to retrieve the truly Christian understanding of what ‘truth’ means. According to the Christian understanding God him/herself is the ultimate truth and to speak of the truth is speaking about God. And the Christian tradition speaks about truth in terms of incarnation and kenosis.

As you know, the word kenosis, emptying, comes from the hymn Saint Paul quotes in his letter to the Philippians (2, 6–11):

He, existing in the form of God,  
counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped,  
but emptied himself,  
taking the form of a servant,  
being made in the likeness of men;  
and being found in fashion as a man,  
he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death,

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even the death of the cross. 
Therefore God highly exalted him, 
and gave unto him the name which is above every name; 
that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, 
of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, 
and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, 
to the glory of God the Father. 

God highness becomes lowliness, power becomes surrender, being Lord means becoming slave. 

What this means for a Christian vision on truth, is already suggested by mathematician and philosopher Blaise Pascal (1623–1662), who wrote in his *Pensées*:

> Just as Jesus Christ went unrecognised among men, so does his truth appear without external difference among common modes of thought. So too does the Eucharist remain among common bread.²

Thus Pascal denotes the self-emptying of the divine sublimity in human vulnerability that Christian tradition holds to be essential for Jesus Christ. Pascal makes a connection with the sacramental character of revelation according to the Christian tradition. The truth does not show itself massively and its pure splendour, but is hidden in earthly signs that are real and present among us and in our world. As Jesus presence in the Eucharist is hidden in the form of common bread.

Now, the documents of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) contain a thorough reflection on the unique character of the sacramental presence of the divine, in part summarizing earlier innovating theological reflections. In accordance with tradition, the constitution on the liturgy, *Sacro sanctum Concilium*, traces back the seven sacraments the Catholic Church has known since the Middle Ages, to Jesus Christ himself as their origin. The emphasis in the council documents however is on Christ’s enduring presence embodied by the sacraments. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* regards the Church as a whole to be ‘like a sacrament’. The Church is in Christ ‘like a sacrament’, the constitution states, that is a ‘sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race’ (LG 1). God is presented as the Creator and Redeemer of the world, hidden but really present. The Church knows about this, expresses it and thus embodies it (LG no. 2–4). In other words, the Church does not exist for her own sake. She is a sign and instrument of God’s mission by which God accepts humanity and the world in Gods own life. In the words of the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern world *Gaudium et spes* this means that the Church in the world ‘is at

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once manifesting and actualising the mystery of God’s love for man’ (GS no. 45). In brief, her ‘sacrament’ do not primarily point to Jesus as historical origin, but to his actual presence as himself the living ‘sacrament of the encounter with God’.³

The truth is of a quasi-sacramental nature, according to Pascal. That is, it shows itself as truth intermingled with a multitude of opinions, not clearly distinguishable from them. The lack of resplendence of the truth corresponds to the lack of visibility of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the prototypical sacrament.

English Dominican theologian and former Master of the Dominican Order Timothy Radcliffe has elaborated on the connection between Eucharist and truth.⁴ Firstly, he writes, according to Scripture the disciples that celebrated the Last Supper with Jesus, from which the Eucharist originates, were a broken community in conflict and confusion. A sacramental vision of the truth therefore suggests that finding a religious truth presupposes a connection with the brokenness, the conflicts and the confusion of contemporary humanity. The Church is not above or outside history. If it really wants to find the truth and preach it, it should start by recognising itself in the disciples around the table of the Last Supper writes Radcliffe: confused and terrified, wondering what is happening to them, to those connected with them, to the world around them. Secondly, according to Radcliffe, the truth about the Eucharist spoken by the Gospels is first and foremost a humiliating truth. There is betrayal, incomprehension and misunderstanding, and there is strong resentment against the only one who seems to understand what is about to happen: the woman anointing Jesus’ feet. However – and here we get to Radcliffe’s third point – the Gospel story about the Last Supper is very resolute in showing that in the ambiguity, brokenness and guilt, the aim is an encompassing liberation, including of those involved.

Saying that the truth is sacramentally present, thus means that it is also always absent. And in its absence it is always mysteriously present.⁵ Therefore, the presence of divine truth breaches the alternative of presence and absence, as the German theologian Eberhard Jüngel wrote. Just like, according to the hymn that Paul quotes in his letter to the Philippians, God did not just empty himself in Jesus, but also humiliated himself through his death on the cross. His life, and therefore that of his disciples too, is not just hidden in humanity, but also mixed with evil. As a result, the truth they speak is not just hidden in the unobtrusiveness of an opinion like any other. It is also tainted by untruth and lies, and constantly at risk of being overwhelmed by it.

³ Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, Christus, sacrament van de Godsontmoeting, Bilthoven 1959.
The revolution of fundamental solidarity – Gaudium et Spes

Shortly after the Second Vatican Council, Edward Schillebeeckx wrote that the theological breakthrough of the Council was hidden its pastoral orientation. Schillebeeckx foresaw that the term ‘pastoral’, which pope John XXIII had been using in connection to the Council right from start, would be interpreted as pertaining to the concrete application of a doctrine of faith which itself was supposedly constant and fixed. In Schillebeeckx’ view, it was exactly this distinction that the Council contradicted. The fact that the Council in its constitution on the Church declared the Church to be the light of the world (Lumen Gentium), could still be reconciled with the classical view of the Church as the keeper of an unchanging revelation that was God’s gift to mankind. Gaudium et Spes however made clear that the Church takes its shape in and emerges from the world. She does not start out as the keeper of God’s revelation standing outside the world, subsequently engaging itself with that world. The Church itself is formed by people in and from the world, who ‘united in Christ ... are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the Kingdom of their Father’ – thus no longer of the world. As such, ‘truly linked with humankind and its history by the deepest of bonds’, Christ’s followers forming the Church ‘have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for every man’, said Gaudium et Spes. (no. 1). Therefore, according to the document, it was the task of the Church as the people of God to witness ‘its respect and love for the entire human family with which it is bound up’, engaged together with this human family in a conversation about the various problems humanity it is faced with.

Critical in this conception is the idea that the world is the theological place of the disciples whom Christ gathers to form his Church. The same idea was in fact already put forward in the dogmatic constitution about the Church, Lumen Gentium. As a result of the vehement discussions about it during the Council, the fact that in Lumen Gentium the chapter about the Church as the People of God precedes that about the Church as a hierarchy, was strongly emphasised in the reception of the document. However, it is just as remarkable that the document says, as we have seen, that ‘the Church is in Christ like a sacrament’ (no. 1). God, revealing Himself as Creator and Redeemer of the world, can be known thus and found to be present there by and through the Church (no. 2–4). The Church does not exist for its own sake; it is a sign and instrument of God’s mission with which God accepts humanity and the world in God’s own life. Gaudium et Spes radicalises this idea by expressly qualifying the world theologically:

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Therefore, the Council focuses its attention on the world of men, the whole human family along with the sum of those realities in the midst of which it lives; that world which is the theatre of man’s history, and the heir of his energies, his tragedies and his triumphs; that world which the Christian sees as created and sustained by its Maker’s love, fallen indeed into the bondage of sin, yet emancipated now by Christ, Who was crucified and rose again to break the strangle hold of personified evil, so that the world might be fashioned anew according to God’s design and reach its fulfilment (no. 2).

‘Presence in the world is presence with God,’ had been the motto of the French Worker-Priests in the 1950s. Twelve years after the suspension of this movement by order of Rome in 1953, because of its tendency to allow itself to be too radically inspired by ‘modern conditions and requirements,’ Gaudium et Spes marks the official adoption of their principle for the entire Roman Catholic Church.

In the view of the documents of the Second Vatican Council, the Christian tradition reveals a revolution of fundamental solidarity. In Jesus Christ God is intimately and without reserve connected to the world, and with humanity in all its perils. By formulating this revolutionary aspect of the Christian revelation, the Council itself also embodied a revolution of solidarity. For quiet a while the Roman Catholic Church had made it her identity to be totally different from the world, untouched by modern unrest and uncertainties. Vatican II declared that is was not the task of the Church to witness to an otherworldly and static truth. Instead, as Gaudium et Spes states, the Church understands herself as the People of God that believes that it is led by the holy Spirit who fills the earth. As such, it is her task:

to decipher authentic signs of God’s presence and purpose in the happenings, needs and desires in which this People has a part along with other men of our age. For faith throws a new light on everything, manifests God’s design for man’s total vocation, and thus directs the mind to solutions which are fully human (no. 11).

It is what was famously called ‘reading the signs of the times’ and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel’ (no. 4).

The theological revolution expressed in this idea of reading the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel, is closely connected with Marie-Dominique Chenu. In the 1930s, Chenu became convinced that theology is a reflection on the current situation of humankind and God’s involvement with it. This was Chenu’s interpretation of Thomas Aquinas’ basic assumption that faith lives life, and theology studies the world, ‘under the aspect of God.’ Chenu was a historian as well

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7 On the controversy surrounding the worker-priests, see F. Leprieur, Quand Rome condamne: Dominicains et prêtres-ouvriers, Paris 1989. This quote, meant critically, is from Pius XII’s encyclical, Humani generis (12 Aug. 1950), nr. 11–12.
as a theologian, and he saw the great theological syntheses of the past as more than just self-contained systems of ideas. He regarded them as forms of reflection on the then contemporary situation, from the point of view of a specific spirituality that was embedded in the current culture. According to Chenu, divine revelation cannot simply be found in Scripture and the tradition of the Church. Revelation is present in the faith of the people that keeps developing and reacting to new situations, and the intellectual reflections on this faith in theology. This is the background of Chenu’s ambition to do more at the Council than informing its participants about the latest developments in the research of Scripture and ecclesial tradition. He meant to open the Council, and with it the Church, to the new situation in which they found themselves and have them account for their relation to the contemporary world. This was the background of his efforts to have the Council issue an address to the world. He proposed a text for it, and he showed his disappointment in the actual statement that was made by saying it ‘had been baptised in holy water’.

During the Council, Chenu secretly and constantly exerted pressure to have the Church define itself as a reader of the signs of the time. Just like Pope John XXIII – Chenu had christened him ‘doctor of the signs of the time’ – had already done in his encyclical *Pacem in terris* before the council, when he called for an *aggiornamento*, a modernisation of the Church. To some extent, the acceptance of *Gaudium et Spes* by the Fathers of the Council was the reward for Chenu’s perseverance.

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10 For his remark that the statement was ‘trempé dans l’eau bénite’, see M.-D. Chenu, *Un nouveau dialogue avec le monde*, in: *Informations Catholiques Internationales* 577 (1982), 41–42.


12 The expression ‘signs of the time’ was first used in the apostolic constitution *Humanae salutis* (25 Dec 1961) by John XXIII, which officially convenes the council which had been announce two years earlier. The expression was not used in the main Latin text of encyclical *Pacem in terris* (11 Apr. 1963), but can be found in the subheadings that were added in the translations of the document.
Theological retrieval of Modernity

Maybe the most innovative contribution of John Webster’s to *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology* he edited together with Kathryn Tanner and Iain Torrence is the introduction of the category ‘theologies of retrieval’.13 The label ‘theology of retrieval’ indicates theologies that consider modernity an ambivalent episode of human history to which theologians cannot simply submit themselves. Modernity as we know it and as it understands itself cannot not be the hidden *norma normans non normata* that decides what can and cannot be said and done in contemporary theology. On the contrary, it is the task of theologians to critique Modernity by retrieving aspects of the Christian tradition that tend to be forgotten and ignored as theology becomes ‘modern’. Strangely enough the most obvious candidate for the title ‘theologian of retrieval’ (and the theologian whose work John Webster probably knows best), Karl Barth, is not presented as such by Webster. But his disciple Eberhard Jüngel is, as are the proponents of the Radical Orthodoxy movement.14 Joseph Ratzinger would also have been an obvious candidate, but he is mentioned only once and very casually in *The Oxford Handbook*.

Speaking of ‘theologies of retrieval’ makes clear that what they are up to is not theological conservatism or ‘neo-orthodoxy’ in any straight-forward way. The retrieval of what is forgotten is considered a precondition to a fuller understanding – that is: an understanding that is more fully theological – of modernity. This is supposed to contribute to a better life in the given Modern context. Theologians of retrieval do not advocate a simple return from modern theology to what they consider more authentic Christian teaching in the past. Some of them may rhetorically suggest this, but ultimately their point is that to respond adequately to our situation, we have to search for what would be true orthodoxy here and now. This implies that orthodoxy – authentic Christian teaching – cannot be regarded as an unchanging substance, but has to be reinvented in relation to contemporary issues. In order to do that, theologians of retrieval bring almost forgotten themes and focuses or points of view that are marginalized in contemporary thought, back into intellectual circulation. This is not straightforward traditionalism and the argument is not simply that because something is part of the tradition, it should now be received as authoritative.

However, there is of course a claim for authority in any theology of retrieval. Pointing at what is wrong in the contemporary situation, the suggestion is made


14 One may suspect the whole idea of ‘theologies of retrieval’ would not have been thought up had J. Milbank not published his *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*, Oxford 1990.
that this might be a consequence of losing something essential from the Christian tradition along our way into late modernity. Retrieving this is presented as necessary to rescue our civilization.

Along with Jüngel and Milbank, Webster also introduces theologians like Henri De Lubac and Yves Congar, representing the Roman Catholic movement of the so called *nouvelle théologie*, into the ranks of his ‘theologians of retrieval’. It is not evident whether Webster understands how daring this gesture is. Be that as it may, the fact of the matter is that *nouvelle théologie* has usually been, and still is often interpreted, as a variety of theological modernism. In a centralized Roman Catholic Church that considered anti-modernism to be the core of its identity, *nouvelle théologie* seems first and foremost a cautious and clever attempt to open up to the contemporary world in the only way possible after the so-called Modernist crisis: by radically re-interpreting the texts on which the anti-modernist stance of the Church was said to be based, i.e. the works of Saint Thomas Aquinas.15 Presenting *nouvelle théologie* as ‘theology of retrieval’, Webster draws attention to the fact that its representatives – and, by implication, the documents of Vatican II along with them – did not want to open up to the contemporary world mainly because they craved for intellectual prestige among their contemporaries. Neither did they think that it was the best strategy for the Church to become again a factor of importance in contemporary society and culture. All talk of theologians after the Second Vatican Council about correlation between theological tradition and the contemporary world notwithstanding, *nouvelle théologie* defended its opening up to the contemporary world ultimately by theological arguments.

For the proponents of *nouvelle théologie*, the very confession of the incarnation breaks down the typically modern – in fact: nominalist – presupposition that the finite and the infinite, the natural and the supernatural are separated by an unbridgeable gap. This means that it can no longer be argued that there is no intrinsic connection between the immanent and the transcendent, between the world and the divine. They read the oeuvre of Thomas Aquinas – that was presented by the hierarchy of their Church as normative in the way it connecting philosophy and theology, nature and grace – as contradicting the dominant Catholic approach that claimed to be founded on his very system of thought. In neo-scholasticism, theological doctrines supposedly based on the authority of the Church given to her by Jesus Christ himself, were extrinsically added to an analysis of the phenomena of the world. If left to itself, the world was bound to show its insufficiency and without supernatural

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15 For this image of nouvelle théologie, the still very influential book by M. Schoof, Breakthrough: Beginnings of the New Catholic Theology, Dublin 1970.
assistance, it could only come to a crisis. This was evident from the catastrophes of poverty and violence so prominently present in Modernity with its wars and its ‘social question’, the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church argued since the middle of the Nineteenth Century. This allegedly made evident that the natural world, in order to be saved, needed the revealed truth entrusted to the Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{16}

According to nouvelle théologie, this was not a genuinely Catholic, but very much a typically modern way of thinking. Based on their reading of Aquinas and what they saw as the consequences of the doctrine of incarnation, the proponents of nouvelle théologie claimed that theology had to analyze the way in which the natural and the supernatural, nature and grace, the world and God were already connected, as a consequence of God’s gracious initiative, in the graced world human beings were part of. To cultivate a connection with modernity does not imply for them a surrender to what is foreign to the Christian faith. It has itself founded in the tradition of that faith. The Christian tradition, nouvelle théologie claims, has its own view on authority. This view differs distinctly from the early modern view on hierarchy and delegated sovereignty that the Catholic Church used until the sixties of last century to present its authority. According to this view, grace does not have to be authoritatively added to the world as it is. In the reading of the Christian tradition by nouvelle théologie, to understand the world adequately one needs to see its connection with Gods and its dependence on the divine gift of grace.

Thus nouvelle théologie brings to light that to do theology is ultimately not to intervene in the world as it is from the outside, but to interpret the situation in which the believer in his or her belief, and the theologian in his or her theologizing, participate. There are not first substantial theological views, themes or topics that are then, in a second step, connected to the contemporary context. In particular Marie-Dominique Chenu has shown how thinking about the incarnation of the Divine in Jesus Christ, is intrinsically a manner of thinking about and critiquing the contemporary situation in world and Church. Theological thinking is not judging the situation from a position supposedly outside that situation, as neo-scholasticism would have it. In this way, theological themes, approaches and intuitions are not only retrieved for modernity, but modernity itself is retrieved as a theologically relevant era. One could therefore argue that nouvelle théologie was the first genuine attempt in Catholicism not just to theologize about modernity, but to make theologizing an aspect of modernity and modernity’s self-reflection. 

\textit{Gaudium et Spes} in its wake was truly the first document on how really to be Church participating in the modern world.

Conclusion

In the final analysis the view on Modernity developed by nouvelle théologie and endorsed by Gaudium et Spes, implies that the world and its situation is – and the debate on what is the case and what is the matter, what our situation is and how we should act in it are – open in principle to contributions from a religious and theological background. The world is Gods world because it is created, whether people acknowledge it or not. History is Gods history because it is redeemed and this redemption has left its traces in human lives, whether this is confessed to or not. Public opinion or dominant voices in the public domain may not always be hospitable to religious and theological contributions, but the debate on who and where we are, and where we are heading, should seduce theologians to make their contribution anyway. By doing so they not just make their theological views public, but bring to light that was is at stake in the public sphere is ultimately profoundly religious. And that a world that considers itself as secular, is still Gods world and remains so forever in Jesus Christ.
Die schwache Präsenz des Christlichen als franziskanische Herausforderung

*Responsio zu Eric Borgmans „The concept of a ‘weak’ presence as characteristic of Christianity”*

Meine responsio auf Eric Borgman versteht sich nicht als Gegenposition zu seinen Thesen. Dazu sind mir die von ihm vorgetragenen Gedanken und ihre Begründungen – wenn auch vielleicht nicht bis in jedes Detail – seit Jahren längst zur Grundlage auch meiner eigenen Theologie geworden.

Es mag zunächst verwundern, im Konzept der „schwachen Präsenz“ des Christlichen diese „schwache Präsenz“ nicht als Schwäche, sondern als charakteristisches Kennzeichen des Christlichen anzusehen, freilich als eines, das lange Zeit und über Jahrhunderte im Hintergrund geblieben, wenn nicht vergessen, war. Gerade heute mag es uns schwer fallen, die schwache Präsenz des Christlichen als ein dem Christlichen zu Innerst Eigenes und Immanentes zu begreifen. Denn im europäisch-abendländischen Raum neigen wir dazu, diese schwache Präsenz kausal der Säkularisierung in die Schuhe zu schieben. Säkularisierung aber bedeutet nicht die Eliminierung des religiösen Erbes, sondern seine Transformation.¹


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² Vgl. Ebenda, 129.
Säkularisierung als Wiederentdeckung der biblischen Kenosis


Exakt darin erkennt Vattimo die innere Kohärenz der Säkularisierung mit der biblischen Kenosis, mit der Erniedrigung und Schwäche des Gottmenschen, von der der Philippерbrief spricht. In ihrem Licht gewinnt die schwache Präsenz des Christlichen ihre Plausibilität. In der Säkularisierung unserer Tage kommt ein Strukturge-

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5 Vgl. Ebenda, 27.


Welt als Raum der Gegenwart Gottes


6 Ebenda, 44f.
7 Vgl. Ebenda, 29.
8 Vgl. Gaudium et spes Art. 4; Presbyterorum Ordinis Art. 9; Apostolicam actuositatem Art. 14, Unitatis redintegratio Art. 4.

**Offenbarung geht weiter**


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9 Vgl. zum Folgenden H. Schnädelbach, Religion in der modernen Welt, 36 und 110.
Lieber, die verpflichtet, als Kern der Offenbarung


« Deus caritas est: et qui manet in caritate, in Deo manet, et Deus in eo » (1 Joh 4,16b). Aus diesem In-der-Liebe-Bleiben begründet sich das Liebesgebot. Es fokussiert in der Nächstenliebe. „Wenn Gott uns so geliebt hat, müssen auch wir einander lieben“ (1 Joh 4,11), in der Konkretheit unserer Lebenssituationen. Um so zu erfahren, was Johann Baptist Metz einmal so formulierte: „Im Entdecken, im Sehen von Menschen, die im alltäglichen Gesichtskreis unsichtbar bleiben, beginnt die Sichtbarkeit Gottes, öffnet sich seine Spur.“11


12 Es fällt mir auf, dass im Prozess der Erneuerungen der Ordenssatzungen das Gemeinschaftsleben stärker betont wird als früher.
Fazit

Verweigern wir uns also nicht in einer Art rückwärts gewandten Romantik der heutigen Zeit, die uns die schwache Präsenz des Christlichen als Chance vor die Füße legt.

Weiterführende Literatur

The Weak Presence of Christianity as a Franciscan Challenge

Response to Erik Borgman’s “The concept of a ‘weak’ presence as characteristic of Christianity”

My response to Erik Borgman is not to be understood as an opposite standpoint to his theses. The thoughts presented by him and their substantiations – even if perhaps not in every detail – have also been a basis of my own theology for many years.

It may initially be surprising to view this “weak presence” in the concept of the “weak presence” of Christianity not as a weakness, but as a characteristic of Christianity, certainly as one that remained in the background for a long time and over the course of centuries, if not forgotten. Especially today it may be difficult for us to comprehend the weak presence of Christianity as an intrinsic and immanent aspect of Christianity. Because in the Western European region we tend to causally lay the blame on secularisation. However, secularisation does not signify the elimination of religious legacy, but rather its transformation.

As a matter of fact, a return of the interest in religion in the configuration is observable today, that an unstructured spirituality is gaining increasing importance in comparison with denominational religiosity. The ‘God Crisis’ verified today is more likely an ecclesiastical-theological problem of perception than an actual problem between man and God, or said more appropriately, between God and man. The weak presence of Christianity is not the work of the devil. A hint of the Holy Spirit is discernible in our Western intellectual history, which refers us to a long-forgotten fundamental structure of Christianity.

Secularisation as a rediscovery of biblical kenosis

As a starting point I recall the non-canonical Gospel of Thomas. It compares the Kingdom of Heaven with a woman who has lost all of her flour from her broken

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jug, without noticing it, while on the way home. The woman only discovers her misfortune as she is at home. The lost flour leaves behind only a fleeting trace. This is a meaningful image of the weak presence of the Kingdom of Heaven, the weak presence of Christianity, an image in which there is a paradoxical strength.

Now we could make it theologically easy for ourselves and refer to the kenosis of the God-Man in Phil. 2: 6–8 in order to draw attention to the fact that humiliation – and in this sense, the weak presence – not only belong to Jesus Christ, but apparently to Christianity in general. But: Wherein should we discern a coherent connection with the present-day weak presence of Christianity, which we – as said – gladly blame on secularisation? We are by no means wrong to associate secularisation with the present-day weak appearance and weak status of Christianity. But we should do this in a very different way than we are probably accustomed to.

Here I follow a deliberative passage from Turin philosopher Gianni Vattimo,3 who subsequent to Nietzsche and above all Heidegger speaks of the Ende der Metaphysik (The End of Metaphysics). According to Vattimo, the supposedly stable edifice of metaphysics having the being and the world under control has given way to a “weak ontology”4 or a “weak reasoning”5 about the being. However inchoate and dissatisfying both of these notions are, they signalise and make one aware that our perception of being is weak. Vattimo thereby departs from the previous intellectual horizon and verifies not only the weakness of the human perception of being, but – what is more fundamental – the weakness as an ontological structure of being itself. He gains this cognition in the light of modern secularisation, which depicts the end of the supposedly powerful metaphysics and the eternal existence of its statements.

Precisely therein Vattimo discerns the intrinsic coherence of secularisation with the biblical kenosis, with the humiliation and weakness of the God-Man of which the Epistle to the Philippians speaks. The weak presence of Christianity gains its plausibility in its light. A structural principle of Christianity is emphasised in the secularisation of our days, which also expresses the Christian legacy. As a result, the so-called “naturally” sacred and “naturally” holy hierarchies instituted by human beings and furnished with power, and the notions of holiness and saintliness – produced by mankind and not owing to the Revelation – which are firmly established in Christianity, withdraw and their real character will be conveyed.

Vattimo advocates a new view of secularisation, which to a certain extent the Holy Spirit has shown the way in the development of modern intellectual history.

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4 Cf. G. Vattimo, Glauben – Philosophieren, 29.
5 Cf. G. Vattimo, Glauben – Philosophieren, 27.
This is why Vattimo speaks of “positive secularisation”. According to him, secularisation means “that the dissolution of the sacred structures of Christian society … is not to be understood as the dwindling or as the dismissal of Christianity, but rather as a quintessential fulfilment of its truth, which is – this is to be remembered – the kenosis, the condescension of God, the revocation of the ‘natural’ traits of divinity.” Vattimo sees a “transliteration” of the doctrine from the incarnation of the Son of God in the present-day weakness of Christian structures.

The World as the realm of God’s presence

This results in momentous consequences. For the Christian faith, God’s transcendence is not a transcendence clearly separated from an earthly one. God’s kenosis signifies his relationship with being, the secular world, so that the Christian faith is also kenotically bound to the realities of an era by societal relationships. The confrontation with the Society of Saint Pius X (SSPX) – which in the talks held with the Vatican in these days and weeks is doing its utmost to repress the influence of modern philosophy and of the spirit of the times on the church – shows how disputed this has been recently. In fact, one of the significant breakthroughs of the Second Vatican Council was to see that the world is the realm of God’s presence, a presence which is kenotically ensconced in the form of his absence. God is present in his supposed absence — this also constitutes the quintessence of the weak presence of Christianity.

This results in the necessity that the Council has spoken of, to ask for the “signs of the times” in the concrete framework conditions of life, time and society in which God speaks to us. The contexts are not residual categories for Christianity, but they are constitutive for the Christian faith. There is no other access to the Christian faith than under the concrete societal conditions, in the admission of the dependency on one’s own historicity. This is the situation of kenosis.

Revelation continues

At the same time, this signifies that the divine revelation is not concluded – as we have once learned – with the death of the apostle. Even if this may be correct from a certain perspective, it must be said that the revelation continues, namely in the confrontation with the respective time relations. The sentence in the Gospel of John

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6 G. Vattimo, Gauen – Philosophieren, 44f.
7 Cf. G. Vattimo, Glauben – Philosophieren, 29.
8 Cf. Gaudium et spes Art.4; Presbyterorum Ordinis Art. 9; Apostolicam actuositatem Art. 14, Unitatis redintegratio Art. 4.
refers to this: “I still have much to say to you all, but you could not bear it now. But when he, the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13). In turn, this corresponds to what Dei Verbum, the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, says in Article 8: that in the course of centuries the Church has constantly striven towards the plentitude of Divine Truth. Whoever strives towards the truth is not yet in its full possession. Once again this is a kenotic aspect.

The Christian notion of truth itself is thereby also kenotically affected. On the other hand, its strength paradoxically lies in its kenotic form. In principle, the revelation does not lead us to truths of being, which substantiate knowledge, but to truths of judgement, which substantiate convictions and certainties. Knowledge and certainty may not be confused with each other in this connection. But from the current Pope one has the impression that he understands the truth of revelation as the truth of being, adjudged via the Magisterium. This is interpreted by the fides quaer creditur, to which the believers shall answer with the fides quaer creditur. The concept of fides quaer creditur can be associated with the English belief, and the concept of fides quaer creditur with the English faith. As a result of the efforts of the Pope, Catholics tend to reduce their religious faith, their religious certainties, to the aspect of truth emphasising belief. I am missing the kenosis in this. For instance, exactly that which Lumen gentium Article 16 expresses: “Nor is God far distant from those who in shadows and images seek the unknown God, for it is He who gives to all men life and breath and all things (cf. Acts 17: 25–28), and as Saviour wills that all men be saved” (cf. 1 Timothy 2: 4).

Love which obligates as the quintessence of the revelation

Now the intonation of kenosis as a weak presence of Christianity could convey the impression that Christianity is ultimately threatened with dissolution and evaporation. Termination. But this is particularly not the case, because the dimension of kenotic perception has its limits in the love of God. That means: God has not played his game of “weakness hide-and-seek” so far that the immeasurable extent of his love would no longer be discernible to a certain extent. On the contrary: in the Creation, but above all in his incarnation, God has shown a love that is immeasurable. In its kenotic form it can also be surmised that it – and not God’s righteousness, transcendence and stringency – is God’s actual criterion in dealing with us human beings. To discover it, to turn towards it, to trust it, is the present-day chance, since the notions of his power, his stringency, his wrath, his might and his judgement projected on God by metaphysics pale in comparison with the true biblical charisma of his love.

9 Cf. zum Folgenden H. Schnädelbach, Religion in der modernen Welt, 36 und 110.
«Deus caritas est: et qui manet in caritate, in Deo manet, et Deus in eo» (1 John 4:16b). The commandment of love is founded on this ‘adherence to love’. It focuses on the concept of brotherly love. “If God loved us so much, we must also love each other” (1 John 4:11), in the concreteness of our life situations. In order to learn what Johann Baptist Metz once formulated: “God’s conspicuousness starts, unfurls its vestige, in the discovery, in the vision of human beings who remain invisible in the everyday scope of view.”

Francis of Assisi discovered God in the lepers. In terms of our Order, this means that our charisma does not entail leading a life that concentrates first and foremost on our confraternity, in order to then approach the poor, the little ones and the unimportant from our religious midst. The reverse is true: we should read the Gospel from their helplessness. In addition to the lectureship of the ministry and the lectureship of theologians, nowadays one rightly sees – even if this is a somewhat expanded aspect – a pronouncement of the so-called Third Magisterium, the third teaching office of the Church, in the so-called basic human communities.

Conclusion

We should not disallow ourselves in a manner of backwards romanticism of our time, which places the weak presence of Christianity as a chance at our feet.

Further reading


12 It strikes me that the Order’s rules of communal life are more strongly emphasised than formerly in the process of renewals.
Inkarnation als heologische Denkform. Glauben im Plural säkularer und religiöser Erfahrungen

„San Domenico predicatore del Verbo fatto Carne“


Abbildung 1: Sandra Brunetti, San Domenico predicatore del Verbo fatto Carne, 1992, Firenze, S. Maria Novella


„Und das Wort ist Fleisch geworden und hat unter uns gewohnt, und wir haben seine Herrlichkeit gesehen, die Herrlichkeit des einzigen Sohnes vom Vater, voll Gnade und Wahrheit.“


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3 Vgl. H. Denzinger/P. Hünemann, Enchiridion symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de re-
Menschlich-göttliche Ökonomie


1. Zum einen beschreibt die Heilsökonomie im Zusammenhang mit dem Inkarnationssprinzip einen Weg der Vergöttlichung des Menschen („divinisation de l’homme“) in der Geschichte. „Zeit“ wird so zur theologischen Kategorie, denn sie ist „der menschliche Weg des Ewigen“.

2. Zum anderen kann Chenu aus dem Gedanken der Ökonomie einen dynamischen Offenbarungsbegriff entwickeln, der die säkularisierte Moderne nicht als Gefahr, sondern als Chance zu begreifen in der Lage ist. In einer Predigt im Rahmen eines Kongresses zum fünfhundertjährigen Bestehen der Zeitschrift „Concilium“ sagte er: „Die Offenbarung ist der Akt, worin sich Gott im ganzen Verlauf der Geschichte enthüllt hat und worin er sich beständig weiter enthüllt, indem er im Laufe der Jahrhunderte seine vollständige Selbstkundgabe in Christus auf die Fülle der Zeiten ausdehnt (...). So gesehen bietet die ‚Säkularisation‘, die den Menschen seiner Mündigkeit und Selbständigkeit inneworden läßt, den Theologen eine wenn auch mit großen Risiken verbundene günstige Gelegenheit, in der neuen Zivilisation zu tieferer Einsicht zu gelangen.“\(^8\)

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Fortgesetzte Inkarnation als theologische Denkform

Inkarnation bezeichnet für Marie-Dominique Chenu (dem ich im weiteren Verlauf meiner Ausführungen folge) nicht primär einen bestimmten Inhalt der theologischen Aussage; vielmehr versteht er Inkarnation als eine „theologische Denkform“:

„Ohne Zweifel ist das Christentum das Mysterium des in mir lebenden, sterbenden und auferstehenden Christus; aber wie hat sich dieses Mysterium vollzogen? In einer Inkarnation, d.h. in einem Kommen Gottes in die Zeit und in die Geschichte“.

Weil das inkarnierte Gotteswort sich in der Geschichte verzeitlicht hat, kann und muss es in eben dieser Geschichte immer wieder neu Fleisch werden. Eine theologische Reflexion, die in diesem Inkarnationsgeschehen wurzelt, kann nur ein Denken sein, das vom historisch, sozial und kulturell Konkreten ausgeht und darin je neu angemessene Ausdrucksformen für Gottes Wort findet. Und: „Insofern der Kirche dieses göttliche Wort (Parole de Dieu) anvertraut ist, hat sie teil an dem Anspruch je neuer Inkarnation.“

D.h. nach Chenus Überzeugung hat sich die Inkarnation Gottes nicht bloß einmal vor 2.000 Jahren in Judäa ereignet, sondern sie setzt sich in der Geschichte fort. Entsprechend kann man mit Christophe F. Potworowski von


12 PD II, 114.


14 Vgl. z.B. PD II, 89: „Car l’Incarnation de Dieu, dont elle [chrétienté nouvelle; U.E.] est le signe et le
einem Prozess der fortgesetzten Inkarnation („process of continued incarnation“) sprechen. Ähnliche Formulierungen finden sich übrigens auch schon bei Johann Adam Möhler (1796–1838): „andauernde Fleischwerdung“, und – jüngeren Datums – bei Thomas O’Meara OP: „The continuing incarnation“. In der theologischen Reflexion realisiert sich die Menschwerdung auf zweifache Weise:

1. Als Inkarnation in Begriffen des Gotteswortes („incarnation dans des concepts de la parole de Dieu“) – z.B. in dogmatischen Sätzen –,

2. wie auch als Inkarnation des Gotteswortes in den Theologen und Theologinnen, die ihren Glauben auf die historischen, sozialen und ökonomischen Gegebenheiten hin und von diesen her denken.


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mystère à la fois, ne s'est pas faite une fois pour toutes dans un coin de Judée; elle dure toujours, elle vaut toujours, elle vaut partout.

15 Ch.F. Potworowski, Contemplation and Incarnation. The Theology of Marie-Dominique Chenu (McGill-Queen's Studies in the History of Ideas Bd. 33), Montreal u.a. 2001, XV.


18 PD I, 251; Hervorhebung U.E.


Kenotische Umformung und religionsloses Christentum

Die von Chenu her entwickelte Doppelbewegung des Abstiegs Gottes in die Geschichte und – daraus folgend – der Verantwortung für die Anderen, korrespondiert in wesentlichen Aspekten mit einer (nicht unumstrittenen) These des italienischen Philosophen Gianni Vattimo (* 1936).

Vattimo ist der Ansicht, dass die Säkularisierung schon im Prinzip der Inkarnation grundgelegt ist. Als zentrales Charakteristikum des Christentums versteht er die Figur der *kenosis* und bezieht sich in diesem Zusammenhang ausdrücklich auf den neutestamentlichen Philipper-Hymnus21:

„Er [Christus] war Gott gleich, hielt aber nicht daran fest, wie Gott zu sein, sondern er entäußerte sich und wurde wie ein Sklave und den Menschen gleich. Sein Leben war das eines Menschen; er erniedrigte sich und war gehorsam bis zum Tod, bis zum Tod am Kreuz.“ (Phil 2,5–8)


Auch Bonhoeffers Christologie nimmt ihren Ausgangspunkt im Moment der Inkarnation: Insofern Gott unwiderruflich als Mensch in diese Welt eingegangen ist, begegnet uns in den Anderen immer auch das Transzendentale.25 Gott, so die These des protestantischen Theologen, lässt sich nur im Vollzug christlicher Verantwortung erreichen, ist also nicht a-kontextuell zu denken. Denn „was ‚immer‘ wahr ist, ist gerade ‚heute‘ nicht wahr. Gott ist uns ‚immer‘ gerade ‚heute‘ Gott.“26

23 Ebd.
25 Vgl. ebd., 414.


„Der Tag wird kommen, an dem wieder Menschen berufen werden, das Wort Gottes so auszusprechen, daß sich die Welt darunter verändert und erneuert. Es wird eine neue Sprache sein, vielleicht ganz unreligiös, aber befreiend und erlösend, wie die Sprache Jesu, daß sich die Menschen über sie entsetzen und doch von ihrer Gewalt überwunden werden, die Sprache einer neuen Gerechtigkeit und Wahrheit, die Sprache, die den Frieden Gottes mit den Menschen und das Nahen seines Reiches verkündigt.“30


Fragen: Wem hilft die Inkarnation? Wozu ist sie gut?

Das Verständnis von Inkarnation hat – so die Quintessenz bei Bonhoeffer – für das kirchliche Handeln Konsequenzen. In seinem Brief an das 2001 in Providence RI (USA) versammelte Generalkapitel hat *Papst Johannes Paul II.* die These aufgestellt, dass ein Leugnen der Inkarnation eine Kultur des Todes begünstige:

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27 Ders., Widerstand und Ergebung, a.a.O., 394.
28 Ebd., 305.
30 D. Bonhoeffer, Widerstand und Ergebung, a.a.O., 328.
31 Vgl. ebd., 312.
„Wir leben in einem Zeitalter, das die Menschwerdung mannigfach praktisch bestreitet. Die Folgen dieser Verneinung sind offensichtlich und zerstörend. (…) Das Leben wird nicht wertgeschätzt und geliebt; die Folge davon ist ein Überhandnehmen einer genuinen Kultur des Todes.“33

Damit knüpft Johannes Paul II. an einen Grundgedanken des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils an, vor allem an „Lumen gentium“ und „Gaudium es spes“. So leiteten die Konzilsväter die sakramentale Struktur der Kirche aus dem Inkarnationsgeschehen ab. Über diesen kircheninternen Aspekt hinaus reflektiert das Konzil aber auch die Bedeutung der menschlichen Natur Jesu Christi für das gesamte Welt- und Menschenverständnis.34

Aus dieser Sichtweise ergeben sich Fragen – banale vielleicht, gleichwohl aber basal: Stimmt es wirklich, dass dem Inkarnationsgeschehen eine allumfassende Bedeutung zukommt, die ob ihres universalen Anspruchs auch die säkularisierte Welt umfasst?

Eine Antwort des Thomas von Aquin: … zur Erlösung von Sünden

Bevor ich näher auf einschlägige Texte des Konzils eingehe, sei mir noch eine kurze theologiegeschichtliche Vorbemerkung gestattet: Im Anschluss an Anselm von Canterbury’s (1033–1109) „Cur Deus homo“35 diskutierten die mittelalterlichen Theologen, ob denn die Inkarnation die Antwort Gottes auf die Sünde des Menschen sei oder ob sich Gottes Menschwerdung auch unabhängig vom Sündenfall ereignet hätte.36 Wäre „Gott auch dann Mensch geworden, wenn der Mensch nicht gesündigt hätte“37?

Duns Scotus (1266–1308) vertrat die These, Hauptmotiv der Menschwerdung sei die Offenbarung der Herrlichkeit Gottes. Gegen diese Position berufen sich Thomas von Aquin (um 1225–1274) und die Predigerbrüder auf die Schrift. Denn diese gibt nach Lesart der Dominikaner – als Hauptmotiv der Menschwerdung die Erlösung von der Sünde an. „Deshalb sind sie der Ansicht, es sei angemessener, ohne einen Sündenfall keine Menschwerdung anzunehmen.“38

Auch wenn die alte Frage in dieser Form heute nicht mehr zur Debatte steht, so möchte ich die theologische Aktualität des Inkarnationsprinzips trotzdem in der Linie von Thomas denken. Dabei interessiert mich nicht das Sündenmotiv, sondern seine Argumentation vom Menschen her. Anstatt über die innergöttliche Psyche zu spekulieren, fragt Thomas (jetzt mit meinen Worten formuliert): Wem hilft die Inkarnation? Wer ist ihr Adressat? Wie verändert sie das Leben von Kirche und Welt?

Eine Antwort des Vaticanum II:
... zur Humanisierung von Kirche und Welt

In vier kurzen Thesen möchte ich aufzeigen, wie relevant eine Theologie der Inkarnation inmitten unserer neuzzeitlich säkularisierten Gesellschaften sein kann. Ich lese und interprete dazu die Nummern 40 bis 42 der Pastoralkonstitution „Gaudium et spes“ (GS):


3. **Homiletisch: Die Predigt des inkarnierten Wortes stärkt die Würde des Menschen.** Eine kirchliche Pastoral, die aus dem praktischen Vollzug des Glaubens an den

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**Schluss: Jesukind oder Menschenkind?**

Ich komme zum Schluss – und damit noch einmal zurück zu dem Bild von Sandra Brunetti. Die Gestalt des Kindes verweist uns auf den Anfang von Joh 1,14: „Und das Wort ist Fleisch geworden und …“. Das zeigt uns das Bild. Interessant ist aber auch, was nicht zu sehen ist. Nicht zu sehen ist die (vielleicht von der linken Hand des Kindes verdeckte) Fortsetzung des Satzes nach dem letzten „et“: „... habitavit

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in nobis et vidimus gloriam eius gloriam quasi unigeniti a Patre plenum gratiae et veritatis (... hat unter uns gewohnt, und wir haben seine Herrlichkeit gesehen, die Herrlichkeit des einzigen Sohnes vom Vater, voll Gnade und Wahrheit).

Die Inkarnationstheologie des Johannesprologs zielt letztlich also auf die Erkenntnis der Wahrheit. Was umgekehrt heißt: Im Rahmen einer Theologie der Inkarnation entscheidet sich die Wahrheitsfrage an der Gestalt Jesu. Chenu hat dies so formuliert:

„In dieser Hinsicht konvergiert die Wahrheitsfrage schlussendlich mit der erkenntnistheoretischen Frage nach der ureigenen Person Jesu (...). Damit ist die Wahrheit ein streng christologisches Konzept.“


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45 M.-D. Chenu, Vérité évangélique et métaphysique wolffienne à Vatican II, in: Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques (1973), 632–640, hier 639f.: „Ainsi finalement la question de la vérité se ramène-t-elle à celle de savoir qui est la personne même de Jésus. (...) La Vérité est donc un concept foncièrement christologique.“
Incarnation as a Theological Form of Thought.
Belief in the Plural of Secular and Religious Experiences

“San Domenico predicatore del Verbo fatto Carne”

I have brought along the reproduction of a painting by Italian painter Sandra Brunetti. The original is located at Santa Maria Novella in Florence. It dates back to 1992 and is titled “San Domenico predicatore del Verbo fatto Carne” (St. Dominic – Preacher of the Incarnate Word).

Illustration 1: Sandra Brunetti, San Domenico predicatore del Verbo fatto Carne, 1992, Florence, S. Maria Novella
The figure of a man – filling the painting in front of a bookshelf – can be seen in the centre of the portrayal. He is slender and looks relatively young: a handsome man with well-proportioned facial traits, slender hands and a muscular neck, with strawberry blond hair and stylish three-day beard. The white habit and black cloak clearly mark him as a Dominican. He faces the viewers frontally in upright posture — but without looking at them. His eyes are open, the gaze concentrated. The title of the painting indicates that the Preaching Brother depicted concerns St. Dominic.

Carefully, almost endearingly, the Dominican figure presents a child to us. This child is also standing upright, directly facing the viewers. It is clothed in nothing but a white shirt. The child’s eyes are open. But it does not look at us. No attributes whatsoever refer to the child’s identity. Is it the Infant Jesus? Or any old human child?

Both figures are arranged on the same vertical image axis. As a result, the scenery looks quite static overall. The painting thus obtains the character of an icon. This effect is supported through the stringent vertical arrangement of the habit’s folds as well as through the hyper-realistic manner of painting.

The child is holding a book in his hands. It is opened as if for presentation. The child is pointing to the text with his right forefinger. The following can be read: “In principio erat Verbum – Et verbum caro factum est et ...” (In the beginning was the Word. – And the Word became flesh and …). Not visible is the (perhaps covered by the child’s left hand) continuation of the sentence after the last “et”: “… habitavit in nobis” (... dwelt among us). The Vulgate translation from John 1:1 and 1:14 is cited here. Verse 14 represents the “hermeneutical key” to all incarnation theology:

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Incarnation literally means the ‘divine Word becoming embodied in flesh’. In the biblical context, “flesh” designates man’s full reality and the sphere of finiteness, mortality. The “Word” biblically stands for the self-revealing God. The noun “incarnation” (σάρκωσις) appears for the first time with Irenaeus of Lyon (approx. 135–202 AD). The term “incarnatio” has been common since the 3rd century as the Latin translation of “σάρκωσις”. “Incarnation” and “becoming human” have been used synonymously since the Council of Nicaea (325 AD).\(^1\)

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\(^3\) Cf. H. Denzinger/P. Hünermann, Enchiridion symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum/Kompendium der Glaubensbekenntnisse und kirchlichen Lehrentscheidungen, Freiburg/Br. u.a. 1999, Nr. 125.
Human-divine economy

Incarnation theology can be portrayed according to its basic approach as *Economy of Salvation*. While belief – as an act of God – is something supernatural on the one hand, on the other hand this belief – as theology – is practiced in the discursive reasoning of humans (together with their historical and consequently alterable social conditions). Accordingly, Marie-Dominique Chenu OP (1895–1990) speaks of a human-divine economy ("économie humano-divine") in his early essay *Position de la théologie*. Such an economic theology led to two consequences:

1. For one thing, the Economy of Salvation in connection with the principle of incarnation describes one method of the divinisation of man ("divinisation de l’homme") in history. “Time” becomes a theological category because it is the “human way of eternity”.

2. For another thing, from the notions of economy Chenu is able to develop a dynamic concept of revelation which does not comprehend secularised modernity as a danger, but rather a chance. In one homily within the framework of a congress on the five-year anniversary of the journal “Concilium”, he said:

“The Revelation is the act in which God has revealed himself throughout the course of history and in which he continually revealed himself over the course of centuries by expanding his complete self-disclosure in Christ in the fullness of the times (...). Viewed in this light, ‘secularisation’, which makes human beings aware of their responsibility and independence, offers theologians a convenient opportunity to gain a deeper insight in the new civilisation, even if it is association with great risks.”

An economic theology such as that outlined here in its fundamentals does not have to have any fear of secular matters – as it also does not have to fear modernity or even postmodernism. Because as a faithful “follower” of Thomas Aquinas Chenu does not

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5 M.-D. Chenu, La Parole de Dieu. I: La Foi dans l’intelligence, Paris 1964, 116f. [cited in the following as “PD I”].
6 Id., La Parole de Dieu. II: L’Évangile dans les temps, Paris 1964, 114 [cited in the following as “PD II”].
understand faith and reason as two worlds separated from each other or even contradictory. He oftentimes finds the missing link between fides and ratio in incarnation.

Continued incarnation as a theological form of thought

For Marie-Dominique Chenu (whom I follow in the further course of my deliberations), incarnation does not primarily designate a specific content of the theological message; on the contrary, he understands incarnation as a “theological form of thought”: “Christianity is undoubtedly the enigma of the dying and resurrecting Christ living in me; but how has this enigma taken place? In an incarnation, i.e. in an arrival of God in time and in history.”

Because the incarnated Word of God has become temporalised in history, it can and must repeatedly be incarnated in exactly this history. A theological reflection which is rooted in this incarnation event can only be a thought that emanates from historical, social and culturally concrete aspects and finds new, adequate forms of expressions for the Word of God. And: “Insofar as the Church is entrusted with this divine Word (Parole de Dieu), it shares in the claim to any new incarnation.”

That is to say, according to Chenu’s firm belief, the incarnation of God did not come about for once and for all 2,000 years ago in Judea, but it continues in the course of history. Accordingly, with Christophe F. Potworowski one can speak of a “process of continued incarnation.” Incidentally, similar formulations can also be


12 PD II, 114.


14 Cf. z.B. PD II, 89: „Car l’Incarnation de Dieu, dont elle [chrétienté nouvelle; U.E.] est le signe et le mystère à la fois, ne s’est pas faite une fois pour toutes dans un coin de Judée; elle dure toujours, elle vaut toujours, elle vaut partout."

15 Ch.F. Potworowski, Contemplation and Incarnation. The Theology of Marie-Dominique Chenu (McGill-Queen’s Studies in the History of Ideas Bd. 33), Montreal u.a. 2001, XV.
found with Johann Adam Möhler (1796–1838): “continual incarnation”\textsuperscript{16}, and – of recent date – with Thomas O’Meara OP, “The continuing incarnation”\textsuperscript{17}. In the theological reflection, incarnation is realised in a double manner:

1. As incarnation in concepts of the Word of God (“incarnation dans des concepts de la parole de Dieu”\textsuperscript{18}); e.g. in dogmatic principles…

2. … as well as incarnation of the Word of God in the theologians who perceive their beliefs in terms of the historical, social and economic circumstances.

The hermeneutics of incarnation firmly believe in the – certainly oftentimes concealed – presence of God in the historically concrete, frequently secular circumstances of the world. In the countenance of the others it seeks to perceive this as the other entity, and thereby as Man with the dignity specific to him. In this respect, the descent of God in history is “not the fall into nothingness, but a responsibility for others”\textsuperscript{19}. The countenance of the humiliated Son of God lights up in him, above all in the poor. Only if one acknowledges the historical evidence of this world in its secularity and believes in it can they repeatedly catch sight of God and Christ from their innermost perception. In this sense, the Judeo-Christian history of salvation is “the history of an incarnation and not the history of angelic creatures”\textsuperscript{20}.

Kenotic transformation and irreligious Christianity

The double movement of the descent of God in history and – consequentially – the responsibility for others developed by Chenu corresponds in essential aspects with a (not uncontroversial) thesis of the Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo (* 1936).

Vattimo is of the opinion that secularisation is already founded in the principle of incarnation. He understands the figure of kenosis as a pivotal characteristic of Christianity and explicitly refers to the New Testament hymn of the Philippians in this connection\textsuperscript{21}:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{16} J.A. Möhler, Symbolik, oder Darstellung der dogmatischen Gegensätze der Katholiken und Protestanten, nach ihren öffentlichen Bekenntnisschriften, hrsg. von J.R. Geiselmann, Bd. 1, Köln – Olten 1958, 389.
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Th.F. O’Meara, Thomas Aquinas Theologian, Notre Dame 1997, 136.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} PD I, 251; Hervorhebung U.E.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} J.-B. Madragule Badi, Inkarnation in der Perspektive des jüdisch-christlichen Dialogs. Mit einem Vorwort von M. Wyschogrod (Studien zum Judentum und Christentum), Paderborn 2006, 268.
  \item \textsuperscript{21} Cf. G. Vattimo, Glauben – Philosophieren. Aus dem Italienischen von Ch. Schultz, Stuttgart 1997, 34.
\end{itemize}
“He [Christ] was equal to God, but did not adhere to being God. But instead he divested himself and became the same as a slave and mankind. His life was that of a human; he humbled himself and was obedient to the point of death, death on the cross.” (Phil 2: 5–8)

Vattimo understands kenotic divestiture as the beginning of a secularisation process, namely because a restriction of great metaphysical principles is announced in God’s self-humiliation evidenced in the New Testament. Even more: nothing less than the end of the metaphysical God himself follows from the Christian kenosis. Vattimo therefore reads the history of Christianity in irreligious terms: as a history of continuing secularisation. Secularisation is ergo not simply a “quantitative dwindling“ to him, but rather – to cite a conceptual differentiation by Hans Blumenberg (1920–1996) – a process of “qualitative transformations“.

Where Vattimo discerns the end of the metaphysical God applied in the Christian doctrine of incarnation, the step to Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945) and his discourse of a “religious Christianity” is not far away.

Bonhoeffer’s Christology also takes its starting point in the moment of incarnation: insofar as God irrevocably arrived in this world as Man, the transcendental also always confronts us in the Other. According to the thesis of Protestant theologians, God can only be ‘reached’ in the consummation of Christian responsibility, i.e. is not to be contemplated extra-contextually. Because “what is ‘always’ true is not exactly true ‘today’. God is ‘always’ exactly God to us ‘today’“. A church which takes this insight seriously has to be unconditionally there for others, without quashing – also secularly – its otherness. Irreligion or irreligious existence (also the Church!) then signifies “that we must live in the world – ‘etsi deus non daretur’” – as if there was no God!

However, this irreligious Church is not yet evident. On the contrary, it is still something pending. Bonhoeffer notes: “We are approaching an entirely irreligious time“.

Therefore the irreligion of which Bonhoeffer speaks in his notes from the Nazi imprisonment has a practical character: namely as profoundly secularised this-worldliness. The non-religious interpretation [is] the associated form of reflection

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23 Ibid.
25 Cf. ibid., 414.
27 Id., Widerstand und Ergebung, a.a.O., 394.
28 Ibid., 305.
and speech “29. Bonhoeffer formulates his vision (in “Thoughts on the Baptism of D.W.R. Bethge”) in view of the future Church as follows:

“The day will come on which men will once again be called to pronounce the Word of God such that the world changes and renews itself. There will be a new language, perhaps entirely irreligious, but liberating and redeeming, like the language of Jesus that the people will be shocked at and yet will be overcome by its power, the language of a new righteousness and truth, the language which promulgates God’s peace with mankind and the approach of his Kingdom.”30

A theology of irreligious Christianity spells out the Christian faith in the plural of secular and religious experiences. The Chalcedonian reference to “unseparated and absolute” consequently characterises Christ’s relationship with the world. This involves neither a one-dimensional profanation31 of the relationship between divine and secular nor its sublation to the mere spiritual – merely accessible to the pious and initiated.32

Question: Whom does incarnation help? What is it good for?

The understanding of incarnation has – according to the quintessence with Bonhoeffer – consequences for ecclesiastical action. In his letter to the 2001 General Chapter assembled in Providence, Rhode Island (USA), Pope John Paul II postulated the thesis that a denial of the incarnation fosters a culture of death:

“Ours is an age which denies the Incarnation in a multitude of practical ways, and the consequences of this denial are clear and disturbing. (...) Life is not valued and loved; and hence the advance of a certain culture of death is the consequence.”33

With that said, John Paul II built on a fundamental concept of the Second Vatican Council, above all “Lumen gentium” and “Gaudium et Spes”. So the Council Fathers

30 D. Bonhoeffer, Widerstand und Ergebung, a.a.O., 328.
31 Cf. ibid., 312.
33 Letter of Pope John Paul II to the Master General of the Order of Preachers (28th June 2001), at: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/2001/documents/hf_jp–ii_let_20010711_order-preachers_en.html [Call: 15.9.2009]: “Ours is an age which denies the Incarnation in a multitude of practical ways, and the consequences of this denial are clear and disturbing. (...) Life is not valued and loved; and hence the advance of a certain culture of death.”
derived the sacramental structure from the incarnation events. But beyond this internal Church aspect the Council also reflected the significance of the human nature of Jesus Christ for the entire understanding of the world and mankind.\textsuperscript{34}

Questions arise from this point of view — banal perhaps, but nevertheless basal: Is it really true that the incarnation events correspond to an all-embracing significance, whether its universal claim also encompasses the secularised world?

A response by Thomas of Aquinas:

… regarding deliverance from sins

Before I elaborate on the Council’s pertinent texts, I am taking the liberty of a brief theological-historical preliminary remark: Subsequent to Anselm von Canterbury’s (1033–1109) “Cur Deus homo”\textsuperscript{35}, medieval theologians discussed whether the incarnation was God’s response to the sins of mankind or whether God’s incarnation had taken place independently of the Fall of Man.\textsuperscript{36} Would God also have become Man if Man had not sinned “\textsuperscript{37}?

Duns Scotus (1266–1308) advocated the thesis that the prime motive of the incarnation was the revelation of God’s glory. Contrary to this position, Thomas of Aquinas (around 1225–1274) and the Dominicans refer to the Scriptures. Because depending on the version, the Dominicans specify the deliverance from sin as the prime motive of the incarnation. “This is why they are of the opinion that it is more reasonable not to assume any incarnation with a Fall of Man.”\textsuperscript{38}

Even if the age-old question is no longer open to debate in this form today, I would nevertheless like to contemplate the theological topicality of the principle of incarnation in the line of Thomas. While doing so, I am not interested in the motive for sin, but rather its argumentation by people. Instead of speculation about the intrinsic divine psyche, Thomas asks (now formulated with my words): Whom does incarnation help? Who is its addressee? How does it alter the life of Church and World?

\textsuperscript{36} Cf. dazu M.-D. Chenu, Das Werk des hl. Thomas von Aquin, a.a.O., 356.
\textsuperscript{37} STh III 1,3.
A response by Vatican II:
… regarding humanisation of Church and World

In four brief theses I would like to show how relevant a theology of incarnation can be in the midst of our modern secularised societies. For this purpose I read and interpret numbers 40 to 42 of the Pastoral Constitution “Gaudium et Spes” (GS):

1. **Anthropologically:** following God Incarnate we will be more human. I start with GS 41, where in the last sentence of the first paragraph it says: “Whoever follows Christ, the perfect human being [Hominem perfectum] will also themselves become more human” — i.e. whoever goes their way in the footsteps of Jesus Christ opens up a deeper meaning of their own existence. In personal terms, following God Incarnate signifies the “intensification of personal incarnation”.

2. **Ecclesiologically:** the task of the entire Church is the humanisation of the world. However, this deepened sense of becoming human is not only applied to every single Christian. In GS 40 (3rd paragraph, last sentence), the humanisation of the world is described as a task of the entire Church. Through “its individual links and its whole community [it can] contribute a great deal (...) towards making the family of man and its history more human”.

3. **Homiletically:** the homily of the Word Incarnate strengthens the dignity of man. “Deus humanissimus” promulgates an ecclesiastical pastoral (care) which lives from the practical consummation of belief in the Incarnate God. The homily of the Word Incarnate has to be measured in word and deed as to whether and how the dignity of people – in personal as well as in societal terms – is strengthened. While doing so, our promulgation may not intend to compel anything.

4. **Politically:** the Church has to refrain from all “potestas“.

Conversely, the following also applies in the sense of the Council Fathers: A

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Practice of promulgation which contributes towards more human configuration of humane living conditions is also a statement of human potential that is inherent in the Church. But according to GS 42 (3rd paragraph, last sentence), such a humane Church will refrain from “exerting any dominion by purely human means” — i.e. the Church also has to measure itself by the humanising message of the Gospel. It refrains from all potestas. With its auctoritas it seeks to serve the “welfare of all” (GS 42, 5th paragraph). 42

This complex “incarnational axiomatic method” 43 of the Second Vatican Council — only briefly outlined here in three numbers of the Pastoral Constitution — can liberate us from power & fear-characterised manners in the Church and towards the secular world. In addition, such a theology of incarnation enables us to experience-identity-establishing encounters with other cultures and religions in a pluralistic society. In this sense, our Western secularised context also applies to the word originally native to Latin American liberation theology: “The inculturation of the Gospel follows the path of the incarnate Son of God” 44.

Conclusion: Infant Jesus or human child?

I conclude — and thus return once again to the painting by Sandra Brunetti. The figure of the child refers us to the beginning of John 1:12: “And the Word became flesh and …”. The painting shows us this. But what is not visible is also interesting. Not visible is the (perhaps covered by the child’s left hand) continuation of the sentence after the last “et”: “... habitavit in nobis et vidimus gloriae eius gloriam quasi unigeniti a Patre plenum gratiae et veritatis“ (... sdwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth).

Therefore the incarnation theology of John’s Prologue ultimately aims at the realisation of truth. Which conversely means: the question of truth in the figure of Jesus is decided within the framework of a theology of incarnation. Chenu has formulated this as follows:

“In this respect the question of truth ultimately converges with the epistemological question pertaining to the very own persona of Jesus (...). Therewith the truth is a stringent Christological concept”. 45

45 M.-D. Chenu, Vérité évangélique et métaphysique woffienne à Vatican II, in: Revue des sciences phi-
In terms of the theological concept of a continued incarnation it is ultimately undecidable and irrelevant whom the Dominican figure of the painting is carrying here: the Infant Jesus or the human child. Because both equally represent the Word Incarnate in a world that has become secular! Both have to be worth our theological attention.

*Losophiques et théologiques* (1973), 632–640, hier 639f.: „Ainsi finalement la question de la vérité se ramène-t-elle à celle de savoir qui est la personne même de Jésus. (…) La Vérité est donc un concept fondièrement christologique.“
Inkarnation und Verantwortung

*Responsio zu Ulrich Engels „Inkarnation als theologische Denkform*


**Die Inkarnationstheologie im Vortrag von Ulrich Engel**

Wenn ich Herrn Prof. Ulrich Engel richtig verstanden habe, hat er auf die Bedeutung der Inkarnation für das Christentum hingewiesen, das in der Kultur der Säkularisierung lebt. Ausgehend von seinem Kommentar eines Bildes des Heiligen Dominikus entwickelte er seinen Gedankengang, demzufolge die Tatsache der Inkarnation dem Prediger und der Kirche die Realität der Welt erschließt.

In seinen Überlegungen über die Inkarnation nahm er auf den dominikanischen Theologen M.-D. Chenu Bezug, um die Tatsache der Inkarnation in den Rahmen der Erlösgeschichte zu stellen. Aus der soteriologischen Besonderheit ergeben sich vor allem zwei Folgen. 1) Erstens: die Inkarnation dient letzten Endes der Vergottung des Menschen. 2) Zweitens müssen die Zeit (und die Geschichte) als der Weg angesehen werden, den das Ewige zurücklegt, um unter uns in Erscheinung zu treten.

Daraus lässt sich eine dynamische Auffassung der Offenbarung ableiten, der zufolge die Realität Gottes, der sich vollständig in Jesus Christus mitgeteilt hat, im Lauf der Zeit zur Erfüllung gekommen ist. Mit anderen Worten setzt sich die Kommunikation Gottes in Jesus Christus in der Geschichte fort. In diesem Sinne sind sowohl Aufklärung als auch die von ihr sich ableitende Säkularisierung zu verstehen – als historischer Reifungsprozess des Humanum. Die Aufgabe einer Theologie, welche die Inkarnation berücksichtigt, besteht darin, in die zu jedem Zeitpunkt bestehende Kultur einzudringen, um aus ihr den Ausdruck der Realität Gottes herauszusuchen.

Es ist hervorzuheben, dass Ulrich Engel in seiner Interpretation der Inkarnation einen Aspekt darstellt, der in den Überlegungen über die Inkarnation gewöhnlich nicht zu finden ist. Ich meine damit die Beziehung zwischen Inkarnation und Ver-
antwortung dem Anderen gegenüber. Mit seinen Worten ausgedrückt ist die Inkarnation nicht ein Sturz ins Leere, sondern Ausdruck der Verantwortung Gottes für seine Schöpfung und den Menschen.

Im Mittelpunkt seines Vortrags greift Ulrich Engel einen Gedanken von Giovanni Vattimo auf, um die Inkarnation als einen Prozess der Selbstnegierung der Göttlichkeit Gottes zu interpretieren (kénosis). Dieser Prozess bedeutet das Ende der metaphysischen Vorstellung von Gott, was uns für die Verantwortung für die Welt zugänglich machen würde. Unter Rückgriff auf die Theologie Bonhoeffers wird ein „areligiöses Christentum“ angeboten, das aus einer ethischen Verpflichtung bestünde, in welcher der christliche Glaube im Plural religiöser und säkularer Erfahrungen zum Ausdruck käme.

Aus dieser Perspektive heraus wird uns eine kirchliche Handlungsweise angeboten, welche die Nachfolge Jesu als Humanisierung der Welt betrachtet, die menschliche Würde in der Predigt verteidigt und dabei auf die Macht verzichtet.

**Grundlegende Übereinstimmungen**

Zunächst ist dem Referenten dafür zu danken, dass er die Aufmerksamkeit wieder auf das Zentrum der christlichen Erfahrung, nämlich die Inkarnation, lenkt. Diese Tatsache kennzeichnet das spezifisch Christliche, und sie gab aus diesem Grund in der Geschichte Anlass zu Konflikten bei der Begegnung des Christentums mit anderen religiösen und philosophischen Angeboten. Das war auch im christlichen Selbstbewusstsein der Fall, welches Schwierigkeiten hatte, Konsequenzen aus der Tatsache der Inkarnation zu ziehen.

Zweitens ist es wichtig, abermals daran zu erinnern, dass die Inkarnation als Grundsatz des christlichen Lebens und Form jeder Theologie, wenn wir sie konsequent weiterdenken, das Christentum vom Manichäismus und idealistischen Spiritualismus befreit.

Wie in dem Vortrag gut zum Ausdruck kam, öffnet uns die Inkarnation den Zugang zur Geschichte und zur Welt, bietet uns ein dynamisches Bild von Gott und stellt die soteriologische Perspektive in den Mittelpunkt der christlichen Reflexion.

In diesem Sinn scheint mir die Beziehung zwischen Inkarnation und Verantwortung für den Anderen ein neuer und interessanter Ansatz zu sein, den es weiter zu entwickeln und zu vertiefen gilt. Die Inkarnation ist der Ausdruck eines für seine Schöpfung verantwortlichen Gottes. Wenn man diesen Gedanken weiterentwickelt, könnten wir uns fragen, ob die Inkarnation nicht die Möglichkeit ist, den Grundsatz der Verantwortung bis in seine letzte Konsequenz fortzuführen.

Es ist auch die erweiterte Darstellung der Formel von Chalcedon seitens Ulrich Engel hervorzuheben, mit der nicht nur in Jesus Christus die Beziehung seiner bei-
den Naturen zum Ausdruck bringt, sondern auch die Beziehung von Jesus Christus zur Welt. Dabei würde es sich um eine einheitliche Beziehung handeln, in welcher die Bestandteile nicht getrennt sind und sich auch nicht vermischen.

Ich stimme mit der von ihm gezogenen Schlussfolgerung voll und ganz überein. Die Erinnerung an Jesus als Menschwerdung Gottes führt dazu, dass wir Gläubigen auf die Geschichte und die Welt sehen, um uns in einer Humanisierungsaufgabe zu verpflichten. Die Aufgabe unserer Reflexion besteht im Festhalten der Dimensionen unserer Welt, in welcher wir humanisierend tätig sein können.

Ein paar Fragen


zurückzuholen. Ich denke, dass die richtige Vorgehensweise in einer tiefgreifenden anthropologischen Reflexion besteht, die uns den Platz zeigt, den die Religion im menschlichen Leben hat.

Vielleicht hilft uns dabei der Gedanke, dass die Inkarnation zwei Bewegungen aufzeigt: die von Gott in Richtung auf die Welt, aber auch die Bewegung der Welt zu Gott. Die Inkarnation offenbart etwas von Gott, aber auch etwas vom menschlichen Wesen. Die Inkarnation zeigt auf, dass der Mensch zu Gott fähig ist und dass er dazu berufen ist, in einer Beziehung zu diesem Gott zu leben. Das bedeutet, dass die Religion nicht eine Größe ist, die im modernen Entwicklungsprozess zu überwinden ist, wie es manche aufgeklärte Strömungen darstellen. Die religiöse Beziehung ist eine Dimension des Menschlichen, die man nicht vernachlässiggen kann und die laut Habermas Werte aufzeigt, welche die aufgeklärte Vernunft selbst nicht hervorbringen kann.

Mir scheint, dass die uns von Ulrich Engel vorgestellte Inkarnationstheologie in diese andere Richtung weiterentwickelt werden kann. Etwas davon wurde in der Beziehung zwischen Inkarnation und Verantwortung genannt, aber die ethische Verpflichtung der Welt gegenüber darf nicht jede religiöse Dimension auslöschen, sondern hat vielmehr dazu beizutragen, diese zu überdenken.

Schließlich möchte ich noch auf ein christologisches Problem hinweisen, das im christlichen Leben und im Auftrag der Kirche bedeutet die Aufnahme des Jesuskinds die Aufnahme aller Menschen, wie es im Evangelium wörtlich heißt. Man müsste sich jedoch fragen, ob die menschliche Natur Christi und die der restlichen Menschen im gleichen Maß das fleischgewordene Wort darstellen. Müsste man sich nicht fragen, ob nicht gerade das von Gott in Jesus gesprochene Wort Verantwortung zur Verantwortung für die Mitmenschen überleitet? Und zwar auf eine Weise, dass, wenn Ersteres aus dem Gedächtnis der Menschheit verschwinden würde, auch das Zweite verschwände?
Incarnation and Responsibility

Response to: ULRICH ENGEL „Inkarnation als theologische Denkform"

Before giving my agreements and my questions to what has been raised by Ulrich Engel, I wish to offer my understanding of his paper.

The theology of incarnation in Ulrich Engel’s paper

If I have understood correctly, Professor Ulrich Engel has indicated the relevance of incarnation for Christianity that exists in the culture of secularisation. Commenting on a pictorial representation of Santo Domingo, he has developed the idea that the fact of incarnation opens the preacher and the Church to the reality of the world.

In his study on incarnation, he has made reference to the Dominican theologian M.-D. Chenue in order to add the fact of incarnation in the mark of the history of salvation. From this impromptu soteriology, mainly two consequences can be drawn: 1) Firstly, the ultimate finality of incarnation is the deification of man. 2) Secondly, time and history have to be considered as the path that passes eternity to make its presence among us.

As a result of all this, what is offered is a dynamic concept of revelation in which the reality of God, which has been communicated entirely through Jesus Christ, reaches its peak in the passing of time. In other words, the word of God, succeeded by Jesus Christ, continues through history. In this way, the historical processes are the place for demonstration as is the secular culture. The task of theology, that takes into account incarnation, consists of penetrating into the culture each moment to take away from it the expression of the reality of God.

In his interpretation of the incarnation, it must be highlighted that Ulrich Engel presents an aspect that is not usually highlighted in a study on incarnation. The aspect of the relationship between incarnation and responsibility to others. In his very words: incarnation is not a fall into nothingness but an expression of the responsibility of God through his creation and through humanity.
At the heart of his presentation, Ulrich Engel refers to an idea from Giovanni Vattimo for interpreting incarnation as a process of self denial of the divinity of God (kenosis). This process represents the end of the metaphysical idea of God, which would open us up to the responsibility throughout the world. Referring to the theology of Bonhoeffer, a “non-religious Christianity” is proposed, that would consist of an ethical compromise, in which Christian faith would be translated into plural secular and religious experiences.

From this perspective an ecclesiastical action is proposed to us that understands the following of Jesus as the humanisation of the world, defending human dignity in predication and renouncing power.

Fundamental agreements

Firstly, the author has to be congratulated for bringing attention to the heart of the Christian experience which is incarnation. This incident marks what is specifically Christian and, therefore, has been a point of conflict in history when Christianity meets with either religious and philosophical views. And it has also been this aspect in the very Christian self-conscious that has had difficulty in grasping the consequences of the event of incarnation.

Secondly, it is important to remember that once again reincarnation, as a principle of Christian life and form of all theology, if we think about it consequently, frees Christianity from manichaeism and idealist spiritualism.

As has been pointed out by the author, incarnation opens us up to history and the world, offers us a dynamic image of God and places the soteriological perspective at the heart of Christian study.

In this sense, I find the relationship between incarnation and the responsibility for others to be a new and suggestive contribution that should be expanded and looked at in more detail. Incarnation is the expression of a God that is responsible for his creation. Extending this idea, we could ask ourselves if incarnation represents the way to bring the principle of responsibility to its ultimate consequences.

Another point that should be highlighted is the extension that Ulrich Engel makes in the formula of Calcedonia to express not only in Jesus Christ the relationship of his two kinds, but also to express the relationship of Jesus Christ with the world. This would be a relationship of unity in which the parts are not separated or mixed up.

I totally agree with the conclusion that he arrives at. The memory of Jesus, as the incarnate of God, makes believers look at history and the world to commit ourselves to a task of humanisation. The tasks of our study is to point out the dimensions of our world in which we can exercise the act of humanisation.
Questions

Ulrich Engel’s paper has also raised a few questions on my part. The first question relates to the concept of secularisation. I seem to understand that Ulrich Engel is referring to a concept of secularisation that is covered in the enlightened thought process. In this sense, the Enlightenment, and the secularisation as a derivation of the Enlightenment, are understood as the historic process of the maturity of mankind. Secularisation would bring humans to the age of maturity.

I wonder if today we can continue to use this enlightened concept of secularisation, that I believe is the concept that Vattimo and Bonhoeffer use. Do we not have to initiate a critical review of the process of secularisation? Without doubt, the enlightened secularisation has freed parts of human life that must take on a self-development from the religious domain.

The European philosophy over the last few years has left the project of Enlightenment, which is most clearly expressed in the piece by Marcase and Adorno, “Dialéctica de la Ilustración”, open to criticism. I also believe that it is also currently necessary to review the concept of secularisation. From this critical perspective, can the secular world be seen only as a process of human maturity? Now into the 21st century, secularisation doesn’t appear to be flowing into nihilism. Has the current European culture given up on the great references of humanity? Is it being emptied of ideological values and references that are only filled by consumption?

Is the plural collaboration on a human ethics project not demanding us to rethink the modern world’s relationship with religion? It is to this review that Habermas points to in his speech of 2001, to which Ulrich Engel has dedicated some work. In this aspect, the rethink on the relationship between modernity and religion agrees with the author in that it is not possible to recover the idea of a metaphysical God. I believe that the right direction is to carry out an profound anthropological study that shows us the place of religion in human life.

Perhaps it will help us to think that incarnation leads to two movements: the movement of God towards the world, but also the world towards God. Incarnation reveals something in God, but also something in humans. Incarnation shows that man is capable of God and that he is calling to live in relationship with this God. In other words, that religion is not a dimension to be exceeded in the process of modern evolution, as shown by some enlightened currents. The relationship with religion is a dimension of mankind that cannot be ignored and that, as highlighted by Habermas, brings forward several values that enlightened reason is not capable of obtaining on its own.

It seems to me that the theology of incarnation that Ulrich Engel has presented to us can be developed in this other direction. Part of this has been indicated in the relationship of incarnation and responsibility, but the ethical compromise with the world must not put an end to all religious dimensions, but help to rethink it.
Lastly I would like to point to a Christological problem that today is debated in European theology. It is the question of the singular humanity of Christ. Recognising the contribution of the Christology of the 70s and 80s that underlined the humanity of Christ, today some Christological studies point to the singular nature of this humanity. The hypostatic union, that is carried out in real humanity, produces a singular humanity, that of the Son of God. In this way, Christ, who is shared by all humanity, points to a difference in that his divine condition is contained. From the singular humanity of Christ, I believe that it would be necessary to discuss the final conclusion of the paper. In Christian life and the mission of the Church, welcoming the child Jesus brings with it welcoming all mankind, as the very words of the Gospel tell us. However, it should be questioned if the humanity of Christ and the humanity of the rest of mankind represent in the same measure the personification of the word. It wouldn’t need to be questioned whether the word of responsibility that God says in Jesus doesn’t lead to the responsibility for other human beings so that if the former disappeared from the memory of humanity so would the second.
UNTERBRECHUNG: KUNST ~ BREAK: ART
Menschen-Bilder. Über „Familienähnlichkeiten“ zwischen theologischem Sinn und säkularer Kunst


Familienähnlichkeiten


³ L. Wittgenstein, Philosophische Untersuchungen, Frankfurt/M. ’1982, 57 (I, 67): „Ich kann diese Ähnlichkeiten nicht besser charakterisieren als durch das Wort ‚Familienähnlichkeiten‘; denn so übergreifen und kreuzen sich die verschiedenen Ähnlichkeiten, die zwischen den Gliedern einer Familie bestehen: Wuchs, Gesichtszüge, Augenfarbe, Gang, Temperament, etc. etc. – Und ich werde sagen: die ‚Spiele‘ bilden eine Familie."

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beschreibt in seinen Philosophischen Untersuchungen Ähnlichkeitsbeziehungen, die
logisch oder substanziell nichts gemeinsam haben und doch irgendwie zusammen-
gehören. Familienähnlichkeiten, so Wittgenstein, resultieren nicht aus logischen
Gemeinsamkeiten. Sie erschließen sich deshalb auch nicht dem begrifflichen Den-
ken. Ihr Spezifikum ist vielmehr, dass sie sich allein dem Sehen erschließen. 4

Menschen-Bilder
Welche Ähnlichkeiten können wir erkennen, wenn wir als Gläubige ein säkula-
res Kunstwerk betrachten? Wo liegen die Gemeinsamkeiten zwischen theologi-
schem Sinn und künstlerischem Ausdruck verborgen? Ich versuche eine Antwort.
(Andere wären möglich.)

Im Sinne eines christlichen Humanismus, der nach Maßgabe der Enzyklika
Evangelium vitae den Menschen als Geschöpf Gottes ernst nimmt und ihm solcher-
art eine besondere Würde zuerkennt5, hat die kirchliche Kulturarbeiten in spezifischer
Weise auf den Menschen zu zielen – und zwar in seiner je einmaligen Individualität
und mit seiner je unverwechselbaren Biographie.

Papst Johannes Paul II. hat Anfang der 1980er Jahre von katholischer Seite aus
einen neuen Brückenschlag zu Künstler und Künstlern gesucht: Ausgehend von der
Pastoralkonstitution Gaudium et spes des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils erkannte er
die Gemeinsamkeiten zwischen Kirche und Künstlern in der Sorge um den Men-
schen. „Das Thema der Kirche und das Thema der Künstler (...) ist der Mensch,
das Bild vom Menschen, die Wahrheit vom Menschen, das ‘Ecce homo’, wozu seine
Geschichte, seine Welt und Umwelt gehören, ebenso der gesellschaftliche, ökonomi-
sche und politische Kontext.“ 6

Das Bild des Menschen steht heute allerdings mehr denn je in Frage: Was ist
der Mensch? Noch einmal sei Johannes Paul II. zitiert; 1983 sagte er in Wien: „Mö-
gen wir uns im Übrigen auch an verschiedenen Ufern aufhalten, so begegnen wir

4 Vgl. ebd., 60 (1, 72): „Das Gemeinsame sehen. Nimm an, ich zeige jemand verschiedene bunte Bilder,
und sage: „Die Farbe, die du in allen siehst, heißt »Ocker«“ – Das ist eine Erklärung, die verstanden
wird, indem der Andere aufsucht und sieht, was jenen Bildern gemeinsam ist. Er kann dann auf das
Gemeinsame blicken, darauf zeigen“. 
5 Vgl. Johannes Paul II., Evangelium vitae. Enzyklika über den Wert und die Unantastbarkeit des mensch-
llichen Lebens. 25. März 1995 (Verlautbarungen des Apostolischen Stuhls Bd. 120), Bonn 1995, Nr. 82.
6 Ders., Ansprache an die Künstler und Publizisten im Herkulessaal in München am 19. November 1980,
in: Papst Johannes Paul II., Predigten und Ansprachen während des Besuchs in Deutschland sowie Be-
Ausgabe (Verlautbarungen des Apostolischen Stuhls Bd. 25A), Bonn 30.J., 186–193, hier 188.
uns einander doch in der Frage nach dem Menschen und seiner Welt. Und wir tun dies in einer weltgeschichtlichen Situation, in welcher die Zukunft des Menschen radikal bedroht ist."  

Was hier von kirchlicher Seite formuliert wird, bestätigt von anderer Seite der Kunstkritiker Lothar Romain: „Je länger sich die Künstler der Moderne mit dem Bild des Menschen beschäftigt haben, um so fragwürdiger ist es geworden. Wie denn auch das Bild einer intakten Persönlichkeit schaffen, wenn es dazu kein Modell mehr gibt?“

„Gloria Dei, vivens homo“

Im Bild des Menschen finden Kunst und Kirche bei aller Unterschiedlichkeit zusammen. Im Bild des Menschen – so unklar, abstrakt oder zerstört es auch sein mag – finden Ästhetik und Glaube ihre „Familienähnlichkeit“. Im Bild des Menschen finden Säkularität und Religion zueinander.

Um den Menschen zu erkennen, müssen wir schauen, hinschauen – und staunen. Denn „Gloria Dei, vivens homo.“ – „Die Ehre Gottes liegt im Glück des Menschen“. In diesem Sinne lade ich Sie/euch jetzt herzlich ein zum Besuch des MUSEO REINA SOFÍA.

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10 E. Schillebeeckx, Die Auferstehung Jesu als Grund der Erlösung. Zwischenbericht über die Prolegomena zu einer Christologie, Freiburg/Br. 1979, 75.
Human Images. On “family resemblances” between Theological Meaning and Secular Art

Where do we find Alexei von Jawlensky’s ‘Abstract Head Icons’? Where do we find Emil Nolde’s ‘The Last Supper’? Where do we find Ernst Barlach’s ‘Singing Monks’? Where do we find Max Beckmann’s ‘Deposition of Christ’? (...) Where do we find Kasimir Malevitch’s ‘White Cross on White Background’? Where do we find Barnet Newman’s ‘The Stations of the Cross’? Where do we find Arnulf Rainer’s ‘Crosses’? And where do we find Werner Knaupp’s ‘Crucifixes’? In churches? No, we find them in museums and in studios. “

Family resemblances

How is this exodus of modern visual art from church buildings to be assessed? Are we confronted with a typical secularisation drama here? Has the museum taken the place of cathedrals, the vernissage taken the place of Sunday service, the artist superseded the priest, the painting superseded the invisible God? Do art and church have nothing in common at the beginning of the 21st century?

But perhaps everything is also quite different! Both protagonists – Church and Art – deal with the depiction of meaning in signs, symbols, similes and images. They feature family resemblances. The talk of “family resemblances” harks back to Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951). In his Philosophical Investigations he describes

3 L. Wittgenstein, Philosophische Untersuchungen, Frankfurt/M. 1923/1982, 57 (I, 67): „Ich kann diese Ähnlichkeiten nicht besser charakterisieren als durch das Wort ‘Familienähnlichkeiten’; denn so übergreifen und kreuzen sich die verschiedenen Ähnlichkeiten, die zwischen den Gliedern einer Familie bestehen: Wuchs, Gesichtszüge, Augenfarbe, Gang, Temperament, etc. etc. – Und ich werde sagen: die ’Spiele’ bilden eine Familie.”
similarity relations which have nothing logically or substantially in common and yet somehow belong together. According to Wittgenstein, family resemblances do not result from logical commonalities. This is also why they do not reveal to any conceptual reasoning. Their specification is rather that they solely reveal to vision.4

Human images

Which similarities can we discern if we, as believers, view a secular work of art? Where are the commonalities between theological meaning and artistic expression concealed? I will attempt one answer. (Others would be possible.)

In terms of Christian humanism, which in accordance with the encyclical Evangelium Vitae takes the concept of man as God’s creation seriously and confers such a special dignity upon him5, the ecclesiastical cultural work has to appeal to people in a specific way — namely in terms of their respective unique individuality and with their respective unmistakable biography.

In the beginning of the 1980s, Pope John Paul II sought to bridge the gap between the arts and artists from the Catholic side. Starting from the Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et Spes of the Second Vatican council, he recognised the commonalities between Church and artists in the concern for people. “The theme of the Church and the theme of artists (...) is the human being, the image of humans, the truth of humans, the ‘Ecce Homo’, which includes their history, their world and environment as well as the societal, economic and political context.”6

However, the image of humans is called into question more than ever nowadays: What is man? John Paul II is cited once again; in 1983, he said in Vienna: “Incidentally, even if we stay on different shores, we still meet each other with regard to the question of people and their world. And we do this in a world-historical situation in which the future of man is radically threatened.”7

What is formulated here from the ecclesiastical side is confirmed from the other

4 Cf. ebd., 60 (I, 72): „Das Gemeinsame sehen. Nimm an, ich zeige jemand verschiedene bunte Bilder, und sage: ,Die Farbe, die du in allen siehst, heißt „Ocker“‘ – Das ist eine Erklärung, die verstanden wird, indem der Andere aufsucht undsieht, was jenen Bildern gemeinsam ist. Er kann dann auf das Gemeinsame blicken, darauf zeigen“.

5 Cf. Johannes Paul II., Evangelium vitae. Enzyklika über den Wert und die Unantastbarkeit des menschlichen Lebens. 25. März 1995 (Verlautbarungen des Apostolischen Stuhls Bd. 120), Bonn 1995, Nr. 82.


side by art critic Lothar Romain: “The longer modern artists have dealt with the image of humans, the more questionable it has become. How to create the image of an intact personality if there is no longer a model for this purpose?”

“Gloria Dei, vivens homo“

Despite all dissimilarity, Art and Church converge in the image of humans. As ambiguous, abstract or corrupted as they may also be, aesthetics and beliefs are similar in their “family resemblance” in the image of humans. Secularity and religion find common ground in the image of humans.

In order to recognise man, we must look, behold — and marvel. Because “Gloria Dei, vivens homo“ — “The Glory of God lies in man’s happiness“. In this sense I now cordially invite you all to visit MUSEO REINA SOFIA.

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10 E. Schillebeeckx, Die Auferstehung Jesu als Grund der Erlösung. Zwischenbericht über die Prolegomena zu einer Christologie, Freiburg/Br. 1979, 75.
Das Museum als Kathedrale?
Versuch der Erfahrung individualisierter Religiosität

Der Betrachter steht in den Räumlichkeiten eines Museums, das es sich zur Aufgabe gemacht hat, außergewöhnliche Exponate bestimmter Künstler dauerhaft auszustellen sowie zusätzlich temporäre Ausstellungen aus dieser Zeit zu organisieren und anzubieten. Ein Rundgang durch die Säle und Stockwerke eines Museums verschafft dem in den Räumen Wandelnden einen Eindruck und jeder, der sich einigermaßen für die Kunst interessiert, wird irgendwelche Exponate finden, die ihm beeindrucken, die ihm gefallen, die ihn erschrecken oder erfreuen. Außerdem wird es Exponate geben, an denen man achtlos vorbeiläuft.

Das Anliegen dieses Beitrags ist es allerdings nicht, auf ein bestimmtes Kunstwerk, eine bestimmte Epoche oder eine bestimmte temporäre Ausstellung hinzuweisen und entsprechende Details zu dokumentieren oder zu kommentieren. Es geht nicht um die Kunstwerke eines Museums, sondern es ist die Rede über das Museum an sich, das Museum als Raum, als Gebäude, das vom Augenblick des Betretens an auf den Besucher einen Eindruck hinterlässt.

„Das Museum als Kathedrale“ – mit diesem Titel soll versucht werden, auf jenes Phänomen einzugehen, dass das Museum bereits per se auf den Besucher einwirkt, dass es etwas auslöst bei denjenigen, die meistens weniger wegen des Museums kommen als vielmehr wegen der Exponate.

Das Museum

Die EKD (= Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland) hat vor einigen Jahren ein Papier veröffentlicht, welches sich mit dem Verhältnis des Protestantismus zur Kultur auseinandersetzt. Im Abschnitt „Begegnungsfelder“ geht das Papier auch auf das Museum ein:

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„Nicht zufällig ist von Museen als den ´Tempeln der Kunst´ und ´bürgerlichen Heiligtümern´ die Rede. Es scheint, als hätten Kirchen und Museen ihre Rollen vertauscht: Die alten Kathedralen werden von Touristen als museale Zeuginnen der Vergangenheit besichtigt; die neuen Galerien und Kunsthallen setzen neuzeitliche Pilgerströme in Bewegung und werden besucht als Orte der Andacht … Gegenüber der traditionellen Funktion des Museums als Stätte des Sammelmans und Bewahrens von Exponaten wollen die (post)modernen Kunstmuseen einen Mehrwert darstellen. In einer durch Rationalität entzauberten Welt kommen sie dem Wunsch nach Wiederverzauberung und Ästhetisierung des Lebens entgegen; anstelle der Kirchen präsentieren sie sich als Ort gesteigerter und verdichteter Realität.“3

Das sind sehr klare Beobachtungen, die das Papier wiedergibt: Es ist scheinbar nicht originell, sich mit dem „Museum als Kathedrale“ auseinander zu setzen, aber es ist in jedem Fall attraktiv, den Gedankengang aufzgreifen und zu vertiefen. Es gibt sogar die These, dass den Museen etwas „Utopisches“4 eignet: „Museen haben gewöhnlich eine andere Realität zum Gegenstand als diejenige, der sie sich selbst verdanken.“5 Denn die Museen heute haben im Vergleich zu früher ihre realistisch-praktische Funktion verloren, sie sind weniger primäre Wissensquellen und –speicher, weniger mit realistischer Funktion behaftet, sondern werden seitens des Publikums nur dann interessiert besucht werden, wenn sie zu Orten werden, in denen Fiktion möglich ist. Es ist deutlich, dass es vernünftig ist, in Museen mehr zu entdecken als nur Informationen über Kunst in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Das Museum ist nicht nur Ort der Aufbewahrung von Kunst, sondern ist als solches ebenfalls mehr als nur die Hülle dieser Aufbewahrung. Für die Artefakte ist klar, welche Bedeutung sie haben. Spätestens in dem Augenblick, in dem sie ins Museum gestellt werden, werden sie zu Kunstgegenständen. Fast alles, aber nicht alles, was heute im Museum als Kunst präsentiert wird, ist immer auch Kunst gewesen. Wenn sie ins Museum aufgenommen werden, bekommen sie dort definitiv eine neue Funktion und beginnen ein neues Leben als Kunstwerk.

Der Philosoph Boris Groys schreibt: „Das moderne Kunstmuseum ist also nicht ein Friedhof, sondern, wenn man will, eine Kirche für Dinge. Dort erleben sie ihre Umkehr, ihre Neugeburt, ihre Parusie. Dort bekommen sie ihre Taufe […] , die sie zu neuem Leben erweckt. […] Das Museum hat die Kirche ersetzt, nachdem der Mensch infolge der Säkularisierung sich selbst als Dinge begriffen und, wie es immer in solchen Fällen passiert, begonnen hat, die Dinge zu sakralisieren.“6

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3 Gestaltung und Kritik, 3.1.
5 Ebd., 38.
Das Museum als Raum-Erfahrung

Es soll aber nicht so sehr um die Kunstwerke gehen und um ihre Bedeutung für den Betrachter. Vielmehr soll es eben um jenen Ort der Aufbewahrung gehen, dem Museum als Raum für diese Kunstwerke. Denn der Raum des Museums ist nicht nur Raum, sondern auch ihm eignet eine besondere Bedeutung. Unter Raum ist nicht nur zu verstehen als etwas Äußerliches (Ausdehnung, Umfang, Gebäudeteil etc.), sondern auch als Stätte der Entfaltung – die Räume bilden „Sphären“ (Mertin). Der Raum hat zu tun mit Freiheit, d.h. mit Freiräumen. In diesem Zusammenhang stellen sich zwei Fragen: Was macht einen Raum zu einem „religiösen“ Raum und was macht ihn zu einem „christlichen“ Raum?


Man deklariert Räume zu religiösen Räumen, man metaphorisiert sie religiös. „Religiöse Räume im engeren Sinne sind solche Räume, die von der Umwelt bewusst abgegrenzt werden, um in ihnen konzentriert über den ausgegrenzten Bereich zu reflektieren, zu meditieren etc.“ (Mertin)

Der christliche Raum in Anlehnung zum religiösen Raum wird zu einem solchen nicht einfach nur durch die Präsenz beispielsweise eines Kreuzes – das ist zwar ein christliches Symbol, welches aber u.a. auch in einem Gerichtssaal hängen kann. Ein Raum wird zu einem christlichen Raum, wenn in ihm ein christlicher Gottesdienst gefeiert wird. „Indem ein Mensch sich in einem Raum zu Jesus Christus wendet, wird aus diesem Raum ein christlicher Raum. Man sieht es nicht, aber es geschieht.“ (Mertin) In der katholischen Kultur gibt es natürlich ein untrügliches Indiz für das Christliche im Falle der Präsenz des Allerheiligsten. Aber es gilt: „… wir lesen/deuten Räume als christliche und das kann aufgrund äußerer Indizien geschehen oder durch einen subjektiven Einstellungswechsel bzw. ein kommunikativerem Verhalten.“ (Mertin)

Das Museum als Ort individualisierter und implizierter Religiosität

Diese Fragen stellt man sich normalerweise im Blick auf Kirchenräume. Es besteht das grundsätzliche Einverständnis, dass die Begegnung von Kunst und Religion (Theologie) primär dort stattfindet, wo sich ritualisierte gemeinschaftliche Religionsausübung vollzieht und wo sich Vorstellungen von Gott, seinem Wirken und der Re-

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lation zwischen Gott und Welt in Bildern manifestieren. Aber es stellt sich die Frage, ob man dies auch auf Museumsräume übertragen kann? Kann man einen Raum, der eindeutig kein Kirchenraum ist und ein solcher gar nicht sein soll, zu einem religiösen, zu einem christlichen Raum „machen“? Ich behaupte: Auch das Museum kann zu einem Ort des Religiösen werden, vielleicht auch zu einem Ort des Christlichen.


13 Natrup, Ästhetische Andacht, a.a.O., 77.

**Eigene Erfahrungen sammeln**

Der Besuch eines Museums kann Teil dessen sein, was auch „Lebenskunst“ (*ars vivendi*) genannt wird. Es zeigt sich, dass bestimmte Antworten in Literatur, Theater und Fernsehen (insbesondere Werbung) gegeben werden und es in der Lebenskunst praktisch um Techniken und Übungen der Selbstformung und Selbstbestimmung geht.\(^{15}\) Ein aus freien Stücken entschiedener Ausflug in ein Museum setzt im Menschen eine gewisse Erwartungshaltung frei. Er möchte nicht nur etwas erleben, sondern er möchte in möglichst umfassenden Sinne Erfahrungen sammeln und Erkenntnisse gewinnen, seien es kunsthistorisch relevant, seien es persönliche im Sinne von Selbsterfahrung und –erkennnis. Deshalb sind Museumsbesuchern folgende Fragen zur Selbstreflexion angeraten:

- Wie war mein Gefühl, als ich das Museum betrat? Welche Erwartungen habe ich mitgebracht?
- Wie verhalte ich mich im Museums-Raum? Ist er für mich ein quasi-sakraler Ort?
- Was empfinde ich, wenn ich den Rundgang mache? Was berührt mich, was gefällt mir, was stört mich?
- Habe ich am Ende gar das Gefühl, eine „Kathedrale“ besucht zu haben?

The Museum as Cathedral?
An Attempt to Experience Individualised Religiosity

The viewer is standing in the premises of a museum that has made it their task to permanently display extraordinary exhibits of certain artists as well as to additionally organise and offer temporary exhibitions from this period. A tour through the halls and floors of a museum creates an impression in the visitor of the rooms, and anyone who is somewhat interested in art will find exhibits which impress them, which they like, which frighten or delight them. There will also be exhibits which one runs past thoughtlessly.

However, the concern of this contribution is not to point out a certain work of art, a certain epoch or a certain temporary exhibition and to document or to comment on corresponding details.\(^{1}\) It is not about the works of art in a museum, but it is the discourse about the museum per se, the museum as a space, as a building that leaves behind an impression on the visitor from the moment of entry.

“The Museum as Cathedral“ — with this title an attempt shall be made to address that phenomenon that the museum already has an influence on the visitor per se, that it triggers something amongst those who more often than not come less because of the museum but rather because of the exhibits.

The museum

Several years ago, the EKD (Evangelical Church in Germany) published a paper which dealt with the relationship of Protestantism with culture.\(^{2}\) In the section “fields of encounter” the paper also addresses the museum:

“It is not coincidental that the discourse is about museums as the ‘temples of art’ and ‘civic sanctuaries’. It seems as if churches and museums have reversed their roles:

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the old cathedrals are being visited by tourists as if they are museum-piece witnesses of
the past; the new galleries and art museums set modern streams of pilgrims in motion
and are being visited as places of devotion… In contrast with the museum’s traditi-
onal function as site for collecting and safeguarding exhibits, the (post) modern art
museums want to depict an added value. In a world disenchanted through rationality
they accommodate the wish for re-enchantment and aestheticisation of life; in place
of churches they present themselves as the site of enhanced and condensed reality.\(^3\)

These are very clear observations which the paper renders. It is apparently not
original to deal with the “museum as cathedral”, but it is at any rate attractive to take
up and to deepen the line of thought. There is even the thesis that the museums are
suitable as something “utopian”\(^4\): “Museums have usually owed a different reality as
subject matter than themselves.”\(^5\) Because in comparison with former times, the mu-
seums today have lost their realistic-practical function; they are less primary sources
and repositories of knowledge, less afflicted with realistic function, but they will only
be visited with interest by the public if they become sites where fiction is possible. It
is clear that it is reasonable to discover more in museums than merely information
about art in the course of history and in the world of today. The museum is not only
a site for safekeeping art, but as such it is also more than merely the shell of this safe-
keeping. For the artefacts it is clear which importance they have. At the latest in the
moment in which they are placed in the museum they become art objects. Almost
everything, but not everything, which is presented in the museum as art nowadays
has also always been art. If it is incorporated into the museum it definitively obtains
a new function there and starts a new life as a work of art.

The philosopher Boris Groys writes: “Therefore the modern art museum is not
a cemetery, but, if you will, a church for things. There it experiences its conversion,
its rebirth, its parousia. There it obtains its baptism […], which inspires it to a new
life. […] The museum has replaced the church after man has comprehended them-
selves as things as a result of secularisation and, as it always happened in such cases,
started to sacralise things.”\(^6\)

The museum as a spatial experience

But it should not be so much about the works of art and about their importance for
the viewer. On the contrary, it should actually be about the site of safekeeping, the

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\(^3\) Gestaltung und Kritik, 3.1.
politische Mitteilungen, Heft 100, Bonn 2003, 38–40.
\(^5\) Ebd., 38.
museum as a space for these works of art. Because the museum’s space is not only space, but it also suits for a special importance. Space is not only to be understood as something extrinsic (expansion, scope, part of a building, etc.), but also as a site of display — the rooms constitute “spheres” (Mertin). Space entails freedom, i.e. free spaces. Two questions can be posed in this connection: What makes a space a “religious” space, and what makes it a “Christian” space?

At the same time, it is to be noted that the concept of religiosity is first of all a quite unspecific and correspondingly broadly conceived concept. In the following it is appropriate to follow the definition suggested by Hans-Ferdinand Angel, for whom religiosity is the biologically essential endowment of man which enables a holistic and unsurpassable world & self-interpretation as well as self-dedication borne by the entire personality. In doing so, Angel presupposes that there is religiosity in the sense of a fundamental endowment of man. His diverse patterns of experience and behaviour are thus characteristics of exactly this religiosity. For Angel the endowment with religiosity is the necessary prerequisite for the fact that people are able to gain the experience of God. Yet he emphasises that his thesis of a more human religiosity is not the question of God per se, but merely addresses people endowed with the ability to encounter God — a small but fine nuance.

Simply expressed, “religious” is to be understood in this context as the phenomenon of a somehow metaphysically or transcendentally natured feeling, whereas “Christian” is to be understood as the correspondingly specific variant of the Christian tradition of redemption and resurrection.

Presumably any space can be considered as a place of religiosity under certain circumstances. This has nothing to do with a certain structuring, but rather with a certain (temporary) punctuation: in the beginning, synagogues and spaces for liturgical worship were also spaces for business or living which were converted at short notice. Such punctuations are also to be understood in the context of rituals and ritualisations which normally play a great role in religion, but also with respect to education, theatre, politics and social services, and affect the individual as well as the community. This is why current ritual studies specifically take into account new forms of ritualisations, whether it is everyday rituals, religious, and civil-religious or secular rituals. Benedikt Kranemann points out that the function of rituals is to be paraphrased with “religious communication” and not only means crisis manage-

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9 Cf. idem, Religiosität, Stuttgart 2006.
ment or organisation of time with regard to calendrical rituals, but above all the communication with a transcendent counterpart. Moreover, in conjunction with the theme of this contribution it is to be conceded that the perception of and participation in religious rituals nowadays is for the most part subject to the choice of individuals and is part of the pluralisation process. This also applies to the individual’s dealings with spaces.

Spaces are declared as religious spaces, religious metaphors are made. “In the narrower sense, religious spaces are such spaces which will be deliberately differentiated from the environment in order to intently reflect, to meditate, etc. in them about the segregated area.” (Mertin)

Following the example of religious space, the Christian space becomes such a space not simply through the presence of a cross, for instance; this is a Christian symbol which can also hang in a courtroom, among other things. A space becomes a Christian space if a Christian service is celebrated in it. “A space becomes a Christian space by virtue of a man turning to Jesus Christ in such a space. One does not see it, but it happens.” (Mertin) In the Catholic culture there is naturally an unmistakable indication of the Christian aspect in the event of the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. But the following also applies: “… we read/construe spaces as Christian, and this can happen on account of external indications, or through a subjective change of attitude or a communicative behaviour.” (Mertin)

The museum as a place of individualised and implied religiosity

These questions are normally posed with regard to church spaces. There is fundamental agreement that the encounter of art and religion (theology) primarily occurs where ritualised, collaborative practice of religion takes place and where perceptions of God, his ministry and the relationship between God and the world are manifested in images.” But the question arises as to whether this can be transferred to museum spaces? Can a space which is clearly not a church space and should not even be such a space be “made” into a religious, a Christian space? I assert: the museum can also become a place of religiosity, perhaps also a place of Christianity.

At the same time, it is evident that the museum does not become religious or Christian because it is asserted that this room is religious or Christian. But here

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10 Cf. B. Kranemann, Riten und Rituale der Postmoderne, in: http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/cps/rde/xbcr/SID-3744CE53-90037E3B/bst/Kranemann%20-%20Riten%20und%20Rituale070925.pdf [Call: 9.2.2010]. For Kranemann it is evident that the transcendent counterpart is tantamount to God and that the religious ritual is essentially an expression of an attestation of faith.

it also applies that there has to be a desire, a feeling that emerges when one strides through the spaces of a museum. Thereby it can be important to relate to the exhibits. But the exhibits are not necessarily required if the museum succeeds as a space in “having an effect” on the visitor, the viewer. Interesting examples are freshly renovated museums or newly built museums which are fully completed, but not a single exhibit has been put up or hung up. Along the walk through the architecturally designed museum building, through the halls, allows religious emotions to surface which one cannot resist. However, the most important prerequisite for this is that one is open to this case. This candour is quite real: “Art or the staging of art events appears to adopt pivotal functions of religion here such as coping with contingency and confrontation with essential questions and endowment with meaning.”

So there are special rituals and liturgies pertaining to the visit in the art museum. Every visitor enters the museum with a certain feeling, with a certain expectation that – perhaps heretofore unknown to them – fulfils exactly that emotion and that expectation of enjoying the museum visit. The art historian emphasises that the postmodern art museum participates in the religious language, in the rituals, and the visit to a museum is similar to visiting a church space: handing over clothing and bags at the cloakroom becomes a “purification ritual”, the tour through the exhibition rooms is absolved with altered gesticulation and particular walking pace, “devotional objects” or “relics” are picked up from the museum shop, and the visit to the museum café emphasises the visitor’s affiliation with a certain milieu.

A museum therefore does not automatically become a place of religiosity. Various prerequisites are required for this purpose. So a certain degree of sensitivity to architecture and art is required. Among other things, a certain degree of interest to get involved in architecture and art, to behold both and allow them to have an effect, is required. This is not unlike visiting a church. In order to allow the church space to have an effect on me, and in order to obtain an impression of the existing works of art in the church and its particular architecture, I also have to be tempered for this purpose.

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12 “Contemporary art seems not to resist a religious production, especially if it is displayed in a postmodern art museum, and under certain circumstances can even be utilised as an equivalent or substitute for ecclesiastically associated religiosity.” S. Natrup, Ästhetische Andacht. Das postmoderne Kunstmuseum als Ort individualisierter und implizierter Religion, in: J. Hermann u.a. (Hrsg.), Die Gegenwart der Kunst. Ästhetische und religiöse Erfahrung heute, München 1998, 73–83; hier 74.
13 Natrup, Ästhetische Andacht, a.a.O., 77.
Gain individual experiences
Visiting a museum can be part of what is also called “art of living” (*ars vivendi*). It shows that certain answers will be given in literature, theatre and television (especially advertising), and the art of living practically involves techniques and exercises of self-formation and self-determination. An excursion to a museum decided in terms of one's own free will unleashes certain expectations in people. They would not only like to experience something, but they would like to gain experiences and knowledge in the broadest possible sense, whether it is relevant from an art-historical point of view or whether it is personal in the sense of self-awareness and self-knowledge. That is why the following questions are advised to museum visitors for self-reflection:

- What was my feeling as I entered the museum? What expectations did I bring with me?
- How do I behave in the museum space? Is it a quasi-sacred place for me?
- What do I feel when I walk around? What affects me, what do I like, what disturbs me?
- In the end, did I even have the feeling of having visited a “cathedral”?

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III. Handeln ~ Acting
„Wie du mich in die Welt gesandt hast, so habe auch ich sie in die Welt gesandt“ (Joh 17, 18; NbR 22, 51). Das Evangeli kale\textsuperscript{1} Leben und die Mission der Franziskaner 21. Jahrhundert


\textsuperscript{1} Ich verwende den Terminus „evangelikal“ hier in einem ganz spezifischen Sinn. Wie das Leben der Mönche vom Rhythmus des ora et labora bestimmt wurde und das apostolische Leben durch das Apostolat oder das geistliche Amt bestimmt wurde, wird das franziskanische Leben durch die Evangelien bestimmt, und wird in diesem Sinne als evangeli kale Lebensform bezeichnet.


Religionsausübung durch Laien auf zwei Arten zur Welt hin: zum einen orthodox in den vielen verschiedenen Ausdrucksformen des apostolischen Lebens und der Bußbewegungen, zum anderen in heterodoxen Ausdrucksweisen, die vom Praktischen (z.B. dem Bestehen auf der Priesterschaft der Getauften und deren Recht zu predigen) bis zum Theoretischen (z.B. die Katharer und andere dualistische Glaubensformen) reichten. Es war in mindestens einer Hinsicht diese Verschiebung der Grenzen zwischen dem Sakralen und dem Säkularen, die einen Kontext für die Ankunft von Franziskus und seinen Brüdern schuf, die zusammen mit anderen auf diese veränderte Position des Sakralen hin zur Welt und in das Leben von Männern und Frauen reagierten.⁴

Im Folgenden werde ich drei Dimensionen der franziskanischen Theologie des evangelikalen Lebens als Reaktion auf diese Verlagerung der Position des Sakralen betrachten; zuerst in Bezug auf die Gotteserfahrung, dann zweitens in Bezug auf das Verstehen der menschlichen Person und schließlich im Hinblick auf die Welt als Schauplatz von Gottes Wirken und Präsenz. Diese Dimensionen der evangelikalen Theologie der Franziskaner entspringen einer Aussage Jesu aus der letzten Rede des Johannesevangeliums, die Franziskus in der Nicht Bullierten Regel (Regula non bullata) zitierte und interpretierte: „Wie du mich in die Welt gesandt hast, habe auch ich sie in die Welt gesandt“ (Joh 17, 18; NbR 22, 51),⁵ und gleichzeitig charakterisiert diese Aussage Jesu, wie Franziskus sie aufgenommen hat, den veränderten Standpunkt für die religiöse Erfahrung und das religiöse Bewusstsein der Menschen zu Beginn des dreizehnten Jahrhunderts.

Die evangelikale Theologie und die Gotteserfahrung

Franziskus und seine Brüder gelangten zu einem Verständnis ihres Lebens als eine Antwort auf Gottes Aufforderung: „den Lehren und Fußspuren unseres Herrn Jesus Christus zu folgen“ (NbR 1, 1).⁶ Man kann entdecken, wie die Brüder zu dieser Einsicht über ihr Leben gelangten, durch den Prozess, den Franziskus in seinem Testament beschreibt, in welchem er zuerst erzählt, wie er bei den Aussätzigen lebte, wie er dann zu der Erfahrung der Präsenz Jesu Christi im Wort und im Sakrament gelangte, wie diese Wahl der sozialen Verlagerung schließlich Brüder dazu brachte, seine Erfahrung teilen zu wollen, und wie Franziskus dann, nachdem Gott ihm

⁵ In der Vulgata heißt es: “Sicut me misisti in mundum et eo misi eos in mundum.”
⁶ E. Menestò/S. Brufani (Hrsg.), Fontes Francescani, Assisi 1995, 186: “Regula et vita istorum fratrum haec est, scilicet vivere in obedientia, in castitate et sine propio, et Domini nostri Jesu Christi dotrimam et vestigia sequi (Mt 28,19).”
Brüder gegeben hatte, um sein Leben zu teilen, davon sprach, wie Gott ihm offenbart hatte, was dies alles im Leben „nach der Form des Evangeliums“ bedeute. So wie Franziskus es beschrieb, folgte diese Form, das Evangelium zu leben, auf die Erfahrung eines geteilten Lebens zunächst mit den Aussätzigen und dann mit den Brüdern, welcher auch eine in erster Linie liturgische Erfahrung der wahren Präsenz Jesu in der Kirche vorausging. Diese Dimensionen des Lebens von Franziskus und seinen Brüdern bilden somit den Kontext um zu verstehen, was mit Vers vierzehn des Testaments gemeint ist: „Als dann der Herr mir Brüder gab, war niemand, der mir zeigte, was ich tun solle, sondern der Allerhöchste selbst offenbarte mir, dass ich nach der Form des Evangeliums leben solle.“\(^7\)

Diese „Form des Evangeliums“ wird auch in einem anderen Zusammenhang beschrieben, mit Worten, die Franziskus gebrauchte, um die Bedeutung der Bitte des Vaterrunsers seiner Meditation zum Vaterunser zu entfalten, in der es heißt: „Gib uns heute: zum Gedächtnis und Verständnis und zur Hochachtung der Liebe, die er [unser Herr Jesus Christus] zu uns gehabt hat, und dessen, was er für uns gesprochen, getan und erduldet hat“ (Vat 6).\(^9\) Hier wird die Form des Evangeliums mit der Liebe identifiziert, die Jesus in seinen Worten, seinen Taten und seinem Erdulden gezeigt hat. Es ist diese Erfahrung Jesu, die Franziskus dazu brachte, seine Einsichten in die Natur Gottes zum Ausdruck zu bringen, und was die Aufmerksamkeit von Franziskus und seinen Brüdern auf sich zieht, ist das Mysterium Gottes im Sinne von Gottes Dasein „für uns“ — *pro nobis dixit, fecit et sustulit*. Die Theologie der frühen Brüder, wie sie in den Schriften ausgedrückt ist, konzentriert sich an erster Stelle auf Taten für andere. Es ist das Leben Jesu, das beleuchtet, was Gott für sie war, und das dann die Grundlage dafür bildete, was die Brüder selbst zu leben, zu sprechen, zu tun und zu erdulden versuchten, während sie durch die Welt zogen.

Die Theologie der Brüder ging dann aus ihrer Lebensform hervor, die den Fußspuren Jesu folgte, und wurde recht systematisch in der längeren Version des Briefes an die Gläubigen vier bis vierzehn artikuliert. Die Verse fassen die Theologie der „Fußspuren Jesu“ zusammen, die sich im Leben der Brüder weiter ausformt. Die „Fußspuren“ übermitteln den Sinn dessen, wie das tatsächliche Leben und die Er-

\(^7\) Testament 1–23.


fahrungen der Brüder in der Welt sich in dem widerspiegeln, was Gott für sie in Jesus „gesprochen, getan und erduldet“ hat. Dieser Text entwickelt diese Fußspuren in drei Momenten: dem der Inkarnation, dem der Institution der Eucharistie oder dem Leib und dem Blut Jesu Christi, wie es die Schriften bevorzugen, und dem der Passion, die sich auf das Leiden Jesu im Garten bezieht. Diese drei Momente werden zusammen als die Fußspuren dargestellt, die Jesus als Beispiel hinterlassen hat und beschreiben, wo die Brüder Gott in ihrem Leben erfahren haben. Der erste dargestellte Moment ist der der Inkarnation:

„Dieses Wort des Vaters, so würdig, so heilig und glorreich, hat der allerhöchste Vater vom Himmel durch seinen heiligen Engel Gabriel in den Schoß der heiligen und glorreichen Jungfrau Maria gesandt. Aus ihrem Schoß hat er das wirkliche Fleisch unserer Menschlichkeit und Gebrechlichkeit angenommen. Und obwohl er reich war, wollte er vor allem selber in der Welt die Armut erwählen mit der seligsten Jungfrau Maria, seiner Mutter (2 Kor 8,9)."

In dieser Beschreibung der Inkarnation und des Lebens Jesu fallen zwei Dinge auf. Das erste ist der Eindruck der Bewegung, der Bewegung von Gott aus der Höhe im Himmel zur Erde hier unten; eine Bewegung von der Herrlichkeit des Himmels in den fleischlichen Schoß Marias und zur menschlichen Schwäche. Zweitens stieg das heilige und glorreiche Wort des Vaters in den Schoß Marias herab, von wo aus das Wort sich in menschliches Fleisch verwandelte, das durch Schwäche gekennzeichnet ist. Es war nicht genug zu sagen, dass das Wort zu Fleisch wurde; was betont wird, ist das Paradox, dass das glorreiche Wort in das schwache menschliche Fleisch herabstieg. Diese Bewegung von Gottes Herabsteigen in Jesus kann als in der Wahl der frühen Brüder, die Franziskus folgten, widerspiegelt angesehen werden, in einer Bekehrungserfahrung als tatsächliche Veränderung der sozialen Position, als sie aus der Bequemlichkeit, Macht und „Herrlichkeit“ des Lebens in der Gemeinde Assisi herabstiegen, um „unter gewöhnlichen und verachteten Leuten zu leben, mit Armen und Schwachen und Aussätzigen und Bettlern am Wege“ wie der bevorzugte Platz der Brüder in der Regula non bullata beschrieben wird (NbR 9,2). Das Passionsoffizium (Officium Passionis) verwendet eine fast identische Terminologie, um die Geburt von Jesus Christus am Hochfest der Geburt des Herrn in Psalm 15, 3, 7 zu feiern:

„Denn der heiligste Vater im Himmel, unser König vor allen Zeiten, hat seinen geliebten Sohn aus der Höhe gesandt und er wurde der gesegneten Jungfrau, der heiligen Maria geboren. … Denn uns wurde das heiligste Kind geschenkt und für uns auf dem Weg geboren und in die Krippe gelegt, weil er in der Herberge keinen Platz hatte."

10 2Efi 405; Opuscula 208: “Istud Verbum Patris tam dignum tam sanctum et gloriosum nuntiavit altissimus Pater de celo per sanctum Gabrielem angelum suum in uterum sancte ac glorioso virginis Marie, ex cuius utero veram recepti carnem humanitatis et fragilitatis nostrae. Qui cum dives esset super omnia, voluit ipse in mundo cum beatissima Virgine, matre sua, eligere paupertatem.”
11 Off XV: 3, 7; Opuscula 350–351: “Quia sanctissimus pater de celo, Rex noster ante secu...
Dieser Text feiert das Herabsteigen Gottes aus der Höhe, das Gott mit denen verbindet, die „auf dem Weg“ leben. Somit nahm die konkrete Lebenspraxis der Brüder theologische Bedeutung an.


Die zweite Dimension der Fußspur Jesu Christi ist in der Beschreibung der Institution des Sakraments des Leibes und des Blutes des Herrn enthalten, welche auch Franziskus und die Brüder als Herabsteigen Gottes in Jesus in Brot und Wein, die gewöhnlichen Dinge des Lebens, als liturgische Handlung erlebten, welche das Herabsteigen der Inkarnation in Form des Gedenkens fortsetzt. Dies ist in der zweiten Version des *Briefes an die Gläubigen* in den Versen sechs und sieben beschrieben:

6 Und dem Leiden nahe, feierte er das Ostermahl mit seinen Jüngern, und er nahm das Brot, sagte Dank und segnete und brach es, wobei er sprach: *Nehmt und esst, das ist mein Leib.* Und er nahm den Kelch und sprach: *Dies ist mein Blut des Neuen Bundes, das für euch und für viele vergossen wird zur Vergebung der Sünden.*

Fili um suum de alto et nat us fuit de beata virgine sancta Maria. … Quia sanctissimus puer dilectus datum est nobis et natus fuit pro nobis in via et positus in presepio quia non habebat locum in diversorio."

12 F 3; *Opuscula*, 343: "Quia sanctissimus Pater de celo rex noster ante secula, misit dilectum Filium suum de alto et operatus est salutem in medio terre."

13 NbR XXIII:3; *Opuscula* 399: "Et gratias agimus tibi, quia sicut per Filium tuum nos creasti, sic per sanctam dilectionem tuam, qua dilexisti nos, ipsum verum Deum et verum hominem ex gloria semper Virgine beatissima sancta Maria nasci fecisti et per crucem et sanguinem et mortem ipsius nos captivos redimi voluisti."

14 2 Gl 6–7; *Opuscula* 208: "Et prope passionem celebravit pascha cum discipulis suis et accipiens panem gratias agit et benedixit et fregit dicens: Accipite et comedite, hoc est corpus meum. Et accipiens calicem dixit: Hic est sanguis meus novi testamenti, quo pro vobis et pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum."
Im direkten Übergang von der Institution der Eucharistie zur Beschreibung der Inkarnation wird Jesu Übertritt, sein Übergang in den Tod und sein Eingehen in das auferstandene Leben, mit Brot ritualisiert und realisiert, welches gebrochen wird, und mit Wein, der geteilt wird, mit einer Geste, die Gottes Herabsteigen folgt. Für die Brüder sakramentalisiert diese liturgische Handlung des Leibes und des Blutes des Herrn ihre eigene Art, durch die Welt zu ziehen, wie es in Kapitel vierzehn der Regula non bullata dargestellt wird:

Wenn die Brüder durch die Welt ziehen, sollen sie unterwegs nichts bei sich tragen, weder Beutel noch Tasche noch Brot noch Geld noch Stab. Und wenn sie ein Haus betreten, sollen sie zuerst sagen: Friede diesem Haus. Und solange sie in diesem Haus bleiben, mögen sie essen und trinken, was die Menschen dort haben. [NbR 14, 1–3].

Dieser Austausch der Brüder mit den Menschen, wenn sie sich an den Tisch setzen, vollendet den Zweck von Gottes Inkarnation auf der Ebene des geteilten Lebens. Und die Brüder stellen auch fest, dass durch dieses Feiern des Leibes und des Blutes des Herrn Gott für alle Zeiten bei ihnen präsent ist, wie der Schluss der Admonitio 1 erklärt: „Und auf diese Weise ist der Herr immer bei seinen Gläubigen, wie er selber sagt: Seht, ich bin bei bis zur Vollendung der Welt (Mt 28,20)” (Erm 1,22). Diese wahre Präsenz Gottes in Jesus im gebrochenen Brot und im geteilten Wein repräsentiert konkret das demütigende Herabsteigen Gottes in schwachem menschlichem Fleisch in die Welt, und wird in der Mission der Brüder fortgesetzt, indem sie durch die Welt gehen. Die Antwort auf dieses Sakrament des andauernden Herabsteigens Gottes in die Welt gibt Anlass für ähnliche Handlungen der Demut, die darin Ausdruck finden, dass man sich vollständig in die Hände eines anderen begibt, was die Lebenspraxis der mindersten Brüder umschreibt. Diese Antwort auf die Inkarnation und das Leiden wird auch im Passionsoffizium gefeiert, in dem man aufgefordert wird: „Bringt eure Leiber dar und traget sein heiliges Kreuz und folgt bis zum Ende

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15 NbR XIV:1–3; Opuscula 389: “Quando fratres vadunt per mundum, nihil protent per viam neque sacramum neque peram neque panem neque pecuniam neque virgam. Et in quacumque domum intraverint dicant primum: Pax huic domui. Et in eadem domo manentes, edant et bibant que apud illos sunt.”

seinen heiligsten Geboten“ (Off XV,13; XII,8).“ Auch hier sieht man, wie das Leben der Brüder in ihrer sozialen Verlagerung besteht, in ihrer Wahl, aus Assisi wegzugehen und mit den Aussätzigen und den anderen entlang des Weges zu leben; darin, wie sie ihr Leben mit den Menschen teilen, indem sie sich mit ihnen an den Tisch setzen, spiegelt sich das Muster von Gottes Herabsteigen durch Inkarnation, Leiden und Tod wider.

Der dritte Aspekt von Gottes Fußspur ist in den Versen acht bis dreizehn in der zweiten Version des Briefes an die Gläubigen dargelegt:

8 Danach betete er zum Vater und sprach: Vater, wenn es geschehen kann, so gehe dieser Kelch an mir vorüber. 9 Und sein Schweiß wurde wie Tropfen Blutes, das zur Erde rinnt.

10 Er legte aber seinen Willen in den Willen des Vaters und sprach: Vater, es geschehe dein Wille; nicht wie ich will, sondern wie du. Dieses Vaters Wille war der, dass sein gebenedeiter und glorreicher Sohn, den er uns geschenkt hat und der für uns gebo-
ren wurde, sich selbst durch sein eigenes Blut als Opfer und Gabe auf dem Altare des Kreuzes darbringen sollte: 12 nicht seinetwegen, durch den alles geschaffen ist, sondern für unsere Sünden, 13 indem er uns ein Beispiel hinterließ, damit wir seinen Fußspuren folgen.18

chen Sohnes nicht, um seinen Zorn zu besänftigen, sondern damit Jesus einfach ein

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17 Off XV:18; Opuscula 351: “Tollite corpora vestra et baiulate sanctam crucem eius et sequimini usque in finem sanctissima precepta eius.”
18 2 Gl 8–13; Opuscula 208: “Deinde oravit Patrem dicens: Pater, si fieri potest, transeat a me calix iste. 9Et factus est sudor eius sicut gutte sanguinis decurrentis in terram. Posuit tamen voluntatem suam in volutante Patris dicens: Pater, fiat voluntas tua; non sicut ego volo, sed sicut tu. Cuius Patris talis fuit voluntas, ut filius eius benedictus et gloriosus quem dedit nobis et natus fuit pro nobis, seipsum per proprium sanguinem suum sacrificium et hostiam in ara crucis offerret; non propter se, per quem facta sunt omnia, sed pro peccatis nostris, 13relinquens nobis exemplum ut sequamur vestigia eius.”


Das Evangelikale Leben und Echte Menschlichkeit

Wie Franziskus in seinem Testament schrieb, veränderte seine Begegnung mit den Aussätzigen radikal seine Werte und brachte ihn dazu, die Gemeinde von Assisi zu verlassen, um bei ihnen zu leben.\(^\text{19}\) Was geschah bei dieser Begegnung mit Franziskus? Er wurde buchstäblich aus sich herausgehoben, sodass er vielleicht zum ersten Mal in seinem Leben die Wirklichkeit der Existenz von Menschen sehen konnte, die nicht nach den Definitionen des Lebens in der Gemeinde von Assisi existierten. In Assisi war kein Platz für die Unreinen, die Unwürdigen, die Unheiligen, die Unerträglichen, die Unglücklichen, die Unberührbaren und die Ungeliebten. Als er diesen leidenden menschlichen Wesen, den Aussätzigen, begegnete, erwies Franziskus ihnen Barmherzigkeit – er sah sie an und berührte sie, er blieb bei ihnen und teilte

\(^{19}\) Testament 1–3; Opuscula 438: “Dominus ita dedit mihi fratri Francisco incipere faciendi poenitentiam: quia cum essem in peccatis nimis mihi videbatur amarum videre leprosos. Et ipse Dominus conduxit me inter illos et feci misericordiam cum illis. Et recedente me ab ipsis, id quod videbatur mihi amarum, conversum fuit mihi in dulcedinem animi et corporis: at postea parum steti et exivi de saeculo.”
das Leben mit ihnen, er tröstete sie und erfüllte ihre Bedürfnisse. Und Franziskus
erklärte auch etwas sehr Wichtiges, und das ist, dass er dies nicht für sich selbst tat
– er ging nicht zu den Aussätzigen, um sich selbst besser zu fühlen, und er benutzte
sie auch nicht als Objekt einer asketischen Übung, um sich selbst zu überwinden
(obwohl dies die Art ist, wie die Hagiographen Franziskus’ Einsatz für die Aussätzige
gen verstehen). Franziskus ist sehr deutlich darin, Gott die Anerkennung für diese
erfahrungsgemäße Wahrheit zuzuschreiben – „Der Herr führte mich zu ihnen und
ich erwies ihnen Barmherzigkeit“. Durch Gottes Anstoß erkannte Franziskus, dass
die Aussätzigen als Brüder und Schwestern, als Geschöpfe desselben Gottes in den
Augen von Gott, dem Schöpfer, die gleiche Würde haben. Während Assisis Wer-
te und Handeln diese Wahrheit leugneten, wurde Franziskus von Gottes Gnade zu
ihr hingeführt (was bitter war, wurde süß!), und er verließ Assisi, um bei seinen
neu entdeckten Brüdern und Schwestern zu leben. Franziskus erkannte Gott in den
Aussätzigen, während er gleichzeitig die Wahrheit entdeckte, dass Mensch zu sein
bedeutet, Bruder und Schwester zu sein.

Tatsache ist, dass die Bruderschaft, oder genauer das Verhältnis von Brüdern,
den Raum definiert, in dem Franziskus und die Brüder sich dazu berufen fühlten,
 ihr Leben zu leben. Und, wie Franziskus in der Beschreibung seiner Bekehrung dar-
legt, dass die Bruderschaft nur möglich ist, wenn man sich einander zuwendet, nur
wenn man sozusagen aus sich herausgeht und sich willentlich in eine Beziehung mit
dem anderen begibt. Die Bruderschaft ist nur so echt, wie die Handlung, die sie de-
finiert – die Zuwendung zum anderen, das eigene Zugehen auf den anderen aus dem
Mittelpunkt heraus. Diese Zuwendung zu anderen ist die Grundlage der Praxis der
Einkehr in der Tradition und impliziert nicht Trennung oder Einsamkeit, sondern
vielmehr Engagement und eine begeisterte Art, in der Welt zu sein. Und diese Art,
in der Welt zu sein, spiegelt das menschliche Antlitz Gottes in Jesus wider.

Ein wesentliches Element der evangelikalen Theologie ist die Mission. Nach den
Aussätzigen ist San Damiano und das sprechende Kreuz das vielleicht bekannteste
Symbol des franziskanischen Lebens geworden. Während diese Geschichte relativ
spät in der hagiographischen Tradition auftaucht (3 Gef 1246), artikuliert sie eine
grundlegende Einsicht des Franziskanismus. Franziskus erhielt den Auftrag, Gottes
Haus wieder aufzubauen, das zerstört wurde: “Franziskus, siehst du nicht, dass mein
Haus verfällt [nonne vides quod domus mea destruitur]? Geh also hin und stelle es
mir wieder her“ (3 Gef 13). Während dieser Satz in der Vergangenheit als „Baue
meine Kirche wieder auf“ übersetzt wurde, verwenden die hagiographischen Texte
durchgehend das Wort „Haus“ in ihren Darstellungen dieses Ereignisses. Und wäh-
rend Franziskus diese Aufforderung des Kreuzes zuerst so verstand, dass das einge-
stürzte Gebäude von San Damiano gemeint war, verstand er später, dass es vielmehr
sein Auftrag war, den Raum wieder herzustellen, in dem die Leben von Männern
und Frauen, die als Menschen gebrochen und zerstört wurden, wieder aufgebaut
werden und gedeihen konnten.

Diese Wirklichkeit des Hauses und der Familie ist der Kern von Franziskus’ eigener
Erfahrung des christlichen Lebens, und er beschrieb sein eigenes Verhältnis zu Gott in
den Kategorien der Hausgemeinschaft. Zum Beispiel schrieb er an alle Gläubigen:

„Und alle jene Männer und Frauen: sofern sie solches tun und darin bis zum Ende
ausharren, wird der Geist des Herrn auf ihnen ruhen, und er wird sich in ihnen eine
Wohnung und Leibes schaffen. Und sie werden Kinder des himmlischen Vaters sein,
dessen Werke sie tun. Und sie sind Verlobte, Geschwister und Mütter unseres Herrn
Jesus Christus. Seine Verlobten sind wir, wenn die gläubige Seele durch den Heiligen
Geist mit Jesus Christus verbunden wird. Seine Geschwister sind wir ja, wenn wir
den Willen seines Vaters tun, der im Himmel ist. Seine Mütter sind wir, wenn wir ihn
durch die Liebe und ein reines und lauteres Gewissen in unserem Herzen und Leib
tragen; wir gebären ihn durch ein heiliges Wirken, das anderen als Vorbild leuchten
soll“ (2 Gl 48–53). 20

Hier kann man sehen, dass für die frühen Franziskaner die Heiligkeit als eine häu-
ßliche Erfahrung gelebt wurde, die zwei Dinge nahelegt: a) die Menschen bilden eine
Familie mit dem dreieinigen Gott, der sie erschaffen hat; und b) dass die Beziehung
t zu diesem Gott in den gewöhnlichen häuslichen Erfahrungen des Lebens in der
alltäglichen Welt zugänglich ist und gelebt wird.

Bonaventura bemerkte, dass Franziskus, nachdem er in San Damiano diesen
Auftrag erhalten hatte, schließlich nach Santa Maria degli Angeli (Unsere Liebe Frau
von den Engeln) ging und dass er „dort lebte, um sie wieder aufzurichten“ (LM II, 8).
Dieser Wiederaufbau wurde durch das Leben in der Bruderschaft, durch das Leben
unter und mit Brüdern und Schwestern vollendet. Der Begriff conversatio wird von
den Brüdern verwendet, um in der Regula non bullata ihr Leben als Mission an
zwei Orten zu beschreiben: Franziskus ermutigte die Brüder sich zu freuen, wenn
sie „mit gewöhnlichen und verachteten Leuten (quando conversantur inter viles…) 
verkehren“ (NbR 9,2); und wo die Regel vorgab, dass sie „geistlich unter den Sara
zenen wandeln (sollten) … (possunt duobus modis spiritualiter inter eos conversari)”
(NbR 16,5). Indem sie das lateinische Wort conversatio verwendet, betrachtet die
Regel das Leben als eine Konversation (miteinander und zueinander hin zu sein),

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20 2 Gl 48–53; Opuscula 211: “Et omnes illi et illae, dum talia fecerint et perseveraverint usque in finem,
requiescet super eos Spiritus Domini et faciet in eis habitaculum et mansionem. Et erunt filii Patris
caelestis, cuius opera faciunt. Et sunt sponsi, fratres et matres Domini nostri Jesu Christi. Sponsi
sumus, quando Spiritu Sancto coniungitur fidelis anima Jesu Christo. Fratres enim sumus, quando
facimus voluntatem patris eius, qui est in caelo; matres quando portamus eum in corde et corpore
nostro per amorem et puram et sinceram conscientiam; parturimus eum per sanctam operationem,
quae lucere debet aliis in exemplum.”

In einem anderen Text der Regel wird diese Konversation der Brüder konkreter beschrieben:

„Ich rate aber meinen Brüdern, warne und ermahne sie im Herrn Jesus Christus, dass sie, wenn sie durch die Welt ziehen, nicht streiten, noch sich in Wortgezänk einlassen, noch andere richten; vielmehr sollen sie milde, friedfertig und bescheiden, sanftmüti-
g und demütig sein und mit allen anständig reden, wie es sich gehört. ... Welches Haus sie auch betreten, sollen sie zuerst sagen: 'Friede diesem Hause!' Und nach dem heiligen Evangelium soll es ihnen erlaubt sein, von allen Speisen zu essen, die ihnen vorgesetzt werden" (BR 3, 10–12, 14).  


Dieses Verständnis der Hausgemeinschaft und der Konversation wird auch in Kapitel sechs der *Regula bullata* beschrieben, das sich mit der Armut befasst. Die Armut wird in diesem Text beschrieben als „sich nichts anzueignen“ und als „Pilger und Fremde in dieser Welt“ zu leben und „nach nichts anderem unter dem Him-  

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21 BR III:10–12, 14; Opuscula 368: “Consulo vero, moneo et exhortor fratres meos in Domino Jesu Chrismo, ut quando vadunt per mundum, non litigent neque contendant verbis, nec alios iudicent; sed sint mites, pacifici et modesti, mansueti et humiles, honeste loquente omnibus, sicut decet. ... Et secundum sanctum Evangelium de omnibus cibis, qui apponuntur eis, liceat manducare.”
mel zu suchen“. Nachdem die Armut der Brüder als durch das Vorbild Jesu Christi vorgeben beschrieben wurde, „der sich für uns in dieser Welt arm gemacht hat“ (BR 6,3), wird die Implikation der Armut für das Leben der Bruderschaft dargelegt:

„Und wo immer die Brüder sind und sich treffen, sollen sie sich einander als Hausgenossen erweisen. Und vertrauensvoll soll einer dem andern seine Not offenbaren; denn wenn schon eine Mutter ihren leiblichen Sohn nährt und liebt, um wie viel sorgfältiger muss einer seinen geistlichen Bruder lieben und nähren!“ (BR 6, 7–8).


Was es bedeutet, menschlich zu sein, ist die Realität, die durch die Stigmata des Franziskus wiedergegeben wird. Die Stigmata blieben von unbeantworteten Fragen umgeben mit Bezug darauf, wo, wann und wie Franziskus die Zeichen des Gekreuzigten in seinem eigenen Fleisch empfing. Thomas von Celano war verantwortlich dafür, die Zeit, den Ort und den Kontext für das Ereignis der Stigmata anzugeben, aber indem er das tat, war er viel mehr daran interessiert, die Bedeutung des Mysteriums mitzuteilen. Celano berichtete, dass Franziskus zwei Jahre vor seinem Tod, während er sich in LaVerna aufhielt: „Da sah er in einem Gottesgesicht einen Mann über sich schweben, einem Seraph ähnlich, der sechs Flügel hatte und mit ausge- spannten Händen und aneinandergelegten Füßen ans Kreuz gehetzt“ (1 C 94).

Celanos Worte suggerieren hier, dass das, was Franziskus an diesem Punkt sah, eine Erscheinung einer menschlichen Person war, die von Gott eingenommen wurde, vor Verlangen glühte (ein Seraph) und gekreuzigt war. Die Erscheinung stellt die Vergöttlichung einer menschlichen Person dar. Celano beschreibt hier nicht die Ge-

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22 BR VI:7–8; Opuscula 369: “Et ubicumque sunt et se invenerint fratres, ostendant se domesticos invicem inter se. Et secure manifestet unus alteri necessitatem suam, quia, si mater nutrit et diligit filium suum carnalem, quanto diligentius debet quis diligere et nutrire fratrem suum spiritualem?”

23 1 C 94; Fontes Francescani, pp. 369–370: “[D]uobus annis antequam animam redderet caelo, vidi in visione Dei virum unum, quasi Seraphim sex alas habentem, stantem supra se, manibus extensis ac pedibus coniunctis, curci affixum.”

Was bedeutet es also für die franziskanische evangelikale Theologie, menschlich zu sein? Es bedeutet, die Wirklichkeit und Gesamtheit des menschlichen Zustands als gebrechlich, schwach, zerbrechlich und verletzlich, und sogar narbig und verwundet, anzunehmen. Der Mensch ist das Abbild des Lammes, das erschlagen wurde, und trägt selbst jetzt glorreich die Narben der Passion.25 Dabei, Narben und Wunden wie Jesus zu tragen, geht es nicht an erster Stelle darum, das Leiden und den Schmerz Jesu am Kreuz nachzuahmen. Vielmehr ist das Tragen der Narben und Wunden die Folge der selbstaufopfernden Liebe, des vollkommenen Daseins für andere, ohne etwas zurückzuhalten, einer göttlichen Eigenschaft. Wahrhaft menschlich zu sein, bedeutet geduldig den wahrhaft menschlichen Zustand der Schwäche, Zerbrechlichkeit und Verletzlichkeit zu ertragen. In den Stigmata zeigte Franziskus,
dass es für einen Menschen möglich ist, Gott ähnlich zu sein, zu lieben, wie Gott liebte, gänzlich und vollkommen für den Anderen da zu sein, und zusätzlich zeigte er, dass Menschen zum Mitleiden fähig sind, dass sie fähig sind, die Schmerzen des Anderen zu ertragen, wie es Gott in der Inkarnation getan hat.

Das scheint es zu sein, was nach der bullierten Regel als Wirken des Geistes des Herrn beschrieben wird: „sondern mehr darauf achten, dass sie über alles verlangen müssen, den Geist des Herrn zu haben und sein heiliges Wirken, immer zu Gott zu beten mit reinem Herzen, Geduldn in Verfolgung und Krankheit, und jene zu lieben, die uns verfolgen und tadeln und beschuldigen …“ (BR 10, 8–10). Die Regel ermahnt die Brüder dazu, ein Leben in Armut zu führen, sich nichts anzueignen und nichts mehr zu verlangen, als das Wirken des Geistes des Herrn. In diesem Text werden die Brüder dazu ermahnt, in ihrem Leben durch ihr Verhalten nach außen das Wirken des Geistes des Herrn zum Ausdruck zu bringen.

Das Wirken des Heiligen Geistes wird im dem Sinne beschrieben, allem und jedem Geduld und Demut entgegenzubringen. Das ist es, wovon Franziskus spricht, als er Leo die „vollkommene Freude“ beschreibt, als sie zurück zur Portiuncula gehen und als ihnen der Zutritt aufgrund der Tageszeit verweigert wird, und ihnen gesagt wird, sie sollten zu den Kreuzherren gehen, weil sie einfältig seien und nicht gebraucht würden. Franziskus sagte: „Wenn ich Gedulde habe und mich nicht aufrige, dass darin die wahre Freude ist und die wahre Tugend und das Heil der Seele.“


Franziskus erfuhr Jesus somit als Antlitz Gottes, der sich selbst in dieser Welt verletzlich machte, der durch das Leben und den Tod Gedulde übte. Aber es ist noch

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26 BR X:9–10; Opuscula 370: “[S]ed attendant, quod super omnia desiderare debent habere Spiritum Domini et sanctam eius operationem, orare semper ad eum puro corde et habere humilitatem, patientiam in persecutione et infirmitate, et diligere eos quo no persequuntur et reprehendunt et arguunt ...

27 FFreud 14; Opuscula 461: “Dico tibi quod si patientiam habuero et non fuero motus, quod in hoc est vera laetitia et vera virtus et salus animae.”

28 LobGott 4; Opuscula 139: “Tu es amor, caritas; tu es sapientia, tu es humiliitas, tu es patientia, tu es pulchritudo, tu es manuetaudo, tu es securitas, tu es quietas, tu es gaudium ...”
mehr die Inkarnation als die Passion und der Tod, die Franziskus betrachtete, weil Jesus sich in der Inkarnation selbst in die Position der Schwäche, Gebrechlichkeit, Verletzlichkeit und Beschränkung versetzt hat, und darin das volle Potential des Menschen offenbart hat, und dass die Akzeptanz der menschlichen Verletzlichkeit erlösend, ja sogar göttlich ist. Das wahre menschliche Leben kann in der franziskanischen Hausgemeinschaft erblühen, die von Brüdern aufgebaut wird, die sich einander zuwenden, die sich als Lebensart mit ehrlicher Konversation beschäftigen und die ihre Menschlichkeit in Schwäche, Gebrechlichkeit und Verletzlichkeit geduldig annehmen. Es ist diese Art des franziskanischen Lebens selbst, die das Göttliche in die täglich gelebte Erfahrung von Männern und Frauen verlagert, und es ist eine deutliche Antwort auf den radikalen Individualismus und die egoistische Engstirnigkeit der modernen Welt.

Die Welt

Als er die soziale Welt von Assisi verließ um bei den Aussätzigen zu leben, trat Franziskus in Gottes Welt – die Schöpfung – ein, in der alles, was existierte, vom Schöpfer im richtigen Verhältnis eingerichtet war – dies ist die Wahrheit, die später im Sonnengesang gefeiert würde. Die Schöpfung singt, die Schöpfung blüht, einfach indem sie so ist, wie sie geschaffen wurde, indem sie im Verhältnis zu allem anderen steht.

Die Gefährten von Franziskus beschrieben, wie der Sonnengesang komponiert wurde, nachdem er die Stigmata empfing und während sein Körper von Schmerzen geplagt war und die Hütte, in der er sich in der Nähe von San Damiano aufhielt, voller Mäuse war, die Franziskus sogar störten, wenn er versuchte zu essen. Frustriert und entmutigt betete Franziskus, dass Gott ihm Geduld für sein Leiden geben möge. Als Antwort darauf wurde er gefragt, was wäre, wenn man ihm im Austausch für seine Krankheiten und sein Leid einen Schatz geben würde, so groß und wertvoll, dass selbst wenn die ganze Erde in pures Gold und alle Steine in Edelsteine verwandelt würden, dies nichts wäre im Vergleich zu dem kostbaren Schatz, der ihm gegeben würde. Franziskus antwortete, dass dies sehr begehrenswert wäre. „Also, Bruder“, wurde ihm gesagt, „dann freu dich und juble in deinen Krankheiten und Bedrängnissen, und des Weiteren sollst du dich so sicher fühlen, als wärest du bereits in meinem Königreich“ (SP 100). Der Punkt ist, dass für Franziskus die Welt selbst mit ihrer Traurigkeit, ihrem Schmerz und ihrem Leiden, bereits Zugang zum Königreich verschafft, wenn man sie mit Geduld und Liebe annimmt. In dieser Hinsicht ist dann sowohl die Welt als auch der Mensch eine Schöpfung nach der Form des Kreuzes. Aber es ist diese Welt, welche der Sonnengesang als ausgeglichenen Raum feiert, in dem alles, was ist, als Bruder und Schwester existiert, und die Elemente in ihrer und durch ihre bloße Existenz den Lobpreis des Höchsten singen.
Die Menschen werden nur dann ein Teil dieses Liedes, wenn sie „Gebrechlichkeit und Trübäl ertragen“ und wenn sie in Frieden ausharren und dem körperlichen Tod nach Gottes Willen begegnen.

Bonaventura griff diese Einsicht Franziskus’ auf und hob ebenfalls hervor, wie die ganze Welt in der Verklärung Jesu verwandelt wurde, indem er in einer Predigt für den zweiten Sonntag der Fastenzeit bemerkte:


Thomas von Celano beschrieb Franziskus’ Verhältnis zur guten Welt der Schöpfung im Sinne seiner Art, Christus in der Schöpfung zu „lesen“, was am Ende des Buches 1 seiner Vita beati Francisci in der Feier von Greccio gipfelte. Celano machte deutlich, dass das, was Franziskus sein ganzes Leben hindurch gesehen hatte, wenn er „auf die Dinge auf der Erde herabsah“, „das Abbild dessen war, der sich für uns in dieser Welt arm gemacht hat“ (vgl. 1 C 76).30 Blumen, Lämmer, Würmer und arme Männer und Frauen, ebenso wie Aussätzige und andere, die leiden, werden in Greccio alle in Christus anerkannt, wo Franziskus etwas tun wollte, das das kleine Kind ins Gedächtnis rufen würde, „das in Bethlehem geboren wurde, und ich möchte die bittere Not, die es schon als kleines Kind zu leiden hatte, wie es in eine Kripppe gelegt, an der Ochs und Esel standen, und wie es auf Heu gebettet wurde “ (1 C 84).31 Celanos Beschreibung des Ereignisses, wie der menschliche Christus „auf dem Stroh lag, auf das er gebettet wurde“, ist nicht einfach eine fromme und demütige Betrachtung der Inkarnation. Wie es hier von Celano an das Ende von Buch I gesetzt wurde, ist es eine bedeutende theologische Aussage über die Bedeutung der Inkarnation.

29 J.G. Bougerol (Hrsg.), Sermones Dominicales, Grottaferrata 1977, 250: “Omnia transfigurata nutrici gratiae tuae deserviunt ad voluntatem eorum quae a te desiderata sunt (Sapientia 16,25). Dicuntur autem omnia transfigurata in transfiguratione Christi, eo quod aliquid de creatura qualibet fuit in Christo transfigurationem: nam Christus in quantum homo communicat cum omnibus creaturis; habet enim esse cum lapidibus, vivere cum plantis, sentire cum iumentis, et intelligere cum angelis. Cum igitur Christus in quantum homo est aliquid de omni creatura, fuit transifuratus, ideo dicuntur omnia in ipse esse transfigurata.”
30 Fontes Franciscani, 352: “Aiebat namque: ‘Qui pauperi maledicit, Chrito iniuriam facit, cuius portat nobile signum, qui se pro nobis fecit pauperem in hoc mundo.’”
31 Fontes Franciscani, 360: “Volo enim illius pueri memoriam agere, qui in Bethlehem natus est, et infantilium necessitatum eius incommoda, quomodo in praesaepio reclinatus et quomodo, adstante bove atque asino, supra foenum positus extitit, utcumque corporeis oculis pervidere.”
– der Platz Christi ist in der Welt; Christus anzusehen, heißt, die Güte der Welt zu bekräftigen und uns selbst an Christi Stelle zu sehen, das heißt, in der Welt sein. In einer ganz anfänglichen Art und Weise bewegt sich die dynamische Ausrichtung der Gedanken in Celanos Text zu der Andeutung hin, dass sich die Bedeutung der Welt, und damit die des Menschen in Christus als Offenbarung Gottes zeigt und manifestiert.

Fazit

Vor fast fünfzehn Jahren wies der nordamerikanische Theologe David Tracy bereits darauf hin, dass die Art der Theologie, die man bräuchte, um sich aus der Sackgasse der Postmoderne und der Säkularisierung zu befreien, ein „Zurück zur Zukunft der Theologie sei“32 Er sagte, dass „die Hoffnung der Christen dem Bösen widerstehen und das Leiden verwandeln soll. Diese Hoffung ist in der zentralen christlichen Metapher von 1 Johannes 4,16 begründet: Gott ist die Liebe.“33 Man kommt jedoch nicht umhin, in die Realität zurückzukehren, wenn man sich umsieht und sieht, wie die Dinge sind — Gewalt, Kriege, Kriminalität, Missbrauch, Verarmung, Umweltkatastrophen, internationale Umbrüche, religiöse Kriege und Diskriminierung, die Auflösung der Familie, die Hoffnungslosigkeit von Drogen, und so fort. Es ist schwer, durch diese Realität hindurchzusehen, um einen Blick auf die erhoffte Erfüllung der Träume und Visionen der Menschheit in diesem Moment zu erhaschen. Tracy kommentierte weiterhin, dass:


Durch die Moderne wurde der Kosmos auf die Natur reduziert und die Wissenschaft nahm in Bezug darauf eine dominierende Stellung ein. Zusätzlich zog sich Gott zurück und verschwand in größere Verborgenheit und Andersheit. Und schließlich wurde das Selbst unabhängiger und individualistischer, es wurde freiwillig von der

34 Tracy, "Evil, Suffering, Hope", 19.
Teilhabe am Kosmos, am Göttlichen und am Anderen isoliert. Diese Trennung des Denkens vom Fühlen, des Inhaltes von der Form, der Theorie von der Praxis führte zur Auflösung dessen, was Tracy als die „gefühlte Synthese“ der meisten antiken und mittelalterlichen Denker beschrieb. Und, wie Tracy es ausdrückte, die wichtigste Konsequenz der Moderne „war der Zerfall sowohl der antiken als auch der mittelalterlichen Auffassung einer Synthese von Gott, dem Selbst und dem Kosmos“.35

Tracys Bemerkungen sind heute noch genauso gültig, wie vor fünfzehn Jahren. Die Theologie des evangelikalen Lebens, wie sie in der franziskanischen Tradition zuerst gelebt und dann artikuliert wurde, bietet sowohl eine Antwort für die Gegenwart, als auch einen Weg für die Zukunft. Wenn man die Grundlagen der evangelikalen theologischen Tradition der Franziskaner in den Schriften von Franziskus und seinen frühen Brüdern studiert, kann man sehen, wie die franziskanische Tradition der Trennung des Denkens vom Fühlen widerstand und eine emotionale menschliche Vernunft als das Maß der Wahrheit vorschlug; die franziskanische Tradition weigerte sich, den Inhalt von der Form zu trennen und legte dar, dass die Welt nicht einfach nur aus Dingen besteht, sondern dass alles in seiner besonderen und einzigartigen Form und Größe und Farbe und Erscheinung die Wahrheit manifestiert, dass Gott gut ist; und die franziskanische Tradition weigerte sich, die Theorie von der Praxis zu trennen, und bekräftigte, dass das Leben in dieser Welt der Ort ist, wo Gott erkannt, erfahren, benannt und geliebt werden kann. Die Franziskaner sind dazu aufgefordert, weiterhin als Zeugen für die Präsenz des guten Gottes, für die Würde des Menschen als Bruder oder Schwester in der Welt zu leben und die Mission der Wiederherstellung von Gottes Haus für das Gedeihen der Menschen zu erfüllen. Es ist wichtig, auch heute daran zu denken, dass es Franziskus selbst war, der uns an die Aufgabe erinnerte, die Jesus uns gegeben hat, als er zu seinem Vater betete: „Wie du mich in die Welt gesandt hast, so habe auch ich sie in die Welt gesandt“.

35 Tracy, "Evil, Suffering, Hope", 20.
“As You sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world” (Jn 17:18; RnBu XXII:51). Franciscan Evangelical Life and Mission in the Twenty-First Century

The North American sociologist, Peter Berger, in an essay published ten years ago now, made the comment that, “A body of data indicates a strong survival of religion, most of it generally Christian in nature, despite the widespread alienation from the organized churches. A shift in the institutional location of religion, then, rather than secularization, would be a more accurate description of the European situation.” Berger was referring here to the expressions of religiosity of the younger generation in particular. Whether or not the data supports his theory of desecularization today, Berger’s emphasis on the shift in “the institutional location of religion” allows for an interesting point of comparison with the situation in Western Europe at the time of the birth of the Franciscan movement. While recognizing the limitation of generalizations, one could argue that the effects of the Gregorian Reform in the eleventh century, intent as it was on re-establishing the connection between the sacred and the institution of the clergy as the focus of reform, had the residual effect of awakening a desire in lay men and lay women for a share in that same experience of the sacred, thus giving birth to a religious renewal that Marie Dominique Chenu has characterized as nothing less than “the experience of a new equilibrium between nature and grace.” This dislocation of the monopoly on the sacred away from the institution of clergy and hierarchy within the church, shifted the lay practice of religion toward the world in two ways, one orthodox in the many different expressions of the apostolic life and penitential movements, the other in heterodox expressions that ranged from the practical (e.g., the insistence on the priesthood of the baptized

1 I am using the term “evangelical” in a very specific sense. As the monastic life was determined by the rhythm of *ora et labora*, and the apostolic life was determined by the apostolate or ministry, the Franciscan life is determined by the Gospel, and in this sense is described as an Evangelical form of life.


and their right to preach) to the theoretical (e.g., the Cathars and other dualistic forms of belief). It was, at least in one sense, this shifting of the boundaries between the sacred and the secular that provided a context for the arrival of Francis and his brothers who together with others responded to this changed location of the sacred toward the world and into the lives of men and women.4

In what follows, I will reflect on three dimensions of the Franciscan theology of the evangelical life as a response to this shift in the location of the sacred, first with regard to the experience of God, then second with regard to the understanding of the human person, and finally with regard to the world as the arena for God’s action and presence. These dimensions of Franciscan evangelical theology flow from and interpret a statement of Jesus from the last discourse of John’s Gospel which Francis cited in the Regula non bullata: “As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world” (Jn 17:18; RnBu XXII:51),5 and at the same time this statement of Jesus, as received by Francis, characterizes the changed location for religious experience and the religious consciousness of men and women at the beginning of the thirteenth century.

**Evangelical Theology and the Experience of God**

Francis and his brothers came to understand their life as a response to God’s call to “follow the teaching and footprints of Our Lord Jesus Christ (RnBu I:1).”6 One can discover how the brothers arrived at this insight into their life through the process that Francis’ records in his Testament, wherein he first recounted how he came to live with lepers, then of how he came to experience the presence of Jesus Christ in word and sacrament, of how this choice of social dislocation eventually attracted brothers to share his experience, and how only after having received brothers from God to share this life did Francis then speak of how God revealed to him what this all meant as life “according to the pattern of the holy gospel.” As Francis described it, the gospel followed upon the experience of shared life first with lepers and then with brothers, which was also subsequent to a primarily liturgical experience of the real presence of Jesus in the church. These dimensions of Francis’ and the brothers’ life function thus as the context for understanding what is meant by verse fourteen of the Testament: “And after the Lord gave brothers to me, no one showed me what I

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5 The Vulgate reads, “Sicut me misisti in mundum et eo misi eos in mundum.”

6 E. Menestò/S. Brufani (Hrsg.), Fontes Franciscani, Assisi 1995,186: “Regula et vita istorum fratrum haec est, scilicet vivere in obedientia, in castitate et sine proprio, et Domini nostri Jesu Christi dotri-nam et vestigia sequi (Mt 28,19).”
should do, but the Most High himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the holy gospel.”

This “pattern of the gospel” is also described in another context, with words Francis’ used to unfold the meaning of the petition of the Lord’s Prayer in the Prayer based on the Our Father where one reads, “Give us this day: in remembrance, understanding, and reverence of that love which [our Lord Jesus Christ] had for us and of those things that He said, did and underwent for us” (ExPa 6). Here, the pattern of the gospel is identified with the love Jesus showed with his words, his actions and his patient endurance. It is this experience of Jesus that led Francis to express his insights into the nature of God, and what claims the attention of Francis and the brothers is the mystery of God in terms of God’s being “for us” – pro nobis dixit, fecit et sustulit. First and foremost the theology of the early brothers as it is articulated in the Writings focuses on action on behalf of others. It is the living of Jesus that cast light on who God was for them, which then became the basis for what the brothers themselves attempted to live, to say, to do, and to undergo as they went about the world.

The theology of the brothers then, emerged from their pattern of living which followed the footprints of Jesus, and has been articulated rather systematically in the longer version of the Letter to the Faithful verses four through thirteen. These verses summarize the theology of the “footprint of Jesus” that are seen to be traced out in the brothers’ living. The “footprint” carries the sense of how the actual life and experience of the brothers in the world is reflected in what God “said, did and underwent” for them in Jesus. This text develops this footprint in three moments: that of the incarnation, that of the institution of the Eucharist, or of the Body and the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Writings prefer, and that of the passion which is focused on the agony of Jesus in the garden. These three moments together are presented as the footprint that Jesus left as an example, and described where the brothers’ experienced God in their lives. The first moment presented is that of the Incarnation:

4 The most high Father announced from heaven through his angel Gabriel, this Word of the Father, so worthy, so holy and glorious, in the womb of the holy and glorious Virgin Mary, from whose womb he received the real flesh of our humanity and frailty.

7 Testament 1–23.
8 This is one the few cases when the words of the Lord are referred to in the past tense, dixit. Much more common in the Writings is the use of the present tense with reference to the words of Jesus in the gospels, dicit.
Though he was rich, he wished, together with the most Blessed Virgin, his mother, to choose poverty in the world above everything else (2Cor 8:9).

Two things stand out in this description of the incarnation and life of Jesus. The first is the sense of movement, the movement of God from on high in heaven to the earth down here below; a movement from the glory of heaven and into the fleshly womb of Mary and human frailty. Second, the holy and glorious Word of the Father descended into the womb of Mary from where the Word took on real human flesh characterized by frailty. It was not enough to say that the Word became flesh; what is emphasized is the paradox that the glorious Word descended into frail human flesh. This movement of God’s descent in Jesus can be seen to be reflected in the choice of the early brothers who followed Francis in a conversion experienced as an actual change of social location when they descended from the comfort, power and “glory” of life in the commune of Assisi in order to “live among people considered of little value and looked down upon, among the poor and the powerless, the sick and the lepers, and the beggars by the wayside” as the Regula non bullata described the preferred location of the brothers (RnBu IX:2). The Office of the Passion uses almost identical terminology to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ on the feast of the Nativity of the Lord in Psalm XV:3,7:

Because the most holy father of heaven, our King before all ages, sent his beloved son from on high and he was born of the Blessed Virgin holy Mary. … For the most holy child has been given to us and has been born for us on the way and placed in a manger because he did not have a place in the inn.

This text celebrates this descent of God from above, which connects God to those who live “along the way.” Thus, the concrete life praxis of the brothers took on theological meaning.

This descent of incarnation is echoed too in a description of the redemption, as the brothers prayed in Psalm VII of the Office of the Passion, the Easter Psalm: “For the Most Holy Father of heaven, our King before all ages sent his beloved son from on high and has brought salvation into the midst of the earth” (FOff, Psalm VII:3).

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10 2Efi 405; Opuscula 208: “Istud Verbum Patris tam dignum tam sanctum et gloriosum nuntiavit altissimus Pater de celo per sanctum Gabrielem angelum suum in uterum sancte ac gloriose virginis Marie, ex cuius utero veram recepti carnem humanitatis et fragilitatis nostre. Qui cum dives esset super omnia, voluit ipse in mundo cum beatissima Virgine, matre sua, eligere paupertatem.”

11 FOff XV: 3, 7; Ouscula 350–351: “Quia sanctissimus pater de celo, Rex noster ante secula misit dilectum Filium suum de alto et natus fuit de beata virgine sancta Maria. … Quia sanctissimus puer dilectus datum est nobis et natus fuit pro nobis in via et positus in presepio quia non habebat locum in diversorio.”

12 FOff 3; Opuscula, 343: “Quia sanctissimus Pater de celo rex noster ante secula, misit dilectum Filium suum de alto et operatus est salutem in medio terre.”
What was begun in the incarnation was brought to completion in the passion. In fact, the incarnation was experienced as redemptive because it embodied God's movement from above in heaven toward humanity here below, and reflecting that movement toward humans in Jesus God lifted up and returned creation to himself in the passion and death of Jesus; “We thank you for as through your son you created us, so through your holy love with which you loved us you brought about his birth as true God and true man by the glorious, ever-virgin, most blessed, holy Mary and you willed to redeem us captives through his cross and blood and death” (RnBu XXIII:3).13

The second dimension of the footprint of Jesus Christ is contained in the description of the institution of the sacrament of the Body and Blood of the Lord which was also experienced by Francis and the brothers as the descent of God in Jesus into bread and wine, the ordinary stuff of life, as a liturgical action continuing the descent of the incarnation in the form of remembrance. This is described in the second version of the Letter to the Faithful in verses six and seven:

6 And as His Passion was near, he celebrated the Passover with His disciples and, taking bread, gave thanks, blessed and broke it, saying: Take and eat: This is my body (Mt 26:26). 7 And taking the cup He said: This is my Blood of the new covenant which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins (Mt 26:27).14

Passing directly to the institution of the Eucharist from the description of the Incarnation, Jesus’ Passover, his descent into death and entrance into risen life, is ritualized and realized with bread that is broken and wine that is shared in a gesture which continues God’s descent. For the brothers, this liturgical action of the Body and Blood of the Lord sacramentalizes their own manner of going about the world as this is presented in chapter fourteen of the Regula non bullata:

When the brothers go about the world, let them take nothing for the journey, neither knapsack, nor purse, nor bread, nor money, nor walking stick. Whatever house they enter (Lk 9:3; 10:4; Mt 10:10), let them first say: Peace to this house. They may eat and drink what is placed before them (Lk 10:5) for as long as they stay in that house (Lk 10:7) [RnBu XIV:1–3].15

13 RnBu XXIII:3; Opuscula 399: “Et gratias agimus tibi, quia sicut per Filium tuum nos creasti, sic per sanctam dilectionem tuam, qua dilexisti nos, ipsum verum Deum et verum hominem ex gloriosa semper Virgine beatissima sancta Maria nasci fecisti et per crucem et sanguinem et mortem ipsius nos captivos redimi voluisti.”

14 2EFi 6–7; Opuscula 208: “Et prope passionem celebravit pascha cum discipulis suis et accipiens panem gratias agit et benedixit et fregit dicens: Accipite et comedite, hoc est corpus meum. Et accipiens calicem dixit: Hic est sanguis meus novi testamenti, quo pro vobis et pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum.”

15 RnBu XIV:1–3; Opuscula 389: “Quando fratres vadunt per mundum, nihil protent per viam neque sacculum neque peram neque panem neque pecuniam neque virgam. Et in quacumque domum intraverint dicant primum: Pax huic domui. 3Et in eadem domo manentes, edant et bibant que apud illos sunt.”
This exchange of the brothers with people when they sit down at table accomplishes the purpose of God's incarnation at the level of shared life. And the brothers also realize that through this celebration of the Body and Blood of the Lord, God remains present with them until the end of time, as the conclusion of Admonition I declares: “And in this way the Lord is always with his faithful, as he himself says: Behold I am with you until the end of the age (Mt 28:20)” (Adm I:22). This real presence of God in Jesus in broken bread and shared wine re-presents concretely the humbling descent of God in frail human flesh into the world, and is continued in the mission of the brothers as they go about the world. The response to this sacrament of the ongoing descent of God into the world occasions similar acts of humility which are expressed by giving oneself completely into the hands of another, which describes the praxis of life of the lesser brothers. This response to the incarnation and passion is celebrated too in the Office of the Passion where one is urged to: “Take up your bodies and carry his holy cross and follow his most holy commands even to the end” (FOff XV:13; VII:8). Here again note how the life of the brothers in their social dislocation, in their choice to descend from Assisi and to live with the lepers and those others along the way, in their sharing life with people by sitting down at table with them, is reflected in the pattern of God's descent of incarnation, passion and death.

The third aspect of God's footprint is articulated in verses eight through thirteen in the longer version of the Letter to the Faithful:

8 Then he prayed to his Father, saying: Father, if it can be done, let this cup pass from me (Lk 22:42). 9 And His sweat became as drops of blood falling on the ground (Lk 22:44). 10 Nevertheless, he placed his will in the will of his Father, saying: Father, let your will be done; not as I will, but as you will (Mt 26:42). 11 His Father's will was such that his blessed and glorious Son, whom he gave to us and who was born for us, should offer himself through his own blood as a sacrifice and oblation on the altar of the cross: not for himself through whom all things were made, but for our sins, leaving us an example that we might follow his footprints (1 Pet 2:21). 12

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16 Adms I:22; Opuscula 107: “Et tali modo semper est Dominus cum fidelibus suis, sicut ipse dixit: Ecce ego vobiscum sum suque ad consummationem seculi.” Robert Karris has demonstrated how verses 14–22 of Admonition I are dependent on Bernard the Cluniac's Treatise on the Body of the Lord in seinem Werk The Admonitions of St. Francis: Sources and Meanings, St. Bonaventure 1999, 42–45. Verse 22 of Admonition I adds to the straightforward citation of Mt 28:20 by Bernard the following words: “In this way the Lord is always with his faithful, as he himself says …” The brothers' addition to Bernard's text here underlines their experience of the ongoing presence of Jesus to them in the present moment in his Body and Blood, and is further emphasized by placing these words of Jesus in the present tense.

17 FOff XV:18; Opuscula 351: “Tollite corpora vestra et baiulate sanctam crucem eius et sequimini usque in finem sanctissima precepta eius.”

18 2Ef 8–13; Opuscula 208: “Deinde oravit Patrem dicens: Pater, si fieri potest, transeat a me calix iste. 9 Et factus est sudor eius sicut gutte sanguinis decurrentis in terram. Posuit tamen voluntatem suam in
The passion of Jesus Christ is focused here in the struggle in the Garden of Olives. The Writings never go into detail or give realistic descriptions of the passion beyond this, because for the brothers the Passion is accomplished in Jesus’ struggle to be true to his own identity, his struggle to remain to the end the beloved Son of the Father by accomplishing his Father’s will. And, this struggle to accomplish the Father’s will engages Jesus completely, body and soul, and becomes so intense that as the text notes Jesus sweats blood in his agony of fidelity. Ultimately, Jesus’ struggle gives way to the peace of acceptance of the Father’s will. And, as the brothers’ come to understand the Father’s will is not that Jesus die, but rather that Jesus continue to be “for us” and not for himself alone, that Jesus continue to be the one sent from above as the embodiment of God’s generous goodness and love for others. The text is clear here: God does not demand the sacrifice of his divine son in order to appease his own anger, but that Jesus simply be a person for others. It was this cup that Jesus was asked to drink non propter se, per quem facta sunt omnia – not for himself through whom all things were made – sed pro peccatis nostris – but rather for our sins. The redemption was accomplished by God in Jesus for us, not for himself! Just as Jesus was born and given for us, so too he was given on the altar of the cross for us, and the altar of the the cross is the same altar where Jesus descends to give himself as broken bread and shared wine. This descent of Jesus into the world in humility and poverty is the way of Jesus’ ascent to God; it is the way of complete self giving for others. This is ultimately the victory of Jesus celebrated in the hours of the Office of the Passion.

All of this – the incarnation, God’s enduring presence as Body and Blood, and the passion – was accomplished for us, “leaving us an example that we might follow his footprints.” Thus the actual pattern of the life of the brothers was experienced to be a reflection of the pattern which Jesus’ life traced out in this world, a pattern which revealed the identity of God his Father. The footprints of Jesus, his traces, are repeated in the choices, the actions and words of the brothers. The theology of the Evangelical Life thus implies and reflects the reality of God who entered into our world, who showed his face in the life, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus giving himself even to the point of death, and who remains available and accessible to all in this world.

voluntate Patris dicens: Pater, fiat voluntas tua; non sicut ego volo, sed sicut tu. Cuius Patris talis fuit voluntas, ut filius eius benedictus et glorius quem dedit nobis et natus fuit pro nobis, se ipsum per proprium sanguinem suum sacrificium et hostiam in ara crucis offert; non propter se, per quem facta sunt omnia, sed pro peccatis nostris, 13 relinquens nobis exemplum ut sequamur vestigia eius.”
The Evangelical Life and Authentic Humanity

As Francis recorded in his Testament, his encounter with lepers radically rearranged his values, and led him to leave the commune of Assisi in order to live with them.\(^{19}\) What happened to Francis in that encounter? He was literally drawn out of himself so that he could see, perhaps for the first time in his life, the reality of the existence of human beings who did not exist according to the definitions of life in the commune of Assisi. There was no place in Assisi for the unclean, the unworthy, the unholy, the unbearable, the unlucky, the untouchable and the unloved. Encountering these suffering human beings, the lepers, Francis did mercy with them – he looked at them and touched them, he stayed with them and shared life with them, he comforted them and served their needs. And Francis also explained something very important, and that is that he did not do this for himself – he did not go to the lepers to make himself better, nor did he use them as the object of an ascetical exercise in order to overcome himself (though this is the way the hagiographers will understand Francis’ engagement with lepers). Francis is explicit in giving the credit for this experiential truth to God – “The Lord led me among them, and I did mercy with them.” With God’s nudge, Francis recognized the lepers as brothers and sisters, as creatures of the same God, as having equal dignity in the eyes of God the creator. While Assisi’s values and practice denied this truth, Francis was led into it by God’s grace (what was bitter became sweet!), and he left Assisi to live among his newly discovered brothers and sisters. Francis discovered God with the lepers while at the same time discovering the truth that to be human is to be brother and sister.

The fact is that brotherhood, or better, the relationship of brothers is what defines the space in which Francis and the brothers felt called to live out their lives. And, as Francis made clear in the description of his conversion, brotherhood is only possible if one turns toward the other, only if one gets out of oneself, so to speak, and willingly places oneself in relationship to the other. Brotherhood is only as real as the action that defines it – turning toward the other, de-centering oneself toward the other. This turning toward others is the basis for the practice of contemplation in the tradition and it does not imply separation or solitude, but rather engagement and an ecstatic way of being in the world. And this way of being in the world reflected the human face of God in Jesus.

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\(^{19}\) Testament 1–3; Opuscula 438: “Dominus ita dedit mihi fratri Francisco incipere faciendi poenitentiam: quia cum essem in peccatis nimis mihi videbatur amarum videre leprosos. Et ipse Dominus conduxit me inter illos et feci misericordiam cum illis. Et recedente me ab ipsis, id quod videbatur mihi amarum, conversum fuit mihi in dulcedinem animi et corporis: at postea parum steti et exivi de saeculo.”
A defining element of evangelical theology is mission. After lepers, probably the most recognized symbol of Franciscan life has become San Damiano and the speaking crucifix. While this story appeared rather late in the hagiographical tradition (3 Soc, 1246), it articulates a fundamental insight of Franciscanism. Francis received a mission of repairing God's house which was being destroyed: “Francis don't you see that my house is being destroyed [nonne vides quod domus mea destructur]? Go then, and rebuild it for me” (3 Soc 13). While in the past that phrase was translated as “Rebuild my church”, the hagiographical texts are consistent in using the term “house” in their accounts of this event. And while Francis initially understood that invitation from the cross to mean the broken down building of San Damiano, he would slowly come to understand that the mission was rather one of repairing a space in which the lives of men and women who have been broken and destroyed as human beings could be rebuilt and flourish.

This reality of house and family is absolutely central to Francis’ own experience of the Christian life, and he described his own relationship to God is in the categories of the household. For instance, as he wrote to all the faithful,

And the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon all those men and women who have done and persevere in these things and It will make a home and dwelling place in them. And they will be children of the heavenly Father, whose works they do. And they are spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are spouses when the faithful soul is united by the Holy Spirit to our Lord Jesus Christ. We are brother, moreover, when we do the will of his Father who is in heaven; mothers when we carry him in our heart and body through love and a pure conscience; and give him birth through a holy activity, which must shine before others by example” (2 EFi 48–53).20

Here you can see that for the early Franciscans, holiness was lived as a domestic experience which suggests two things: a) humans are family with the Trinitarian God who created them; and b) that relationship with this God is accessible and lived in the ordinary, domestic experiences of life in the everyday world.

Bonaventure commented that after receiving this mission in San Damiano, Francis eventually moved to St. Mary of the Angels and that he “lived there in order to repair it” (LMj II:8). The repair was accomplished by life in brotherhood, by living among and with brothers and sisters. The term conversatio is employed by the bro-

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20 2 EFi 48–53; Opuscula 211: “Et omnes ills et illae, dum talia fecerint et perseveraverint usque in finem, requiescet super eos Spiritus Domini et faciet in eis habitaculum et mansionem. Et erunt filii Patris caelestis, cuius opera faciunt. Et sunt sponsi, fratres et matres Domini nostri Jesu Christi. Sponsi sumus, quando Spiritu Sancto coniungitur fidelis anima Jesu Christo. Fratres enim sumus, quando facimus voluntatem patris eius, qui est in caelo; matres quando portamus eum in corde et corpore nostro per amorem et puram et sinceram conscientiam; parturimus eum per sanctam operationem, quae lucere debet alii in exemplum.”
thers to describe their life as mission in two places in the *Regula non bullata*: Francis encouraged the brothers to rejoice when they “live among (*quando conversantur inter viles …*) people considered of little value and looked down upon” (RnBu IX:2); and where the rule stated that they should “live spiritually among the Saracens … (*possunt duobus modis spiritualiter inter eos conversari*)” (FnBu XVI:5). Employing the Latin word *conversatio*, the rule envisages life as a conversation (being with and towards another), and adapts the monastic sense of *conversatio* as a manner of life. The brothers’ manner of life in this sense is to be conversational – sharing life with brothers and sisters in this conversational manner is the way the house of God is rebuilt.

In another text of the Rule this conversation of the brothers is described more concretely:

“I counsel, admonish and exhort my brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ not to quarrel or argue or judge others when they go about in the world; but let them be meek, peaceful, modest, gentle, and humble, speaking courteously to everyone, as is becoming. … Into whatever house they enter, let them first say: ‘Peace to this house!’ According to the holy gospel let them eat whatever food is set before them” (RBu III:10–12, 14).

Here one can see how for the brothers the medium is the message, that is, their manner of being with others is the primary means for accomplishing their mission, and their life is itself the message. The gospel is about life in the world, a way of life, a way of being with and a way of relating to others with the peace that is God’s gift freely given in Jesus. The brothers are to simply speak the Gospel honestly with everyone, beginning with each other. But, before the brothers can speak the word of the gospel they must live the word of the gospel – here you can recall the emphasis Celano gave to this in the life of Francis, “[Francis] was no deaf hearer of the gospel” (1Cel 22). Coherence of life and message becomes the norm: the brothers’ honest conversation and engagement with the world and people invites the recognition of the presence of the kingdom of God already in their midst. Conversation though, is a skill that must be learned, and many of the prescriptions of the rule that describe behavior in a negative way must be read as impediments to the quality of conversation that the brothers must engage in as part of their mission.

This understanding of household and conversation is also described in chapter six of the *Regula bullata* that deals with poverty. Poverty is described in this text as “not making anything one’s own” and by living as “pilgrims and strangers in this world”

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21 RBu III:10–12, 14; *Opuscula* 368: “Consulo vero, moneo et exhortor fratres meos in Domino Jesu Christo, ut quando vadunt per mundum, non litigent neque contendant verbis, nec alios iudicent; sed sint mites, pacifici et modesti, mansueti et humiles, honeste loquente omnibus, sicut decet. … Et secundum sanctum Evangelium de omnibus cibus, qui apponuntur eis, liceat manducare.”
and by “never seeking anything else under heaven.” After describing the brothers’ 
poverty as modeled on Jesus Christ “who made himself poor for us in this world” 
(ER VI:3), the implication of poverty for the life of brotherhood is spelled out:

Wherever the brothers may be and meet one another let them show that they are mem-
bers of the same family. Let each one confidently make known his need to the other, for 
if a mother loves and cares for her son according to the flesh, how much more diligently 
must someone love and care for his brother according to the Spirit!” (RBu VI:7–8).22

Literally, the rule suggests here that the brothers should demonstrate that they come 
from the same “household”, the same family (ostendunt se domesticos invicem inter 
se). Thus, having nothing, living itinerantly, and desiring only this, the brothers can 
be at home in their relationships. Poverty is the condition for brotherhood. This 
is an important consideration because poverty can dehumanize. Rebuilding God’s 
house implies offering an alternative to the dehumanizing effects of poverty – today 
we can include everything that dehumanizes, from forms of work, to abuse, to social 
structures. The life of brotherhood should provide for humanizing relationships, ex-
pressed in turning toward the other in one’s real need, and the response of authentic 
care for one another.

What it means to be human is the reality given with the stigmata of Francis. The 
stigmata remained surrounded by unanswered questions with regard to the where, 
when and how Francis received the marks of the crucified in his own flesh. Thomas 
of Celano was responsible for providing the time, the place, and the context for the 
event of the Stigmata, but while doing that, he was much more interested in the 
communicating the meaning of the mystery. Celano recounted that two years be-
fore his death, while at LaVerna, Francis, “[S]aw in the vision of God a man having 
six wings like a seraph, standing above him, arms extended and feet joined, fixed 
to a cross” (1 Cel 94).23 Celano’s words here suggest that the vision Francis saw at 
that point was a vision of a human person taken up into God, burning with desire 
(a seraph), and crucified. The vision portrays the divinization of a human person. 
Celano is not describing history here, rather he is attempting to interpret an event 
whose meaning was for him in a sense, beyond history. Thus, Celano understood 
the stigmata as demonstrating the fullest potential of a human being as embraced by 
God in the incarnation. In Jesus, God embraced the human condition with all of its

22 ReBu VI:7–8; Opuscula 369: “Et ubicumque sunt et se invenerint fratres, ostendant se domesticos 
invicem inter se. Et secure manifestet unus alteri necessitatem suam, quia, si mater nutrit et diligit 
filium suum carnalem, quanto diligentius debet quis diligere et nutrire fratrem suum spiritualem?”

23 1 Cel 94; Fontes Francescani, pp. 369–370: “[D]iuobusannis antequam animam redderet caelo, vidi in 
visione Dei virum unum, quasi Seraphim sex alas habentem, stantem supra se, manibus extensis ac 
pedibus coniunctis, curci affixum.”
limitation, fragility, weakness and vulnerability, and in the embrace of this particular human condition God’s own divine nature was revealed – in other words, the crucified flesh of Christ revealed the essential nature of God symbolized by the crucified Seraph. In this context, the event of the stigmata revealed both the meaning of God and the meaning of the human person assumed by Jesus Christ. This human condition embraced by Jesus from his birth to the cross, was the same human condition lived by Francis to the point that Francis came to feel this in his own wounded flesh and blood. Marked with the wounds of Jesus, Francis became the leper, an icon of the crucified Jesus, as Celano described the event, “While he was unable to perceive anything clearly understandable from the vision, its newness very much pressed upon his heart. Signs of the nails nails began to appear on his hands and feet, just as he had seen them a little while earlier on the crucified man standing above him” (1 Cel 94). Francis literally became what he saw, that is what he had been seeing from the moment God turned him to the lepers to contemplate there humanity as a living image of Jesus Christ, crucified and fixed to a cross, the icon of God.

What does it mean to be human, then, for Franciscan evangelical theology? It means to embrace the reality and totality of the human condition as frail, weak, fragile, and vulnerable, and even scarred and wounded. The human person is an image of the Lamb who was slain, who carries even now in glory the scars of the passion. And, being scarred and wounded like Jesus is not primarily about imitating Jesus’ suffering and pain on the cross. Rather, being scarred and wounded is the consequence of self-sacrificing love, of being totally for others, without holding anything back, a divine quality. To be truly human means to patiently bear the real human condition of weakness, fragility and vulnerability. In the stigmata Francis demonstrated that it is possible for a human being to be God-like, to love as God loved, to be totally and completely for the other, and in addition he demonstrated that human persons are capable of compassion, are capable of bearing the pain of the other as God did in the incarnation.

This it seems is what is described as the action of the Spirit of the Lord in one’s life according to the _Regula bullata_: “[L]et them pay attention to what they must desire above all else: to have the Spirit of the Lord and Its holy activity, to pray always to him with a pure heart, to have humility and patience in persecution and infirmity, and to love those who persecute, rebuke and find fault with us…” (RBu X:9–10). The rule

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24 _Fontes Francescani_, p. 370: “Cumque liquido ex ea intellectu aliquid non perciperet et multum eius cordi visionis huius novitas insideret, coeperunt in manibus eius et pedibus apparere signa clavorum, quemadmodum paule ante virum supra se viderat crucifixum.”
25 See the _Laudes Dei ad omnes horas dicenda_.
26 Rbu X:9–10; _Opuscula_ 370: “[S]ed attendant, quod super omnia desiderare debent habere Spiritum Domini et sanctam eius operationem, orare semper ad eum puro corde et habere humilitatem, patientiam
admonishes the brothers to a life of poverty, to have nothing of one’s own and to desire nothing more than the action of God’s Spirit. In this text the brothers are admonished to live by expressing the activity of the Spirit of the Lord in their outward behavior.

The action of the Spirit is described in terms of bearing with everyone and everything in patience and humility. It is what Francis speaks of when he describes “true joy” to Leo as they made their way back to the Portiuncola, and after having arrived there and when they were refused entrance because of the time of day and because they were stupid and not needed, they were told to go to the Crosiers. Francis said that, “If I had patience and did not become upset, true joy as well as true virtue and the salvation of my soul would consist in this.” The experience of the presence of God transforms human existence in such a way that even persecution and sickness can be converted into the means for following Christ. The experience of the Spirit of the Lord thus expresses itself in patience – the Latin term *patiens* describing a willingness to endure or undergo, to be capable of bearing hardship. For Francis, patience is an attribute of God as he acclaimed in the *Praises of God*, “You are love, charity; you are wisdom, you are humility, you are patience, you are beauty, you are meekness, you are security, you are rest” (LDei 4).

Francis thus experienced Jesus as the face of God who made himself vulnerable in this world, who exercised patience through life and death. But it is the Incarnation even more than the passion and death that Francis looked to, because in the incarnation Jesus put himself into the position of weakness, frailty, vulnerability, and limitation, and in this revealed the full potential of human being, and that the acceptance of human vulnerability is salvific, even divine. Authentic human life can flourish in the Franciscan household that is built by brothers who turn toward each other, who engage in honest conversation as a way of life, and who patiently embrace their humanness in weakness, fragility and vulnerability. It is this Franciscan way of life itself that relocates the divine into the everyday lived experience of men and women, and is a clear response to the modern world’s radical individualism and selfish parochialism.

**The World**

Leaving the social world of Assisi when he went to live with lepers, Francis stepped into God’s world – creation – where everything that existed was established in right

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27 VPLaet 14; *Opuscula* 461: “Dico tibi quod si patientiam habuero et non fuero motus, quod in hoc est vera laetitia et vera virtus et salus animae.”

28 LDei 4; *Opuscula* 139: “Tu es amor, caritas; tu es sapientia, tu es humilitas, tu es patientia, tu es pulchritudo, tu es maneuetudo, tu es securitas, tu es quietas, tu es gaudium ...”
relationship by the Creator – this is the truth that would later be celebrated in the *Canticle of the Creatures*. Creation sings, creation flourishes, simply by being what it was created to be, by being in relationship with everything else.

The companions of Francis described how the *Canticle of Creatures* was composed after he received the Stigmata and while his body was racked with pain and the shelter that he was staying in near San Damiano was overrun with mice, disturbing Francis even when he tried to eat. Frustrated and discouraged, Francis prayed that God would give him patience in his suffering. In response he was asked if in exchange for his illnesses and troubles, someone gave him a treasure so great and precious that, even if the whole earth were changed to pure gold, all stones to precious stones it would be nothing in comparison to the precious treasure which he would be given. Francis responded that this would be greatly desirable. “Then, brother,” he was told, “be glad and rejoice in your illnesses and troubles, because as of now, you are as secure as if you were already in my kingdom” (CAss 83). The point is that for Francis, the world, even with its sadness, pain and suffering, if embraced with patience and love, already gives access to the kingdom. This world is a cruciform creation as is the human person. But it is this world that the *Canticle of Creatures* celebrates as reconciled space in which everything that is exists as brother and sister, and the elements in and through their very existence sing the praise of the Most High. Humans become a part of the song only when they “bear infirmity and tribulation,” and when they endure in peace and meet bodily death in God’s will.

Picking up on this insight of Francis, Bonaventure too underlined how the entire world was transformed in the transfiguration of Jesus, commenting in a sermon for the Second Sunday of Lent:

“All things are said to be transformed in the transfiguration of Christ, in so far as something of each creature was transfigured in Christ. For as a human being, Christ has something in common with all creatures. With the stone he shares existence; with plants he shares life; with animals he shares sensation; and with the angels he shares intelligence. Therefore, all things are said to be transformed in Christ since—in his human nature—he embraces something of every creature in himself when he is transfigured”.29

29 J.G. Bougerol (Hrsg.), Sermones Dominicales, Grottaferrata 1977, 250: “Omnia transfigurata nutricia gratiae tuae deserviunt ad voluntatem eorum quae a te desiderata sunt (Sapientia 16,25). Dicuntur autem omnia transfigurata in transfiguratione Christi, eo quod aliquid de creatura qualibet fuit in Christo transfiguratum: nam Christus in quantum homo communicat cum omnibus creaturis; habet enim esse cum lapidibus, vivere cum plantis, sentire cum iumentis, et intelligere cum angelis. Cum igitur Christus in quantum homo est aliquid de omni creatura, fuit transfiguratus, ideo dicuntur omnia in ipse esse transfigurata.”
Thomas of Celano described Francis’ relation to the good world of creation in terms of his manner of “reading” Christ in creation which culminated at the end of Book I of his *Vita beati Francisci* with the celebration of Grecchio. Celano made the point that what Francis had been seeing all through his life as he “looked down on the things of the earth,” was “the image of him who made himself poor for us in the world” (1 Cel 76). Flowers, lambs, worms and poor men and women, as well as lepers and others who suffer, are all recognized in Christ at Grecchio, where Francis desired to do something that “would recall to memory the little Child who was born in Bethlehem and set before our bodily eyes in some way the inconveniences of his infant needs, how he lay in a manger, how, with an ox and an ass standing by, he lay upon the hay where he had been placed” (1 Cel 84). Celano’s description of the event, of how the human Christ “lay upon the hay where he has been placed,” is not simply a pious and devotional reflection on the incarnation. Placed here by Celano at the end of Book I, it is a significant theological statement about the meaning of the incarnation – Christ’s place is the world; to look at Christ is to affirm the goodness of the world and to see ourselves in Christ’s place, that is, in the world. In a very inchoate manner, the dynamic direction of thought in Celano’s text moves to the suggestion that the meaning of the world, and hence of the human person, is revealed and is made manifest in Christ the revelation of God.

**Conclusion**

Almost fifteen years ago now, the North American Theologian David Tracy suggested that the kind of theology that was needed to move beyond the impasse of postmodernity and secularization was a “back to the future of theology.” He stated that “the hope of Christians is to resist evil and transform suffering. That hope is grounded in the central Christian metaphor of 1 John 4:16: God is love.” One cannot but help however to be pulled back down to reality today by looking around at the way things are—violence, wars, crime, abuse, impoverishment, ecological disaster, international realignments, religious wars and discrimination, the dissolution of the family, the hopelessness of drugs, and on and on. It is difficult to see through this reality in

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30 *Fontes Franciscani*, 352: “Aiebat namque: ‘Qui pauperi maledicit, Chrito iniuriam facit, cuius portat nobile signum, qui se pro nobis fecit pauperem in hoc mundo.’”

31 *Fontes Franciscani*, 360: “Volo enim illius pueri memoriam agere, qui in Bethlehem natus est, et infantilium necessitatium eius incommoda, quomodo in praesaepio reclinatus et quomodo, adstante bove atque asino, supra foenum positus exstitit, utcumque corporeis oculis pervidere.”


order to glimpse the hoped for fulfillment of the dreams and visions of humanity at this moment. Tracy went on to comment that,

“Modern Western culture believed that we not only could but should separate thought from feeling, content from form, theory from practice. Despite the many great accomplishments of modernity...modernity has also proved impoverishing in its inability to face evil and suffering squarely: not only personal sufferings but especially the suffering modernity's own historical success often caused — the suffering of whole peoples, cultures, and groups both outside and within modern Western culture.”

As a result of modernity, the cosmos was reduced to nature, and science adopted a dominating attitude towards it. In addition, God withdrew and disappeared into a greater hiddeness and otherness. And finally, the self became more autonomous and individualistic, becoming isolated by choice from participation in the cosmos and with the divine and with the other. This separation of thought from feeling, of content from form, of theory from practice led to the dissolution of what Tracy described as the “felt synthesis” of most ancient and medieval thinkers. And, as Tracy put it, the main consequence of modernity “was the breakup of both the ancient and medieval sense of a synthesis of God, self, and cosmos.”

Tracy’s comments are as valid today as they were fifteen years ago. The theology of the Evangelical life as lived first and then articulated in the Franciscan tradition offers both a response to the present and a way into the future. Studying the foundations of the Franciscan Evangelical theological tradition in the Writings of Francis and the early brothers, one can see how the Franciscan tradition resisted separating thought from feeling and proposed an affective human rationality as the measure of truth; the Franciscan tradition refused to separate content from form and proposed that the world is not made up simply of things, but rather that everything in its particular and unique shape and size and color and appearance manifests the truth that God is good; and, the Franciscan tradition refused to separate theory from practice, affirming that life in this world is the place where God can be recognized, experienced, named and loved. Franciscans are challenged to continue living in the world as witnesses to the presence of the good God, to the dignity of the human person as brother and sister accomplishing the mission of rebuilding God’s house for human flourishing. It is important to remember even today that it was Francis himself who reminded us of the mission Jesus gave as he prayed to his Father: “As You sent me into the world, so I sent them into world.”

34 Tracy, “Evil, Suffering, Hope”, 19.
35 Tracy, "Evil, Suffering, Hope", 20.
Responsio

auf Michael Blastics Referat Franciscan Evangelical Theology


Evangelische Theologie aus persönlicher Gotteserfahrung

Drei spezielle Orte bleibender Christus-Gegenwart

Michael Blastic zeigt aus den Primärquellen auf, wie Franziskus schrittweise zu Gott und zu seiner Sendung findet: (a) Erfahrungen mit Aussätzigen bereiten den jungen Kaufmann auf (b) die persönliche Begegnung mit Christus vor, der sich unerwartet nahe zeigt: im Wort hörbar – es ergreift zunächst in der Armenbibel von San Damiano – und dann auch im Sakrament sichtbar gegenwärtig. Als sich (c) Brüder anschließen, finden sie (d) ihre gemeinsame Lebensweise in den Fußspuren Jesu und ihre Sendung in der missio apostolorum. Dieser Prozess in vier Schritten offensichtlich werden könnte.

die Welt-Liebe Gottes: Eine Liebe, die Franziskus unter die Geringsten vor Assisis Toren führt und da das Herz des Kaufmanns weckt (er reagiert „miseri-cors“). Gott selber handelt am Rand der Gesellschaft, wo sich die Ärmsten als Lieblingsgeschwister Jesu erweisen. In San Damiano zeigt dann auch Christus selber sich am Rand der Gesellschaft, in einer einsturzgefährdeten Landkirche.


_Fragen und Anfragen_


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Der eine Vater und unsere geschwisterliche Welt

Fragen und Anfragen


Vom Geist Gottes inspiriert – Hoffnung für alle Menschen

Br. Michael hat Franziskus’ Gotteserfahrung auch auf die Beziehung zum Heiligen Geist befragt. Mit seiner trinitarischen Tiefe und Weite ermutigt der Brief an alle Gläubigen Menschen jeder Lebensweise, Wohnung des Geistes zu sein, persönlich inspiriert den Willen des Vaters zu tun und Christus durch die eigene Praxis neu auf die Welt zu bringen.

Franziskus’ hartnäckiges Ringen mit der römischen Kurie 1209 erklärt sich aus einer dreifachen Erfahrung: Die ersten Brüder gehen nach Rom, um dem Papst mitzuteilen, was Christus selber in Kreis der Brüder wirkt (Gef 46). Diese sehen bereits Anfänger in der Nachfolge inspiriert (NbR 2,1), und ermutigen Menschen aller Lebensweisen zu je persönlicher Christusnachfolge (Leo, Ord 5–9, 2 Gl 48–53): Alle Glieder der Kirche – vom einfachen Bauern bis zum mächtigen Papst – suchen den Willen des einen gemeinsamen und einzigen Vaters zu tun. Zehn Jahre später wagt sich Franziskus zu Sultan al-Kâmil im Vertrauen darauf, dass er nicht einen Unmenschen, sondern einen Bruder findet: Sohn desselben Vaters (dass er Christus nicht als Gottessohn erkennt, motiviert Franziskus zum Glaubensgespräch, das sich über
Tage hinzieht und seine Freundschaft zum Sultan begründet). Franziskus stellt in Ägypten staunend fest, welche Gottesliebe er in der anderen Religion antrifft.

**Fragen und Anfragen**


**Kirchenferne und De-Institutionalisierung**

**Institutionell belastet und gefangen**

Frage und Anfragen


Als Laien in den Fußspuren Jesu


Frage: In einer Moderne, die in kritischer Spannung zur Institution Kirche nach Sinn, Spiritualität und ganzheitlichen Visionen sucht, fragt sich, ob wir nicht den

Eine Sendung, die sich nicht pastoral, sondern menschlich-solidarisch entfaltet: dort, wo moderne Menschen leben, kämpfen und suchen? Sie in ihrer eigenen Lebenswelt finden, verstehen und begleiten? und dabei nicht „pastoral“ auftreten, denn wir sind nicht zu Hirten berufen, sondern als Brüder in die Welt gesandt.

Illustration zu einer der aufgeworfenen Frage

KARTE:
Religiöse Orte und Zentren in Assisi zur Zeit des jungen Franziskus

- Kirche San Donato: heute Kirche
- Kirche Santa Maria Sopra Minerva: Kirche der Benediktiner von Subaso
- Pfarrkirche Santo Stefano: Bis 1212 Kirche
- Bischofskirche Santa Maria Maggiore: Sitz von Bischof Guido I.
- Hospital San Giorgio: mit Pfarrschule; hier lernte Franziskus lesen, schreiben, Latein
- Benediktinerabtei San Pietro: mit Mönchsgemeinschaft
- Kloster Sant’ Andrea: Frauen? abhängig von San Giacomo
- Benediktinerkirche San Giacomo di muro rupto: mit Priester der Abtei Farfa, eine von vielen kleinen Pfründen
- Dom San Rufino: Mit Kapitel = Kanonikergemeinschaft
- Pfarrkirche Santo Stefano
- Prioratskirche San Paolo: der Benediktiner von Subasio
- Marktkirche San Niccolò de plathea: an der Piazza von Assisi wird vor 1227 Pfarrkirche

Farben der Karte:
- monastisch, benediktinisch
- bischöflich-pfarrlich
- kanonikal
My “responsio” to Br. Michael’s seminal presentation is to be understood as an initial reaction which will initiate our collective discussion and seeks to be practically oriented. It is divided into two parts. A first part underscores pivotal statements by our American brother and subsequently poses questions in our present-day reality. A second part harks back to Peter Berger’s de-secularisation thesis from 1999. Michael Blastic alludes to it in an interesting comparison with the period around 1200. Our discussion could take both into account: firstly, the practical *Theology of Saint Francis*, which sees the brothers sent into an eventful world in the morning of modernity; and secondly, *his behaviour* in an epoch in which world and church, everyday life and religion are increasingly estranged.

Evangelical theology from personal experience of God

*Three special places of the enduring presence of Christ*

Michael Blastic illustrates from primary sources how St. Francis gradually finds God and his mission: (a) experiences with lepers prepare the young merchant for (b) the personal encounter with Christ, who exhibits unexpected closeness: audible in the Word – it is initially embraced in the *Biblia pauperum* from San Damiano – and is then also presently visible in the Sacrament. As (c) brothers join, they find (d) their common way of life in the footsteps of Jesus and the mission in the *missio apostolorum*. This process in four steps reveals God’s love for the world: a love which leads St.

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1 I share Michael Blastic’s view of young Francis’s experiences of calling as well as the consequences from the gradual discovery of the “poor Christ” and the Father of all human beings, which his presentation depicts: cf. N. Kuster, *Franziskus. Rebell und Heiliger*, Freiburg/Br. 2009; a new, in-depth analysis of the autobiographical attestation is offered by Pietro Maranesi, *L’eredità di Frate Francesco. Lettura storico-critica del Testamento*, Assisi 2009, speziell 95–301 (= intuizione dell’identità personale e comunitaria).
Francis among the lowermost before the gates of Assisi, and there the merchant’s heart wakens (he reacts “misericors”). God himself acts on the fringe of society, where the poorest prove to be the favourite siblings of Jesus. In San Damiano, Christ then also shows himself on the fringe of society, in a rural church in danger of collapsing.

St. Francis discerns the radical consequences of the Incarnation: the Son of God has become a brother to the people, and the Divine Brother encounters on the fringe of society and church – beyond the bourgeois city and far away from the cathedral which Assisi built at that time for the Almighty – a half-naked Christ on the Cross, ostensibly weak, with wide open arms and open eyes, with open ear and open heart. If the Son of God so resolutely descends, every human aspiration to a career and any egoistic economic activity lose their meaning: radical sharing and boundless solidarity are the existential response to such experiences of God. If the Son of God becomes Man in this world and remains present here in word and bread, he cannot be found by fleeing the world. When Christ is and remains the brother of the poorest (Matthew 25: 31–46), social reality is the third place of encounter with Christ: St. Francis even discovered the fringe of society and diverse forms of human misery as privileged places for encounters with Christ. What does this vital discovery of St. Francis mean to us today: word, sacrament and human siblings (particularly those in misery) are the three aspects in which Christ can be experienced in the everyday inconspicuous — easy to miss, to overlook and to ignore?

Questions and inquiries

Even today, our Capuchin provinces throughout the world seem to provide me with these privileged places of Christ’s presence in everyday life. First place: hear Christ in the Word. Liturgy of the hours and periods of meditation, preaching and pastoral accompaniment ensure much scope for hearing the Word in our everyday life. What many communities could probably do more often and better here: that the brothers not only individually hear the Word of God, but also do it together, as the first companions in San Niccolò also do. The worldwide rapidly growing Pentecostal Church is holding a mirror up to us here. Second place: to experience Christ in the shared bread. The Celebration of the Eucharist is – other than in the parishes which suffer from an increasing lack of priests – frequently possible in our communities

and largely assured. But frequency does not say anything about the intensity with which we also seek, nurture and experience *communio* amongst ourselves in this celebration — and as we carry on in everyday life. Third place: Christ’s siblings. Brotherly *service to the community*, magnanimous hospitality, open doors for people of any origin and class, material *solidarity with the poorer* and social commitment of specialised brothers make us Capuchins “*frati del popolo*” even today. Yet we must ask ourselves whether we do not excessively remain in institutionalised forms which increasingly make us apart from the world in which we have been sent. St. Francis leaves Assisi and finds the presence of Christ in surprising places — beyond the institutions, on the fringe of the social network, far away from the municipal churches. And his brothers follow the footsteps of Christ as laity, without pastoral powers and privileges, without financial recompense. They live and herald the Gospel not primarily in churches and in church services, but with the mundane means and in the secular language of the new civic culture. Is a social and ecclesiastical relocation also not being imposed on us brothers today? Is this a way to the “hedges and fences” of the pastoral calling if the new religious-spiritual searching of post-modern people starts far away from the institutions?

**The one Father and our brotherly world**

Experiences of Christ allowed St. Francis to find the one and only Father. The Canticle of the Sun illustrates in poetically compact form what Saint Francis discerns in the further course of his spiritual quest: the entire world assumes brotherly traits. Whoever prays to “Our Father” discovers with the early companions a brother and a sister in all people: in rich and poor, in friends and strangers, in friendly and hostile, in fellow believers and ultimately also in believers of a different faith. St. Francis celebrates God’s ‘Yes’ to the created world in a song that extols God’s creation as a brotherly family. Comprised of 33 verses, the Song of Creation honouring God’s ‘Yes’ to our created world is also celebrated in his fine composition: the Father and Creator loved our world so much that his Son lived 33 years in it “with body and soul”. In it Immanuel shares “God with us”, our human-earthly joys and suffering, worries and hopes — shares it “with body and soul”!

Michael Blastic convincingly illustrates that the lived solidarity of the brothers has deep religious roots: by placing themselves in the service of Christians and Saracens, sitting at tables with people of all classes while destitute en route and seeking to carry peace into every house they profess their faith in the one Father and they follow the practice of Jesus.
Questions and inquiries:
With regard to our reality, it can be stated that we “internally” live the “vision of a brotherly humanity” first of all in our own communities, and then also promulgate it outwards in word and deed in our worldwide solidarity and mission. Men from all cultures, races and social classes congregate as brothers and thus seek to make a piece of God’s Kingdom on Earth come alive. At the same time we also find xenophobia, remnants of class consciousness and traces of racism in our ranks. In the Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples and “to all people everywhere on earth” (LtR), St. Francis widens his view of universal “fraternitas” to include the whole of humanity: whoever loves or seeks God will be a companion in faith. A double consequence of this could be: spiritually, that not a single person, no matter which religion they belong to, may fall from our hope; and that secondly, our Order’s internal “oeconomia fraterna” has urged a maximum of solidarity with our siblings in God’s world, i.e. to also live outside the Order and outside the Church. The Canticle of the Sun does not allow that we behave like a concern in the “house” of one family, which primarily invests in the personal institution, its branch establishments and works: our family enterprise is God’s world, and ‘oeconomia fraterna’ ultimately applies to all siblings.

Inspired by the Spirit of God — hope for all people
Br. Michael has also questioned St. Francis’ experience of God in the relationship with the Holy Spirit. With its Trinitarian depth and scope the Letter to the Faithful encourages every way of life to be the dwelling of the Spirit, personally inspires us to do the will of the Father, and to bring Christ to the world again through personal practice. St. Francis’s tenacious struggle with the Roman Curia in 1209 is explained by a triple experience: the first brothers go to Rome in order to inform the Pope what Christ himself is bringing about in the circle of brothers (L3C 46). They already see beginners inspired in the succession (ER 2, 1), and encourage people from all ways of life to personally follow Christ (LtL, LtORD, Ord 5–9, and 2 LtF 48–53): all members of the Church – from simple peasants to the mighty Pope – seek to do the will of the one common and only Father. Ten years later, St. Francis ventured to confidentially tell Sultan al-Kâmil that he has not come upon a brute, but rather a brother: the Son of the same Father (the fact that he does not recognise Christ as the Son of God motivates St. Francis to engage in a discussion of faith that drags on for days and established his friendship with the Sultan). In Egypt St. Francis is astonished to discover the love of God which he finds in the other religion.
Questions and inquiries

Today we Franciscans are also challenged to trust God's inspirational power in every person. The peace prayers of world religions in Assisi have impressively and encouragingly expressed this trust. God's Spirit takes effect in every religion and in every person. The essence of what Hans Küng's Global Ethic Foundation hopes for can be brought to fruition through the respectful dialogue of religions and their common application for justice, peace and preservation of creation: peace among the nations through peace among the religions. Many modern people associate distrust towards religious institutions (church hierarchies as well as the rule of ayatollahs) with the trust that God inspires in every religion in his way and leads to the common goal of humanity. Franciscans are encouraged by the Poverello to encounter people of any religion in a brotherly manner. Test question to any and every one of us: Where do I personally see myself — also outside my community and church — as subservient to people in a brotherly or sisterly manner?

Remoteness to the Church and de-institutionalisation

Institutionally burdened and captive

Peter Berger has stated that many people demonstrate a new religious sensitivity today and absolutely seek Christian aspects if they also do something outside of the institution Church. Young St. Francis is thereby close to modern contemporaries in a triple way. First of all he professes that for many years he “lived as if there were no Christ” (Test). Many years without personal experience of God make the favourite saint of Christianity seem amazingly modern. Then St. Francis sought in a deep identity crisis far away from the churches of his city. At that time, Assisi included nothing less than a dozen small ecclesiastical centres, half of them in the hand of monks, moreover a large abbey, a bishop's residence and a community of canons. There is no lack of religious-spiritual competence centres. Yet none of them were a place of refuge for the merchant. Ultimately he finds a new ecclesiastical way of life as a self-conscious laymen — with nothing but laymen whose concept of life is recognised by the Pope in 1209.

Questions and inquiries

In view of the spiritual search for meaning among modern people, we Capuchins have to ask ourselves what we think religiously disinterested and indifferent people are capable of doing. Young St. Francis was one of them for several years.
In view of ourselves, it can be asked whether nowadays we are not standing in many places where the monks of Assisi stood at that time: Abbeys and parishes attended to by us, competence centres present in our cities, yet remote from the search for meaning by many contemporaries? Are we much too institutionalised and not familiar enough with the living environment of new generations? Present and not sought because only churchgoers understand our language and because our answers only appeal to this small segment of our society – “believers” who are usually over age 60?

As laymen in the footsteps of Jesus

Michael Blastic underscores what the brothers see in the life and mission of St. Francis: to live and promulgate the Gospel in the footsteps of Jesus. The Kingdom of God shall be experienced in our concrete world, in which case we do more than “establish the church”: arrange the house of Creation as a brotherly family, approach all forms of suffering, misery and violence and give the modern era “visions of humanity”: a holistic view of life which combines nature and mercy, thinking and feeling, internal and external, people of all cultures, people and creatures, the self with the cosmos and with God.

Question: The fact that today St. Francis fascinates people worldwide and is beloved beyond our Church confirms his visionary power: a love for the world and a holistic spirituality which the modern age is seeking more than ever before. The question is posed to us Franciscans as to why St. Francis is acclaimed and we ourselves, his brothers, are repeatedly overlooked. What is the status of our visions, our holistic approach, and our mission against all forms of suffering, misery and violence? Where are we prophets today?

I am missing a not insignificant detail in Br. Michael’s synthesis: 800 years ago St. Francis stood as a layman with nothing but laymen before Pope Innocence III. His succession was to follow the footsteps of a rabbi who was also the Son of God, a layman among the nation of Israel: no educated theologian, no teacher of the law, neither priest nor synagogue ruler. Like Jesus, St. Francis lived, acted and had an effect as a layman in the prophetic tension with the institution of his own religious community.

Question: In a modern era which seeks meaning, spirituality and holistic visions in the critical tension with the institution Church, it is asked whether we do not have to rediscover the “lay character” of our first inspiration: that at least the younger among us work outside the church building and the traditional liturgical forms, and are newly familiar with the cultures and subcultures of our modern
civilisation, to perform “non-ecclesiastical” work “in the houses and in the fields” of present-day people, to speak our life and hope in the everyday life of our contemporaries. The first brothers (also the priests amongst them) did it creatively, as street performers on the squares of cities, as caregivers in the hospices, as workers in the peasant families or in townhouses. Familiar with the living environment of their contemporaries, they shared the “joy and hope, sorrow and fear of the people from today, especially the poor and the distressed of any nature” (GS 1): While St. Francis did this as guest and guest worker (and not as host in abbeys!), he understood contemporaries in their own living environment and inspired their reality from his friendship with Christ. Does not the chance of our founding charisma particularly lie in a modern era that has increasingly become distant from the Church, yet seeking religiosity: if we once again combine our “come here pastoral message” with a “go there mission? The ‘come here pastoral message’ in terms of the “pastoral care of hospitality” also remains our strength today: that we share our spiritual sources, offer oases to seekers, whether it is a city church in Frankfurt, friaries to share life and houses of tranquillity, a vibrant liturgy or simply the experience of a concrete religious community — in the strongly secularised France new cornerstones of the Church. And what about those who do not come or do not find the way to our sources? Would we not have to increasingly combine our ‘come here pastoral care’ with a ‘go there movement? A mission which is not developed in pastoral terms, but rather in terms of human solidarity: where modern people live, struggle and seek? Find, understand and accompany them in their own living environment? And while doing so, do not appear “pastoral”, because we are not called to be shepherds, but sent into the world as brothers.

Illustration regarding one of the questions posed

Are our friaries threatened in many places nowadays with standing there where Assisi’s monks stood around 1200? Religious, liturgical and spiritual competence centres, institutionally present in cities, yet far away from modern contemporaries in the search for meaning? New religious encounters reach people without institutional importance in one’s own everyday world.
MAP:
Religious sites and centres in Assisi at the time of young St. Francis
”Brüder, lasst uns beginnen, denn bisher haben wir noch nicht viel getan”. 800 Jahre Franziskanische Bewegung, gefeiert im ‘Zeitalter der Säkularisierung’

Vorbemerkungen

Die amerikanische Benediktinerin Joan Chittister zitiert in ihrem provokativen Buch „Unter der Asche ein heimliches Feuer“ zur Aktualität des Ordenslebens die byzantinisch-katholische, dreifache Mutter und soziale Aktivistin Catherine de Hueck Doherty: „Ich hätte nicht gerne gelebt, ohne je jemanden aufgeschreckt zu haben.“

Daraus folgert Chittister: „Die Frage lautet nicht: Sollte das Ordensleben weiterhin bestehen? Die Frage heute lautet: Kann das Ordensleben unserer Zeit noch aufrüttelnd genug sein, um das Verlangen zu stillen, das die Welt nach ihm verspürt?“


Grundsätzliches

Positionierung


Diese Worte scheinen für das Thema der Spiritualität heute in der Auseinandersetzung mit der Säkularisierung fast schon programmatisch zu sein. Mit anderen Worten finden sich ähnliche Aussagen bereits in den Quellen der Franziskanischen Bewegung aus dem Mittelalter. So z. B. führen in dem mittelalterlichen Mysterienspiel „Sacrum Commercium“ die Brüder während eines langen Gesprächs mit der Herrin Armut diese „auf einen Hügel, zeigten ihr die ganze Welt, soweit man sehen konnte, und sprachen: Das ist unser Kloster, Herrin!“

Nicht Weltflucht kann also die Franziskanische Antwort auf die Säkularisierung sein, sondern Weltengagement, ein Leben in und mit dieser Welt. Das hat Konsequenzen für den Lebensstil, für die Ausbildung und viele andere Dinge, wie noch zu sehen sein wird. Die Säkularisierung, so wie sie Gogarten versteht, unterstreicht diesen Aspekt Franziskanischer Spiritualität, den man mit ,in der Welt sein‘ umschreiben kann.


Die Säkularisierung ist kein Feind, sie stellt Fragen, die konstruktive Antworten erfordern. Sie ergeben sich zwangsläufig aus der Botschaft und dem Leben Jesu, aus der Inkarnation, die Franziskus so sehr in den Mittelpunkt seines Handelns und Denkens stellte. Und in Verbindung mit den oben genannten Beobachtungen sind die Kapuziner Teil der Welt. Säkularisierung hat Chancen, wenn man sie im Sinne Gogartens als eine notwendige und legitime Konsequenz des christlichen Glaubens

2 R. Kramer, Die postmoderne Gesellschaft und der religiöse Pluralismus. Eine sozialethische Analyse und Beurteilung (Sozialwissenschaftliche Schriften Heft 41), Berlin 2004, 45.
betrachtet. Es geht um die Gestaltung der Welt von innen heraus, und nicht von au-
ßen. Der Theologe Kerber bringt es sogar noch pointierter auf den Punkt, indem er
betont, dass der Christ und der Verkünder sich zum Anwalt der säkularisierten Welt
tun haben, gerade auch angesichts der reaktionären und fundamentalen Ver-
haltensweisen, die die Säkularisierung oftmals in der Kirche zeitigt: „In diesem ande-
ren Fall muss sich der Verkünder des Evangeliums bewusst zum Anwalt der säkulari-
sierten Welt gegenüber reaktionären Strömungen innerhalb der Kirche machen.“

Die Kapuziner sind Anwälte der säkularisierten und modernen Welt, leben in
dieser Welt und sind gleichzeitig Kinder dieser Welt.

**Die Franziskanische Bewegung und die Säkularisierung**

In diesen acht Jahrhunderten hat sich die Franziskanische Bewegung weltweit nicht
nur etabliert, sondern in beeindruckender Weise Kirche mitgestaltet und viele Men-
schen aufgerüttelt, aus ihrer Lebensweise herausgerufen und zu einem oft radikalen
Neuaufbruch geführt. Vielfach waren das Menschen, die sich nicht gefragt haben,
woin nun die Franziskanische Identität liegt. Sie haben sie vielmehr einfach zu le-
ben versucht, in aller Unterschiedlichkeit, getroffen vom Wort Gottes und aufgerüt-
telt durch Menschen, die in Elend und Armut leben. Ein Blick auf die Franziskani-
sche Geschichte und Tradition und auf die vielen beeindruckenden Gestalten in der
Franziskanischen Geschichte zeigt, dass vier Charakteristika die Franziskanische
Identität als solche umschreiben können:

- Das Leben in einer brüderlich-geschwisterlichen Gemeinschaft
- Das Leben als Minderbruder, als Mindere
- Das Leben mit einem Auftrag und einer Sendung
- Das Miteinander von Priestern und Laien

Die amerikanische Theologin Ilia Delio sieht in diesen vier Aspekten eine neue Wei-
se des Franziskus, Beziehungen zu gestalten und zu pflegen. Für sie impliziert diese
neue Weise eine nahezu theologische Dimension, ausgestaltet in einem Leben nach
dem Evangelium. „Francis’s life was, by definition, theological, for it entailed a new
set of relationships to God, humanity and creation. Theology, I would argue, is what

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4 W. Kerber, Zur Krise der Glaubensverkündigung, in: ders. (Hrsg.), Säkularisierung und Wertewan-
del. Analysen und Überlegungen zur gesellschaftlichen Situation in Europa (Fragen einer Weltkultur.
Veröffentlichungen des Forschungs- und Studienprojekts der Rottendorf-Stiftung an der Hochschule

Franziskus hat sich aufschrecken lassen und daraufhin sein Leben radikal verändert; ein Schritt, der nicht nur die Welt des Mittelalters verändert hat. Franziskus hat sich verändern lassen und ist einen Weg gegangen, der für viele andere exemplarisch geworden ist. Dieser Weg ist zu einer Schule der Spiritualität geworden, auch zur einer Schule für die Kapuziner:

- Seine Quellenerfahrung mit dem Aussätzigen, die ihn radikal hat umdenken lassen,
- hat erste Schüler und Nachfolger gefunden, die sich mit Franziskus als seine Brüder auf den Weg gemacht haben,
- konnte nur so in einem bestimmten sozio-kulturellen Kontext stattfinden, in einer vom Evangelium und dessen Nachfolge fast schon geschwängerten Zeit,
- hat sich schnell als zukunftsträchtig und eine riesige Bewegung gezeigt,
- hat sich organisiert und strukturiert,
- verfestigt
- und ist reformbedürftig geworden, d. h. Veränderung tut Not in der Rückbesinnung auf die eigenen Wurzeln.6

Hier scheinen die Kapuziner auch heute, wie viele andere Gruppierungen der Franziskanischen Bewegung, wieder zu stehen. Das 800jährige Jubiläum der Franziskanischen Bewegung ist ein guter Anlass, inne zu halten und sich auf die Ursprünge in der Auseinandersetzung mit der Gegenwart zu besinnen. Die Frage, die sich hierbei stellt, ist die Frage nach der Franziskanischen Identität. Was zeichnet die Franziskanische Bewegung, und damit speziell die Kapuziner, aus, oder: Wofür stehen die Kapuziner, in aller Unterschiedlichkeit? Was ist allen gemeinsam? Kann man sich

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auch heute noch im Zeitalter der Säkularisierung auf die vier Charakteristika aus der Tradition einigen?

Die Säkularisierung und der Umgang mit dem Thema fordern zur Auseinandersetzung heraus und verändern.

**Veränderung**


Einer der zentralen Begriffe christlicher Spiritualität und des gelebten Glaubens ist der Begriff der Veränderung; keine Veränderung um der Veränderung willen, aber eine Veränderung, die von Umkehr und Hinwendung geprägt ist, ein Veränderungsprozess, der ein Gestaltungsprozess ist. Umkehr und Hinwendung implizieren Wandlung, womöglich sogar Verwandlung und Umformung. Tiefgreifende und existentielle Veränderungen sind immer wieder Thema innerhalb der Geschichte und der Theologie der Spiritualität; am Anfang der Franziskanischen Geschichte steht die Veränderung eines Menschen. Dabei geht es um Umformung, um eine radikale Umkehr und Neu-Ausrichtung. Transformatio des Menschen in Gott hinein, Transformatio aufgrund einer Gotteserfahrung, Transformatio, die passiv und aktiv gestaltet wird – das ist das Thema der christlichen Spiritualitätsgeschichte. Und dabei lautet die Frage eigentlich ganz simpel und einfach immer nur: Wie kann authentisch heute die Nachfolge Christi gelebt werden, einzeln, als Gemeinschaft und als Kirche?

konjunkturresistent ist. „Als erfolgreich gilt heutzutage jener, der sich reibungslos an neue Situationen und Konstellationen anpassen kann und will. Dieser wird dann mit Adjektiven wie flexibel, adaptiv und dynamisch gefeiert.“  


Eine zweite Weise, mit der Umbruchsituation umzugehen, liegt in der Fusionierung von Provinzen, und das erleben wir im Moment ja in Europa in fast allen Ländern. Zumeist die großen und internationalen Männerorden wie Franziskaner,

Kapuziner, Jesuiten, Salesianer und Pallotiner in Deutschland legen Provinzen zusammen und fusionieren, um so Synergieeffekte zu erzielen, sich konzentrieren und neue gemeinsame Akzente setzen zu können. In diesem Kontext stellt sich weniger die Frage nach der Wahrung und Findung von Identität, als vielmehr nach der Begleitung und auch Durchführung dieser Fusionierungs- und damit Veränderungsprozesse. Wie kann es gelingen, dass alle Brüder mit in den Prozess einbezogen werden und sich nicht unnötig Widerstände regen, die die Veränderung erschweren oder gar unmöglich machen? Das gestaltet sich oft schwierig. Daneben gilt die Einsicht als Voraussetzung, dass das Zusammengehen von Provinzen nicht ein notwendiges Übel, sondern ein gemeinsamer Schritt in die Zukunft ist.

Wiederum andere Gemeinschaften beginnen einen entschiedenen internen Prozess einer geistlichen Erneuerung, bevor sie Schritte der Aufgabe, der Umstrukturierung oder der Fusionierung unternehmen.

Alle drei Varianten, sollen sie denn gelingen, müssen dabei die Komplexität der Organisation vor Augen haben, d. h. die verschiedenen Formen von Widerständen, von Traditionen und Ängsten, die verschiedenen Gruppierungen innerhalb der Gemeinschaften, die oftmals nicht im Gleichschritt gehen, sondern verschiedene Lebensgeschwindigkeiten an den Tag legen. Widerspruchshandhabung von Spannungen und Wertekonflikten im Alltag scheint angesagt. „Charakteristisch für diese Widersprüche ist es, dass sie nicht einseitig auflösbar sind. Der Umgang mit den Widersprüchen besteht in der Balancierung, darin, die Produktivität der Spannung aufzunehmen: konkret etwas zwischen Alt und Jung, Einzelnen/Vereinzelung und Gemeinschaft, denen die bleiben und denen die gehen, Bewahrung und Veränderung, Ordensmitgliedern und Laien.“

In allen drei Varianten ist eine gute und umsichtige Leitung, ist Management gepaart mit der Spiritualität der Gemeinschaft und des Gründungsimpulses notwendig. Doch woher kommt das Wissen, die praktische Einübung und Erfahrung?


eigene Akzente zu setzen. Wenn das der Fall ist, dann müssen sie besser, intensiver und persönlicher begleitet sowie vorbereitet werden. Ziel der personellen Solidarität, so heißt es in einer Arbeitshilfe der CENOC, ist: „Erhalt und/oder Revitalisierung des kapuzinischen Charismas in einer Region, wo der Orden durch Überalterung und Mangel an Berufungen an Lebenskraft verloren hat, durch:

- Belebung der Dynamik und des Gemeinschaftsgeistes in den Gemeinschaften
- Verstärkung der bestehenden Gemeinschaften, um dem Zeugnis mehr Lebendigkeit zu verleihen
- Überbrückung des Altersabstands zwischen den Brüdern der Provinz und evtl. neuen Bewerbern
- Hilfe in einem Projekt, das für eine Region zukunftsträchtig wäre, aber mit den einheimischen Kräften nicht zu leisten ist.“

Geschieht das? Ehrlich? Sind sich die Kapuziner und die Verantwortlichen der jeweiligen Provinzen bewusst, dass die personelle Solidarität in diesem Verständnis zunächst einmal mehr Arbeit bedeutet?

Die Grundfrage in allen Umstrukturierungsprozessen, auch in der personellen Solidarität, die verändert, wenn sie ernst genommen wird, bleibt: Sind die Kapuziner bereit, sich zu ändern, d. h. zunächst einmal die Situation anzuerkennen wie sie ist, also nicht dem Alten hinterher zu trauern? Dann gilt es, in einem zweiten Schritt Ziele zu formulieren und sich auf den Weg der Veränderung zu machen: “Are we willing to change, to grow, to allow ourselves to be challenged by the tradition and to challenge the tradition in light of our culture? That is, are we willing to become theological by definition?”¹⁰

Haben die Kapuziner eine gemeinsame Vision, wie das Gemeinschaftsleben aussehen kann und soll? Wird die Solidarität, die von den Minderen Brüdern gefordert wird, gelebt? Wie werden überhaupt Beziehungen gelebt? Oder sind die Kapuziner individualisiert und wie so manch andere Gemeinschaften zu einem ‚Franziskanischen Hotelgewerbe‘ geworden? Sind die Kapuziner zu sehr mit sich selbst beschäftigt und selbst-absorbiert, oder lassen sie den Blick in den Spiegel der Welt zu und sind veränderungsbereit, wenn es notwendig ist?

Noch immer gilt, was Franziskus zum Ende seines Lebens sagt: “Brüder, lasst uns beginnen, denn bisher haben wir noch nicht viel getan.”¹¹ Das ist die Charta einer Spiritualität, die Veränderung in das Zentrum ihres Denkens und Handelns stellt.

¹⁰ Delio, a. a. O., 31.
Leitung und Management


Die Organisations- und Managementberater Doppler und Lautenburg stellen eine Charta des Managements von Veränderungen mit acht Prinzipien auf, die sich durchaus auch auf die Lebensweise in einer Franziskanischen Gemeinschaft übertragen lassen:

¶ Zielorientierung
¶ keine Maßnahme ohne Diagnose,
¶ Ganzheitliches Denken und Handeln
¶ Beteiligung der Betroffenen,
¶ Hilfe zur Selbshilfe,
¶ prozessorientierte Steuerung,
¶ sorgfältige Auswahl der Schlüsselpersonen.
¶ lebendige Kommunikation

Auf dem Hintergrund dieser Grundforderungen eines Veränderungsprozesses in Unternehmen ist die Frage zu stellen, wie in den Provinzen der Kapuziner, wie in der Leitung und auch in einzelnen Häusern Entscheidungen getroffen werden.

Manche dieser Grundforderungen sind in der Regel des Franziskus enthalten und nicht wegzudenken. Es handelt sich um eine Lebensweise, somit sind die Betroffenen beteiligt, oder sie sollten es sein. Ein Beispiel dafür ist die Leitungsorganisation der Franziskanischen Orden und Gemeinschaften, die sehr basisdemokra-


13 Ebd., 164.

Lebensstil


Drei Punkte sollen näher in den Blick genommen werden.

ировать Gemeinschaft
Wenn über Säkularisierung nachgedacht wird, über die Trends und Fakten einer säkularen Welt, dann fällt auf, dass oft von Sehnsucht die Rede ist; Sehnsucht nach Gemeinschaft, Sehnsucht nach Spiritualität, Sehnsucht nach Sinn. Franziskanisches Ordensleben hat primär gemeinschaftliches Leben im Fokus. Sich für das Franziskanische Leben zu entscheiden bedeutet, einer Bruderschaft beizutreten, so wie es Franziskus schon in seiner Regel ausdrücklich formuliert hat, wenn er von denen spricht, die zu den Brüdern kommen, nicht um Ordensmann zu werden, sondern um Bruder zu werden. Gemeinschaftliches Leben ist das Zentrum Franziskanischer

14 Delio, a. a. O., 15.
Spiritualität und eines der vier Merkmale, die schon zu Beginn dieses Artikels konstatiert wurden: Bruder und Minderbruder sein. Das hat einige Konsequenzen.

1. **Bruder sein heißt: Minderbruder sein, sich abhängig wissen und ‚unten’ leben!**
   Darüber ist viel geschrieben worden, darüber hat man sich jahrhundertelang gestritten: Was bedeutet das für die bestehenden Institutionen? Darf ein Minderbruder ein Amt übernehmen, wie und welches? Diese Diskussion soll an dieser Stelle nicht wiederholt werden. Doch es gibt durchaus Impulse aus der Säkularisierung:
   Immer wieder fragen sich die Kapuziner, was Kapuzinersein heute bedeutet und wie es gelebt werden kann. Das ist gut so, das macht Sinn. Allerdings bleibt es oft dabei. Es wird Nabelschau betrieben. Es dreht sich alles um die eigene kleine Welt. Der größere Kontext wird ausgeblendet. Es darf nicht sein, dass sich ein großer Konvent einer Provinz über fast ein gesamtes Jahr hinweg fast ausschließlich Gedanken über die eigene Kommunikation und das eigene geistliche Leben macht. Dieses wird nur dann geändert und sinnvoll gestaltet werden können, wenn die Diskussion sich Inspirationen in der Kontemplation der Wirklichkeit sucht. Die Kultur prägt eine Gemeinschaft und ihr geistliches Leben, denn dieses umfasst das ganze Leben, oder aber es hat mit Geist und geistlich nichts zu tun. “Our social location was the choice of minoritas. “
   Minoritas ist eine Beziehungskategorie, die sich nicht in ständiger Selbstreflexion und Nabelschau erschöpft.

2. **Bruder sein heißt: einander wie Mütter sein – zärtliche Zuwendung**

3. **Bruder sein heißt: sich den Sündern und Randständigen zuwenden**
   In einer Zeit, in welcher die Kirchenaustritte steigen, in welcher Menschen von Kirche und auch Glauben nichts mehr wissen wollen, kann eine gelebte Brü-

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15 M. Cusato, Hermitage or marketplace? The search for an authentic Franciscan locus in the world, in: Spirit and life, Volume 7, 125–148, 144.
derlichkeit, die sich als Geschwisterlichkeit versteht, Akzente von Kirche setzen und aufzeigen, die in den Gemeinden angesichts der Fusionierungen von Pfarrgemeinden nach dem McKinsey-Prinzip gar nicht mehr gesetzt werden könnten.

4. *Bruder sein heißt: universale Gastfreundschaft leben*

“Is our experience of community life sufficiently mature and does it challenge the signs of exaggerated individualism whenever it encounters them? Is our sense of co-responsibility for the Church’s mission strong enough to be prophetic and critical even when this is unpopular or misunderstood as disloyalty? Does our communal identity allow the person to grow both as a subject of autonomous activities and as a social being – both in equal measure?“

In Brüderlichkeit leben bedeutet, zum einen als Bruder in einer konkreten Gemeinschaft zu leben, aber es bedeutet auch gleichzeitig, mit all den anderen zu leben, die den einzelnen umgeben, mit allem, was lebt, universelle Brüderlichkeit zu gestalten. Dazu gehört auch und gerade die Kultur, die prägt: “the community that we claim as Franciscan and then the community of the world in which we find ourselves, that is, the culture in which we live.” Die Kultur ist geprägt durch die Säkularisierung, die insbesondere eine Reflexion über das brüderlich-gemeinschaftliche Leben anregen kann.

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18 Delio, a. a. O., 28.
Einsatz für Frieden, Gerechtigkeit und Bewahrung der Schöpfung

Ein anderes Stichwort, das unbedingt in den Kontext des Lebensstils hineingehört, ist die Verantwortung für Frieden, Gerechtigkeit und Bewahrung der Schöpfung. Gemeinschaften, die diese Grundanliegen einer Franziskanischen Spiritualität (und auch des konziliaren Prozesses) heute ausklammern, stellen sich nur einem Teil der ganzen Wahrheit. Säkularisierung geht Hand in Hand mit der Globalisierung, und die Säkularisierung wird auch die Länder ergreifen, für die diese heute noch ein Fremdwort darstellt, nicht zuletzt aufgrund der Globalisierung. Betrachten wir die Tradition, dann sollte die Franziskanische Bewegung allen voran gehen. Es geht dabei nicht nur darum, ob der Kaffee nach dem Essen aus Plastikbechern getrunken wird (auch wenn dieses ein untrügliches Zeichen für eine Ausblendung von Wirklichkeiten darstellt). Es geht vielmehr um eine Verantwortung der Welt gegenüber, weil Christus in diese Welt gekommen ist. Franziskus hat in diesem Sinne, ganz im Gegensatz zu vielen seiner Zeitgenossen, prototypisch gehandelt und alles in eine Beziehungskategorie hineingestellt. Beziehungen schaffen, für die der einzelne verantwortlich ist, ist ein Grundgesetz Franziskanischer Spiritualität und eines Franziskanischen Lebensstils. Dahinein gehört auch die Verantwortung für die ganze Schöpfung. “I am equally concerned that, as Franciscans, we come to realize that we can no longer presume disconnection or fragmentation at a fundamental level. As members of a global community, we can bring to the world a radical sense of connection not predicated on supply and demand but on an intrinsic familial sense of relationality, both transcendent and trans-species.”19 Ühlein geht in ihren Überlegungen sogar soweit, dass sie „connection making“, also Beziehungen herstellen, als einen Franziskanischen Archetypen bezeichnet.20


20 Vgl. ebd, 117.
die Armen leben wollen, beinhaltet Friedens- und Schöpfungsarbeit. Die Armut heute ist dann nicht nur eine materielle, sondern u. a. ein Mangel an Verbindung zur Schöpfung. Die Wunden, die der Mensch der Schöpfung zugefügt hat und weiter zufügt, die Härte der Globalisierung, die die Schwachen immer schwächer und hilfloser hinterlässt, im Kleinen aber auch die Unfähigkeit, Beziehungen herzustellen, die sich anscheinend eine Gemeinschaft, die sich nichts mehr zu sagen hat – hier hat Franziskanische Spiritualität ihren Ort.


Auch hier gilt es, im Denken nicht nur umzukehren, sondern sich transformieren zu lassen, sich selbst umformen zu lassen.

**Ausbildung**


Die Renaissance des Religiösen als religiöser Pluralismus hat auch die Ordensgemeinschaften und die Ausbildung erreicht. Die Gruppen derer, die kommen, sind sehr heterogen:

1. die einen betonen die tägliche Eucharistie und das tägliche Stundengebet
2. die anderen betonen die Freiheit in der Wahl, die Freiheit, die Eucharistie nicht täglich zu konsumieren, und sie dennoch als Höhepunkt des christlichen Lebens zu bezeichnen
3. die einen betonen die Bedeutung der Gruppe und eine gemeinsame Gestaltung der Ausbildungszeit für alle, unabhängig vom Alter und vom Ausbildungsstand, ganz im Sinne eines alten Seminarstils
4. die anderen sind für Individualität und Curricula, abgestimmt auf die Bedürfnisse des einzelnen ...

**Kontemplation**


Die Betonung der Kontemplation, besonders bei den Jüngeren heute, ist beeindruckend und entspricht sicherlich auch einem Bedürfnis und der Erfahrung, dass kontemplatives Leben in der Vergangenheit bei den Kapuzinern zu kurz gekommen ist. Gerade auf dem Hintergrund der Entstehungsgeschichte der Kapuziner ist die
Kontemplation ein wichtiges Element und gehört in der Auseinandersetzung mit der Zeit und auch der Säkularisierung hinein. Doch ist eben Kontemplation auch ein Beziehungsbegriff. Kontemplation, wie Sudbrack es ausdrückt, heißt: Andacht der Wirklichkeit vor dem Wirklichen. Das ist weitaus mehr als Innerlichkeit und Verweilen vor dem Allerheiligsten. Das hat mit Aufmerksamkeit, mit Wachheit, mit Beziehungsgestaltung zu tun, oder so wie es Michael Blastic ausdrückt: „The discipline of contemplation and compassion in the Franciscan tradition both demands and fosters attentiveness to what is happening in the world, in people’s lives as they unfold. … Life in Franciscan brotherhood and sisterhood must also be horizontally ecstatic. This would imply that fraternal/sororal life be outwardly directed and not self-absorbed.‖ Wenn sich der Wunsch nach Kontemplation allein in Formenfrömmigkeit niederschlägt, oder wenn es bei der Zulassung eines Bruders zur Ewigen Profess allein um die Frage geht, ob er jeden Tag zur Eucharistie geht und seine halbe Stunde Betrachtung am Tage einhält, wenn er am besten auch noch einen geistlichen Begleiter vorzuweisen hat, dann ist das ein Verständnis von Kapuzinersein und von geistlichem Leben, ja von Kontemplation, das zu kurz greift und im wahrsten Sinne des Wortes fragwürdig ist.

Klerikalismus


Die Ausbildung im Kapuzinerorden scheint, auch im deutschsprachigen Raum, immer noch „klerikerlastig“ zu sein Es fängt damit an, dass in manchen Provinzen bei der Abstimmung zur Ewigen Profess gleichzeitig auch die Frage nach dem

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Sind einige Studierende erst einmal zu Priestern geweiht, dann steht die Form der Feiern im Vordergrund. Die Hoffnung bleibt, dass diese Formenfrömmigkeit in der Auseinandersetzung mit den Gläubigen und in der pastoralen Arbeit eine Korrektur erfährt.

**Ausblick – „Unser Kloster ist die Welt“**

Was kann nun als Fazit gezogen werden, trotz der vielen Fragen, die letztlich die Brüder in den Gemeinschaften und Provinzen durch ihr gemeinsames Leben beantworten müssen?

Franziskus findet Gott an ganz überraschenden Orten. Er lebt radikal in einer Zeit, die genau diese Form der Radikalität benötigte, damit sich in Kirche und Welt die Dinge grundsätzlich zum Wohle des Menschen wenden und verändern mussten. Burckhard unterstreicht in seinen Ausführungen, dass es nicht darum gehen kann, es Franziskus in allem gleichzutun. Zu sehr hat ein jeder und eine Gemeinschaft, im Kleinen wie im Großen, der Kultur Tribut zu zollen, die wiederum ein Resul-
tat geschichtlicher Entwicklungen darstellt. Franziskus als leblosen, starren, unbeinflussbaren und unveränderbaren Archetypen zu betrachten, oder besser gesagt, ihn darauf zu reduzieren, wird weder ihm noch dem heutigen Franziskanischen Menschen gerecht. Burkhard argumentiert mit Bonaventura und stellt Franziskus als einen Prototyp hin, der den Einzelnen verändern will, der Veränderung nicht ausschließt, im Gegenteil, diese vielmehr impliziert und fordert. “According to Bonaventure a new context calls for a new discernment. The ‘Spirituals’ within the Order could envision no deviation from the radical poverty of the first Franciscans even when the Order grew to thousands. They treated Francis as an archetype so the new context was irrelevant. An archetype is ‘an ideal form that establishes an unchanging timeless pattern. Bonaventure looked at the story of Francis differently. He approached Francis as a prototype, also an original model but one that does not impose a pattern that cannot change.”

Franziskus ein Prototyp oder ein Archetyp – eine interessante Fragestellung, an der gleichzeitig auch eine Stellungnahme bzw. Verortung in Richtung Säkularisierung deutlich wird.


„Unser Kloster ist die Welt.“ Das kann und sollte sich im Lebensstil, in der Art der Leitung der Gemeinschaften, in den Ausbildungsformen zeigen. Hier wird deutlich, dass Säkularisierung, mit all ihren Herausforderungen, eine positive Kraft der Erneuerung für den Orden darstellen kann, die Veränderung bewirkt, eine Veränderung hin zu dem ureigensten Charisma, denn: Wer sich auf Christus einlässt und seiner Botschaft der Liebe und Hoffnung traut, der kann sich nicht mit der Wirklichkeit abfinden und zufrieden sein, sondern beginnt, sich dem Armen und Schwa-

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chen zuzuwenden, versucht, denen Sprachrohr zu sein, die mundtot gemacht worden sind. Er schenkt denen Antlitz und Würde, deren Würde mit Füßen getreten wird. Kurzum, wer sich auf Christus einlässt, der lässt sich auch auf die Wirklichkeit ein. Er beginnt, sich zu verändern.
“Brothers, let us begin, because up to now we have not done much yet.” 800 Years of Franciscan Movement, Celebrated in the ‘Age of Secularisation’

Preliminary remarks

In her provocative book ‘Unter der Asche ein heimliches Feuer’ (‘Under the Ashes of a Secret Fire’) on the topicality of religious life, the American Benedictine sister Joan Chittister quotes the Byzantine Catholic, mother of three and social activist Catherine de Hueck Doherty: “I would not have lived without having startled someone.”

Chittister concludes: “The question is not: Should religious life continue to exist? The question today is: Can the religious life of our time still be evocative enough to satisfy the longing that the world feels for it?”

In this statement from Joan Chittister there are two aspects worth considering in connection with secularisation. For one thing it is the evocative questions: Have you, have I ever startled someone with and in my way of life as a Capuchin? What distinguishes the Capuchins in the age of secularisation? Where does this phenomenon invoke the aspect of critically scrutinising the way of life as a member of a Christian religious order and developing a separate profile in a secularised world that rouses people and is able to provide an orientation in their search for the meaning of life? For another thing it is the question as to whether startling and rousing can even be the purpose of a religious life and the Franciscan way of life. Does the world feel the longing for us? Secularisation poses these questions in an entirely new sense of urgency.

Fundamentals

Positioning

Several decades ago, the theologian Friedrich Gogarten (1887–1967) distinguished himself due to the fact that he did not consider secularisation as the great foe of the

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Church and theology, but rather as a necessary consequence of the Christian faith: “For him, secularisation represented the ‘necessary and legitimate consequence of Christian faith. It is already founded in the Gospel itself. The Son of God comes into this world and thus in its legacy, and with him we humans also became heirs of Christ (Romans 8:17). By accepting this legacy he acts on behalf of God. He becomes God’s responsible trustee.”

Today these words seem to be almost programmatic for the theme of spirituality in the confrontation with secularisation. In other words, similar statements are already found in the sources of the Franciscan movement from the Middle Ages. For instance, in the medieval mystery play “Sacrum Commercium”: during a long conversation with the Lady Poverty the brothers took her “to a certain hill, they showed her all the world, they could see and said: This, Lady, is our enclosure!” Therefore escapism cannot be the Franciscan response to secularisation, but rather involvement in the world, a life in and with this world. This has consequences for the lifestyle, education and many other things, as will be subsequently seen. Secularisation, as Gogarten understands it, underscores this aspect of Franciscan spirituality, which can be paraphrased with ‘being in the world’.

Then this ‘being in the world’ is also christologically founded in a tradition: “kenosis” and “incarnation” are the catchwords in this connection. God has come into this world, takes the world so seriously, turns towards the poor and the infirm, the small and insignificant — all that is and exists and lives. This is why the place of the Capuchins and Franciscans is right in the middle of this world, and their task is to help all others to live.

Secularisation is no foe. It poses questions which necessitate constructive answers. They inevitable ensue from the message and life of Jesus, from the incarnation which St. Francis so gladly placed in the heart of his action and reasoning. And in conjunction with the abovementioned observations, the Capuchins/Franciscans are part of the world. Secularisation has chances if one considers it in Gogarten’s terms as a necessary and legitimate consequence of Christian faith. It is about the arrangement of the world from within and not from without. The theologian Kerber encapsulates it even more pointedly, in which case he emphasises that the Christian and the preacher have to make themselves advocates of the secularised world, particularly also in view of the reactionary and fundamental behavioural patterns which secularisation frequently brings forth in the Church: “In this other case, the

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2 R. Kramer, Die postmoderne Gesellschaft und der religiöse Pluralismus. Eine sozialethische Analyse und Beurteilung (Sozialwissenschaftliche Schriften Heft 41), Berlin 2004, 45.
preacher of the Gospel has to consciously make himself an advocate of the secularised world in the face of reactionary trends within the Church.”

The Capuchins are advocates of the secularised and modern world, live in this world and are at the same time children of this world.

*The Franciscan movement and secularisation*

The Franciscan movement celebrated its 800-year anniversary in 2008/2009. In those eight centuries the Franciscan movement has not only established itself worldwide, but helps form the Church in an impressive way, and rouses many people, called out from the way of life, and leads to an often radical new awakening. In many cases it was the people who did not ask themselves where the Franciscan identity now lies. On the contrary, they have simply attempted to live, in all dissimilarity, affected by the Word of God and aroused by people who live in misery and poverty. A glance at the Franciscan history and tradition and at the many impressive figures in the Franciscan history shows that four characteristics can paraphrase the Franciscan identity as such:

¶ Life in a brotherly-sisterly community  
¶ Life as a Franciscan, as Friars Minor  
¶ Life with a task and a mission  
¶ The cooperation of priests and laity

The American theologian Ilia Delio sees a new manner of St. Francis, to form and to foster relationships, in these four aspects. For her this new manner implies a virtually theological dimension, embellished in a life according to the Gospel. “Francis’s life was, by definition, theological, for it entailed a new set of relationships to God, humanity and creation. Theology, I would argue, is what really comprised Francis’s identity and thus the identity of the early movement.” Delio thereby emphasises three theological ‘intuitions’ which help to comprehend the identity of the early Franciscan movement: the relationship of Christians with the world, the significance of the human Christ and the nature of the human being. The consideration of these intuitions has resulted in a solidly united behaviour with regard to man, nature

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and the world — a behaviour that entails being involved in the world for the world, and embraces this behaviour with open arms in terms of confraternity, uniquely expressed in St. Francis’ Canticle of the Sun.

St. Francis was startled and subsequently radically altered his life — a step that not only altered the world of the Middle Ages. St. Francis allowed himself to be altered and took a path that has become exemplary for many others. This path has become a school of spirituality, also a school for the Capuchins:

- His source of experience with the leper which made him radically rethink things,
- and which was discovered by the first students and followers who set out on the path with St. Francis as his brothers,
- could only occur in such a specific socio-cultural context in a period virtually impregnated by the Gospel and its succession,
- and quickly proved to be promising and a huge movement,
- has become organised and structured,
- solidified,
- and has become in need of reform, i.e. change is a necessity in the recollection of one’s own roots.6

Even today the Capuchins, like many other configurations of the Franciscan movement, seem to be standing here. The 800-year anniversary of the Franciscan movement is a good occasion to pause and to reflect on the origins in the confrontation with the present. The question posed in this connection is the question of Franciscan identity. What distinguishes the Franciscan movement and thereby especially the Capuchins, or: What do the Capuchins stand for, in all dissimilarity? What is common to all? Can one come to terms with the four characteristics from the tradition even today in the age of secularisation?

Secularisation and dealing with the theme challenge us to accept confrontation and change.

**Change**

Change is the catchword today. Change in the society, in the economy and also in the churches and religious orders: change and transformation. Organisations change, the religious orders change, the world and culture change. These tensions shall not be blandished, but it is imperative to encounter them in veracity. The Church is the

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ecclesia semper reformanda, likewise the religious orders as well as the communities of Capuchins. Secularisation, whether it has already come to pass or is still in the process of taking place with its characteristics specific to each country, also challenges the Capuchins to take a stance and to modify, change and have themselves changed should the occasion arise.

One of the central concepts of Christian spirituality and lived faith is the concept of change; not change for the sake of change, but a change which is characterised by reversal and loving devotion, a process of change which is a creative process. Reversal and loving devotion imply transformation, possibly even metamorphosis and reshaping. Profound and existential changes are a theme over and over again within the history and the theology of spirituality; the change of a human being is at the beginning of the Franciscan history. Thereby it involves reshaping, a radical reversal and realignment. Transformation of man into God, transformation due to an experience of God, transformation which is passively and actively configured — this is the theme of the Christian history of spirituality. And at the same time the question is actually quite simple and simply always only: How authentically can the imitation of Christ be lived today, individually, as a community and as a Church?

Changes are not only an essential element of spirituality and of lived faith; on the contrary, they are also an essential element of economic life today. The concept ‘change management’ has a similar resonance and popularity in the gamut of management as ‘spirituality’ has in the realm of theology. Change constitutes economic life: changes as the result of changes in strategy, changes as a consequence of restructuring, changes as results of mergers, and ultimately also changes through external influences from politics, from the Europeanization and globalisation of the world or also as a consequence of technical innovations. The management consultancy firm “Capgemini” even assumes that change management is resistant to economic cycles. “Successful change management is nowadays regarded as that form of management which can and will adapt smoothly to new situations and constellations. This is then acclaimed with adjectives such as flexible, adaptive and dynamic.”7 Flexible and adaptive are definitely also catchwords which suit the religious orders and the Church, especially also the Franciscan movement. Because the churches and the religious orders are also undergoing a process of change, whether they want to or not, and at the same time have to deal with resistance factors. However: Does smooth adaptation to new circumstances signalise success? This is surely not applicable to the religious orders, since these are particularly characterised in history by resistance and provocation. A smooth adaptation eclipses the ideal and the profile of religious

orders and ultimately robs them of any vitality! Nevertheless, to speak with Capge-
mini: Are the communities flexible, adaptive and dynamic — or amicably obdurate?
The Capuchins and the Franciscan movement are today facing vehement upheaval
situations which prove to be quite dramatic on account of the way of life and also the
slight number of new entrants. Generally speaking, three directions can be deter-
mined regarding how to deal with these challenges and how change and innovatio-
nal management is to be pursued meaningfully.8

Very frequently the lacking numbers and finances lead to the fact that religious
orders and communities abandon the works brought to life by them or are converted
into foundations. For instance, hospitals are consequently no longer supported and
managed by a specific community of sisters, let alone organised in everyday life, but
very often turned over to foreign hands as a result of introduced foundations. Ques-
tions are then asked, and this is the case in many religious orders and communities
which were established between the 17th and 19th century, for one thing regarding to
what extent the overall identity of the community will change as a result; and for
another thing, how the spirit of the founder can still be retained in the foundation
and can also be transported. Does the community have to reposition itself and de-
velop new fields of work and thereby also new realms of life? What is their identity?
How can the spirit of foundation be preserved?

But this way of dealing with the situation at hand does not pertain much to the
Capuchins.

A second way of dealing with the situation of upheaval lies in the merger of pro-
vinces, and yes, in Europe we are experiencing this at the moment in nearly all coun-
tries. For the most part, the large and international men's religious orders such as
the Franciscans, Capuchins, Jesuits, Salesians and Pallottines in Germany consolidate
and merge provinces in order to be able to achieve synergy effects, concentrate efforts
and set new common accents. In this context, the question of preserving and finding
identity is posed less than the question pertaining to the accompaniment and also
the implementation of these merger processes — and with that said — change proces-
ses. How can it succeed that all brothers will be included in the process and not stir
unnecessary resistances which make the change difficult or even impossible? This is
often difficult. In addition, the understanding that the merger of provinces is not a
necessary evil but rather a common step in the future is regarded as a prerequisite.

On the other hand, other communities begin a decisive internal process of a
spiritual renewal before they take steps with regard to the task, the restructuring or
the merger.

8 Cf. T. Dienberg, Das Leben nach dem Evangelium. Modernes Management und die Regel des
All three variations, should they succeed, must thereby bear in mind the complexity of organisations, i.e. the various forms of resistances, traditions and fears which various groups within the communities, which often do not march in step, but exhibit different paces of life. The management of discrepancy with regard to tensions and conflicts of values seems to be called for. “Characteristic of these discrepancies is that they are not unilaterally solvable. Dealing with the discrepant aspects consists in the balancing, incorporating the productivity of tension: specifically something between old and young, individuals/isolation and community, those who stay and those who go, preservation and change, members of religious orders and laity.”

In all three variations, good and circumspect leadership as well as management coupled with the spirituality of the community and the founding incentives is necessary. Yet where does the knowledge come from, the practice and experience?

Not a variation, but an absolutely critical way of dealing with the phenomenon of upheaval is the so-called ‘personnel solidarity’. Brothers from other cultural circles which feature many callings go to the provinces in Northern and Central Europe having a disproportionate number of older brothers. But does it really make sense to bring Indian or Polish confriars into the provinces? What is their task? Is it about maintaining houses and works, filling gaps, or is it about setting new accents in a secularised world? Confriars from a foreign culture contribute in the respective province with their talents, and have the right and the possibility to set their own accents. If that is the case, then they must be better, more intensively and personally accompanied as well as prepared. According to what is said in a CENOC working aid, the objective of personnel solidarity is: “Preservation and/or revitalisation of Capuchin charisma in a region where the Order has lost vitality due to ageing and lack of callings, through:

- Revival of dynamics and community spirit in the communities
- Enhancement of existing communities in order to give more vitality to their witness
- Bridging the age gap between the brothers of the province and any new candidates
- Assistance in a project that would be promising for a region, but could not be accomplished with local forces.”

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Does this occur? Honestly? Are the Capuchins and the responsible authorities of the respective provinces aware that the personnel solidarity in this understanding means first and foremost more work?

The fundamental question in all restructuring processes, also in the personnel solidarity which changes if it is taken seriously, remains: Are the Capuchins willing to change, i.e. to first of all to acknowledge the situation as it is, and not to mourn for the old ways afterwards? Then it is imperative to formulate objectives in a second step and to set off on the path of change: “Are we willing to change, to grow, to allow ourselves to be challenged by the tradition and to challenge the tradition in light of our culture? That is, are we willing to become theological by definition?”

Do the Capuchins have a common vision as to how community life can and shall look? Will the solidarity required by the Order of Friars Minor be lived? How will relationships be lived in general? Or have the Capuchins become individualised and transformed into a ‘Franciscan hotel business’ like so many other communities? Are the Capuchins too busy with themselves and self-absorbed, or do they allow a look at the mirror of the world and are willing to undergo change if it is necessary?

What St. Francis said at the end of his life still applies: “Brothers, let us start, because up to now we have not done much yet.” This is the charter of a spirituality which places change in the centre of its reasoning and action.

Leadership and management

Spirituality and management are increasing becoming the focal point of the considerations of the most varying institutions and research centres, not least also the Institute for Church, Management and Spirituality (IKMS) at the Philosophical-Theological University (PTH) of Münster. Value crisis, confidence crisis, financial crisis, banking crisis, corporate closures, recession — these are horror scenarios which fill the news all over the world every day. What will the future be like? Can budget and economy be restructured? Voices have long since been heard, which particularly call into question the leaderships and management of many involved persons. The incidents of the recent past, the discussions about managers and ethical attitudes, but also secularisation – and the processes of a school of spirituality – challenge us to ponder our own understanding of leadership. Who takes the processes of change in their hands? Who manages and leads them? Are there impulses and guidelines stemming from the Franciscan tradition? Can the communities perhaps learn and

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also implement something from the impulses of modern management knowledge?

The organisational and management consultants Doppler and Lauterburg establish a charter of the management of changes with eight principles, which can also be thoroughly transferred to the way of life in a Franciscan community:

- Goal orientation
- No measure without diagnosis
- Holistic reasoning and action
- Involvement by those concerned
- Help for self-help
- Process-oriented control
- Careful selection of key persons
- Lively communication

Against the background of this basic requirements of a change process in concerns, the question is to be posed as to how decisions will be made in the Capuchin provinces as well as in the leadership and also in the individual establishments.

Some of these basic requirements are incorporated in the Rule of St. Francis and are indispensable. It involves a way of life. Consequently, those concerned are involved, or they should be. One example for this is the chain of command of the Franciscan Order and communities, which is oriented in a very basic democratic fashion. The change in the leadership positions after a certain number of years is one aspect, whereas the possibility for the brothers to be selected and thereby involved in the positions is another. Furthermore, dealing with resistances and a conflict culture as an important aspect of a corporate philosophy play a leading role within the framework of change management. The members of the Order generally and the Franciscan communities in particular can learn quite a bit from the concerns here. The entrepreneurial principles partially constitute good supplements to the various rules of the Order. All too often it seems to be the case that frank and honest words are not spoken in the Church and in religious orders. Much is quietly swept under the carpet with the principle of ‘harmony’ or ‘we all act in concert’ and ‘the Gospel is a message of love’. Conflicts are often not decided honestly, yet precisely conflict management is an essential element of a corporate culture and a culture of change or an innovative culture. Dealing with resistances is enormously important for a success in the Church as well as in concerns. Where and how do members of Christian religious orders learn this fundamental principle of human communication?

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“The leadership has to utilise powers of persuasion – and the foundation for this is lively communication.” The basic attitudes for this are important cornerstones in the Rule of St. Francis, yet the lived practice frequently looks quite different. A culture of innovation presupposes that the ideas of colleagues and confriars will be promoted and required, that confriars and colleagues can distinguish themselves with new ideas, and will not be immediately classified as troublemakers whether the new idea is now successful and implies change or not. Innovation and change cannot happen on their own, not even in the religious orders. Structures such as ‘house chapters’, discussion forums and clear leadership guidelines are necessary here in order to be able to confront the requirements and also the challenges today. It is not enough to refer to the love called for in the Bible. This has to be communicated. The ‘being in the world’ perceives the modern communications possibilities, the methods and instruments of various management theories and practices and takes them seriously. It combines this – in an attitude of love and considerateness, the passion for people for the sake of people – with the spirituality of St. Francis, and can consequently develop a principle of management that can accompany this abundance of provocation and questions in the confrontation with the secular world. At this point a very deliberate distinction is also made once again between management and leadership: management is the competency to establish networks, to arrange everyday business and to arrange it successfully. It is the capacity not to lose sight of the corporate objective.

Leadership involves the development of visions. It can be a risky business, because it means taking the brothers along in the boat, taking them seriously and involving them, and undertaking something for the entirety, with the possibility that it can also fail. It is building confidence and respect for the dignity and competency of every single person. It is action at eye level on the one side, and on the other side it also involves the other levels. Is this differentiation present in the religious orders? Both dimensions should be lived and arranged in a provincial leadership, possibly through various individuals who complement each other in this respect.

Lifestyle

A lifestyle is associated with a culture of life. For the most part it is expressed in a recognisable range of common interests as well as references and backgrounds in life. The development of common attributes such as clothing or language, places to live or ways of life is typical for a certain lifestyle. Quite a few things connect people who display a common lifestyle. They are recognisable and stand for certain forms. A group

13 Ebd., 164.
feeling emerges; a common lifestyle connects, creates closeness and lessens distances. At the same time, distances emerge to other people who do not share this lifestyle.

Do the Capuchins have a specific lifestyle? Or, to ask differently: What does distinguish them? A common fashion? A very specific subculture? Is the Franciscan lifestyle today alternative, clear and to be assigned to a very specific lifestyle? The habit? The places where sisters and brothers live and work? Where are they, and how are they associated with their tradition and their roots? Where not? Where must they change? Do they want to change? “What defines it?”

Three points shall be taken more closely into account.

Community

If one thinks about secularisation and the trends and facts of a secular world, then it is apparent that longing is often spoken of; longing for community, longing for spirituality, longing for meaning. Franciscan community life primarily focuses on communal life. Deciding on a Franciscan life means to join a confraternity as St. Francis explicitly formulated in his Rule, where he speaks of those who come to the brothers not to become a man of the Order, but to become a brother. Communal life is the focal point of Franciscan spirituality and one of the four features which have already been stated in the beginning of this article: to be a brother and Franciscan. This has several consequences.

1. Being a brother means: being a friar minor, to know dependently and to live ‘below’!

Much has been written about this, and this has been contended for hundreds of years: What does this mean for the existing institutions? May a friar minor assume a position? And if so, how and which position? This discussion shall not be repeated at this point. Yet there are definitely impulses from secularisation: Capuchins repeatedly ask what it means to be a Capuchin today and how it can be lived. This is good so, this makes sense. But it often remains at that. This is nothing but navel-gazing. Everything revolves around one’s own small world. The greater context is blocked out. It may not be that a larger friary in a province almost exclusively has thoughts about their own communication and their own spiritual life over the course of an entire year. Then this can only be altered and meaningfully arranged if the discussion seeks inspirations in the contemplation of reality. The culture characterises a community and its spiritual life because this encompasses the entire life, or otherwise has nothing to do with spirit and

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14 Delio, a. a. O., 15.
spiritual matters. “Our social location was the choice of minoritas.” Minoritas is a relationship category which is not exhausted in constant self-reflection and navel gazing.

2. **Being a brother means: to be like a mother to each other – affectionate devotion!**
   Dealing affectionately with each other is something that every life craves and hopes for. But how often do brothers and also sisters deal anything but affectionately with each other. The question of communicative behaviour, word usage, a common language which unfortunately frequently spoils the others that helps it to live is particularly asked here. The language in religious orders is often brutal, judgmental, cynical and ironic. Have the Capuchins learned to apply the basic rules of communication which mutually nurture the counterpart out of respect? Can they quarrel with each other, since being a mother also means entering into the conflict?

3. **Being a brother means: turning towards the sinners and socially marginalised**
   In an age in which the numbers of those leaving the Church is increasing, in which people also no longer want to know about Church and faith, a lived brotherliness which is understood as confraternity can set and illustrate accents of the Church, which can no longer be accomplished in the parishes in their processes of merging, often according to the McKinsey principle.

4. **Being a brother means: living universal hospitableness**
   The fundamental missionary trait of Capuchin communities, an original asset of Franciscan spirituality, is also shown here. The General Chapter of Franciscans found the expressive formulation for this in 2003: fraternitas in missione. It involves giving people space, especially in an age in which they seek a home, open ears, and a loving and attentive look in which they want to be ‘whole’ in the truest sense of the word today. Lived hospitableness is the touchstone of Franciscan spirituality, which profoundly obligates people and the creation. Living like a Franciscan means: to authentically bear witness, as a community, not individualised and sporadically. A community of brothers and mission have all too often been played off against each other in the past. Yet does being active in Franciscan pastoral care mean not doing this in light of all consequences, and doing this together as a community of brothers? And are the communities not striking a bargain with individualism here? On the other hand, here it also

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15 M. Cusato, Hermitage or marketplace? The search for an authentic Franciscan locus in the world, in: Spirit and life, Volume 7, 125–148, 144.
has to be emphasised that the individual and the community belong together. The Franciscan Anthony Carrozzo speaks of: The Franciscan creed of individualism. 16 “Is our experience of community life sufficiently mature and does it challenge the signs of exaggerated individualism whenever it encounters them? Is our sense of co-responsibility for the Church’s mission strong enough to be prophetic and critical even when this is unpopular or misunderstood as disloyalty? Does our communal identity allow the person to grow both as a subject of autonomous activities and as a social being – both in equal measure?” 17

For one thing, living in brotherliness means to live as a brother in a concrete community, but at the same time it also means to live with all the others who surround the individuals, to create universal brotherliness with everything that lives. This also and particularly includes the culture which shapes: “the community that we claim as Franciscan and then the community of the world in which we find ourselves, that is, the culture in which we live.” 18 The culture is shaped through secularisation, which can especially encourage a reflection about the fraternal-communal life.

Commitment for peace, justice and integrity of creation

Another catchword that absolutely belongs in the context of lifestyle is the responsibility for peace, justice and integrity of creation. Communities which exclude these basic concerns of a Franciscan spirituality (and also of the conciliar process) today provide only a portion of the entire truth. Secularisation goes hand in hand with globalisation, and secularisation will also take hold of the countries for which this describes a foreign word even today, not least on account of globalisation. If we consider the tradition, then the Franciscan movement should precede everything. This not only involves whether the coffee after dinner will be drunk from plastic cups (even if this depicts an unmistakable sign for a neglect of realities). On the contrary, it involves a responsibility towards the world, because Christ came into this world. In contrast to many of his contemporaries, St. Francis acted prototypically in this sense and placed everything in one relationship category. Creating relationships for which the individual is responsible is a fundamental law of Franciscan spirituality and a Franciscan lifestyle. The responsibility for the whole creation is also included in this. “I am equally concerned that, as Franciscans, we come to realize that we

16 Cf. comment 4.
18 Delio, a. a. O., 28.
can no longer presume disconnection or fragmentation at a fundamental level. As members of a global community, we can bring to the world a radical sense of connection not predicated on supply and demand but on an intrinsic familial sense of relationality, both transcendent and trans-species.”

Ühlein even goes so far in her considerations that it describes “connection making”, i.e. establishing relationships, as a Franciscan archetype.

This is to be concurred with all along the line, especially against the background of the four fundamental characteristics of Franciscan spirituality: fraternal community, being a “fiar minor”, task and mission, priests and laity. All of these characteristics are relationship categories. This then also has particular consequences for dealing with the basis of the Franciscan movement: the relationship with people goes hand in hand with the relationship with the world, simply responsible involvement, the struggle for the right for many to exist that depends on the treasures of nature, deployment against another injury to our world, which harms exactly those who already live under the level of our subsistence level anyway. Wanting to live the experience of evangelical poverty and a service for the poor today involves the work of peace and creation. Poverty today is then not only a material connection, but among other things a lack of connection to creation. The wounds which man has inflicted and continues to inflict on creation, the harshness of globalisation which leaves the weak increasingly weaker and helpless, in microcosm but also the inability to establish relationships, the silent community which no longer has anything to say — Franciscan spirituality has its place here!

However: Is this work often merely sneered at? Can and may it be that the NGO “Franciscans International”, supported by the entire Franciscan movement worldwide, is having financial difficulties? Is a work and a commission not be torpedoed in terms of content if the chairman is only involved with his own benefice, solely with his country and the financings there? Is this work in the Order even appreciated and wanted?

Here it is also imperative not only to turn back in terms of reasoning, but to be transformed, to allow yourself to be reshaped.

**Education and formation**

Secularisation also belongs placed in the context of education and formation in the Order, since particularly the younger or partially also older candidates are strongly characterised by the developments of recent years: secular and postmodern. Here
it makes sense not to inexorably maintain the so-called “good old tradition”, but to ask: How does one have to encounter these brothers in order to be fair to them? What are their needs? What do the needs of the communities look like? Are these compatible?

The renaissance of religiosity as religious pluralism has also reached the religious orders and education. The groups of those who come are very heterogeneous:

- Some emphasise the daily Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours
- Others emphasise the freedom in the choice, the freedom not to consume the Eucharist daily, and yet they describe it as the highlight of Christian life
- Some emphasise the importance of the group and a common arrangement of educational time for all, regardless of age and level of education, entirely in terms of an old seminar style
- Others are for individuality and curricula, attuned to the needs of the individuals …

So much seems to be no longer compatible. But are these not experiences which will be gained generally in the communities? Is there the Capuchin image, the Capuchin to whom the brothers then come to be formed and accompanied as brothers? Is the way of life as a Capuchin also not very different today? And is this not good so? Or should the Capuchins signalise uniformity in the forms as well as in the manner of appearance and the pastoral care, as some younger men who come to the brothers actually expect to appear? This also belongs to plurality! But are they then even in the right community for them? The General Minister of the Order, Br. Mauro, clarifies in his letter concerning education: “Education has to be arranged so that it guarantees a genuine growth in the affective maturity, in a ‘mature’ faith and in the internalisation of values.”

How can this work in light of the briefly described developments?

**Contemplation**

The history of mystics is a history of contemplation, and this is not silently concluded in the encounter with God, but attempts to carry this into the everyday life of people. A mystic encounter always has consequences of a very specific nature. The love experienced has to be carried further and begs to be specified in the encounter with others. St. Francis explicitly encounters God in others, in the brother and the sister, particularly in the poor and disenfranchised. In the contact and in the en-

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21 www.db.ofmcap.org/ofmcap/allegati/2372/circolare04-de.pdf [Call: 25.05.2010], 11.
counter with people, the encounter with God is reflected from the contemplation, it is specified and actualised. The encounter with people is the privileged site of Franciscan encounter with God. Radical sharing and solidarity are the consequences of mystical experience. Is this in view in the education and in the introduction to contemplation in the Order?

St. Francis experiences God in others. He also experiences him in a special way in the encounter with the Word and the Sacrament: hearing the Word is the focal point of his spirituality. His contemplation is devotion in front of the ‘Real’ towards the reality. Consequently the world needs to be included in the realm of contemplation, not excluded.

The emphasis of contemplation, particularly among the younger generation today, is impressive and certainly also corresponds to a need and the experience that contemplative life has been short-changed among the Capuchins in the past. Particularly against the background of the evolutionary history of the Capuchins, contemplation is an important element and should be included in the confrontation with the period and also secularisation. Yet contemplation is also a relational concept. As Sudbrack expresses it, contemplation means: devotion in front of the ‘Real’ towards reality. This is much more than inwardness and abidance before the Blessed Sacrament. This involves attentiveness, alertness and relational configuration, or as Michael Blastic expresses it: “The discipline of contemplation and compassion in the Franciscan tradition both demands and fosters attentiveness to what is happening in the world, in people’s lives as they unfold. … Life in Franciscan brotherhood and sisterhood must also be horizontally ecstatic. This would imply that fraternal/sororal life be outwardly directed and not self-absorbed.”

If the desire for contemplation is reflected solely in formal devoutness, or if the admission of a brother to the final vows solely involves the question whether he takes the Eucharist every day and observes his half hour of contemplation a day, if he at best also has to show a spiritual director, then this is an understanding of being a Capuchin and of spiritual life — yes, of contemplation that falls short and is questionable in the truest sense of the word.

**Clericalism**

Secularisation also challenges the brothers to take a stance on the topic of clericalisation. St. Francis did not want any clerical Order. He saw priests in their task, i.e. above all in their relational configuration with regard to the Sacrament and to the faithful. The ideal of his community was the confraternity and the equality of laity and

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priests. The eleven brothers, with whom St. Francis went to an audience with Pope Innocent III in April 1209, were all laity. Today the First Order communities consist of two thirds from clerics. As the former General Minister of Capuchins, Flavio Roberto Carraro, once expressed, have the brothers been deprived of the possibility to explicitly live their own renewal and charisma? In a secularised age, Franciscan spirituality understood more in terms of laity would not only be desirable, it would also convey a different, perhaps for many people liberating, image of the Church. Being a Friar Minor is possibly shown in a special way, precisely in this point.

The education in the Capuchin orders, also in the German-speaking region, still seems to be “cleric-heavy”. It starts with the fact that in some provinces the question of priesthood is also posed at the same time as with the voting for the final vows, and the respective friary is called upon to cast a vote. But is this the right point in time? Should a vote not be rendered here first at the end of studies? Not everyone who studies theology and completes a course of studies has a pastoral passion. Moreover, the education of the brothers who do not study is actually still not regulated. Nevertheless, the question is also posed as to whether this is even possible on account of the partially quite individualised paths and backgrounds of brothers in the process of education.

And how does it look like with regard to clerical thinking in the community of brothers? Some forms of concelebration trigger questions among some brothers. Over and over again there also seems to be something like a form of ‘class related reasoning’, and the priest simply represents more than a lay brother. St. Francis wanted a community of brothers who do not define themselves by means of position and profession, but solely through their common calling to confraternity. Clerical tendencies have no place in such a form of spirituality. Yet the topic also seems to be very emotionally charged, which complicates an open and honest discussion of these topics within a friary.

Another precarious development should be mentioned in this connection. Much appears to be a matter of course. For some students within a religious order, friarly regulations have priority over curricular and university regulations. The needs and the everyday study routine of other students are hardly noticed. A considerable sense of entitlement is repeatedly ascertainable. This is a sign of clericalised religious order spirituality, but on the other hand also a form of ingratitude.

Once several students have been ordained as priests, then the form of celebration is the priority. The hope remains that this formal devoutness undergoes a correction in the confrontation with the faithful and in the pastoral work.
Outlook — “Our enclosure is the world”

What can be concluded now, despite the many questions which ultimately the brothers in the communities and provinces must answer through their communal life?

St. Francis found God in very surprising locations. He lived radically in an age which exactly required this form of radical nature so that things had to turn and change for the benefit of people in the Church and the world. In his considerations, Burckhard emphasises that it cannot be about imitating St. Francis in everything. Everyone and a community, both large and small, have to pay too much tribute to culture, which in turn portrays a result of historical developments. To look upon St. Francis as an inanimate, rigid, unswayable and unchangeable archetype, or better said, to reduce him to that, is not fair to him or the present-day Franciscan people. Burckhard argues with Bonaventura and portrays St. Francis as a prototype who wants to change the individuals, who does not preclude change; on the contrary, instead he implies and calls for this. “According to Bonaventure a new context calls for a new discernment. The ‘Spirituals’ within the Order could envision no deviation from the radical poverty of the first Franciscans even when the Order grew to thousands. They treated Francis as an archetype so the new context was irrelevant. An archetype is ‘an ideal form that establishes an unchanging timeless pattern. Bonaventure looked at the story of Francis differently. He approached Francis as a prototype, also an original model but one that does not impose a pattern that cannot change.”  

Franciscan spirituality is optimally prepared for a confrontation with secularisation. We look back on 800 years of this movement, in which continual reforms, updates and secessions have come about. Contemplation, more stringent poverty or solitude have been repeatedly sought. Communities have involved themselves in pastoral-missionary awakenings reflected in clerical and lay forms. And yet the Franciscan aspect lives, and yet – perhaps also because St. Francis still fascinates people today – it is displayed in very diverse vestment. St. Francis allowed leeway, and today this seems to be one of the most important virtues in religious life. Who does not dare, does not win, or who does not vibrantly seek and remains questioningly alert grows stiff — and life no longer emanates from such stiffness.

An apparent weakness of the Franciscan movement can become a forte, since dynamics, processuality and creativity, adaptability and resistance in many different forms are lived today.

“Our enclosure is the world.” This can and should become apparent in the lifestyle, in the nature of leadership and communities as well as in the educational forms. Here it becomes clear that secularisation, with all its challenges, can represent a positive force of renewal for the religious orders which brings about change, a change towards its very own charisma. After all, whoever gets involved with Christ and trusts his message of love and hope cannot come to terms with and be satisfied with reality, but begins to turn towards the poor and the weak, and attempts to be the mouthpiece for those who have been muzzled. He gives countenance and dignity to those whose dignity has been trodden upon. In short, whoever gets involved with Christ gets involved with reality! He starts to change.
Das franziskanische Leben zwischen Säkularisierung und Veränderung

**Responsio auf BR. THOMAS DIENBERG, OFMCAP**

Veränderung: Zeichen des Lebens


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Um sich wirklich verändern zu können, muss auch die Einheit der Person klar sein, die sich in den regulierenden Elementen ausdrückt, die die Person selbst identifizieren, man könnte sagen seiner DNA. Eine Veränderung ohne Regeln und ohne die Berücksichtigung der Einheit der Person könnte schlussendlich nicht real sein; es wäre eine “genetische Differenzierung” oder einfacher eine Pseudo-Veränderung, eine Art von “Verkleidung”. Ein Mensch, der wächst, vom Kind zum Erwachsenen, muss sich ständig verändern; aber es gibt noch die Kontinuität seines Wesens, ohne die der Organismus, wenn er überlebt, zu einem Monstrum wird.

In diesem Sinne ist es notwendig, eine recht positive polare Spannung anzu führen, die im Heiligen Franziskus von Assisi vorhanden ist: einerseits die Treue gegenüber dem Evangelium und den Regeln „sine glossa“, andererseits die tiefe Öffnung gegenüber der Zukunft, die in den Händen Gottes liegt: „Ich habe meinen Teil getan; euren Teil wird Christus euch lehren“ (Legenda Maior XIV,3).

Auch die Säkularisierung verändert sich …


Zu dieser Überlegung sind wir vor allem gezwungen, wenn wir an die Veränderungen denken, die in letzter Zeit eingetreten sind: wie viele Wirtschaftskrisen sind seit den sechziger Jahren, in denen das westliche Europa einen Wirtschaftsboom erlebte, einschließlich des sogenannten „Babybooms“, bis heute vorgekommen, wo


Heute ist offensichtlich, dass die Vorhersagen der Soziologie und oft auch der Theologie aus den fünfziger und sechziger Jahren zum Ende der Religion in einer weltlichen Welt zum größten Teil durch Tatsachen widerlegt wurden. Im Übrigen hatten Autoren wie Martin Buber bereits seit Beginn der fünfziger Jahre von einer „Gottesfinsternis“ gesprochen, um auf den vorübergehenden und nicht endgültigen Charakter der Abwesenheit Gottes in der modernen Gesellschaft hinzuweisen.4

3 Vgl. P. Hazard, Die Krise des europäischen Geistes, Freiburg/Br. 1946.
4 Gottesfinsternis wurde von M. Buber 1953 geschrieben. „In der Tiefe geschieht etwas, das keinen Namen hat; schon morgen könnte ein Zeichen aus der Höhe kommen, über den Köpfen der Archonten."

Darum präsentiert sich die sogenannte Theologie der Säkularisierung uns heute als sicherlich wichtiges Kapitel in der Geschichte der Theologie, obwohl sie stark kontextbezogen und in gewissen Punkten veraltet ist\(^7\). Zweifellos muss der gesamte Prozess der Säkularisierung heute kritischer betrachtet werden, wobei alles, was man beurteilen muss, richtig zu beurteilen ist, aber mit der mutigen Benennung der Probleme. Es scheint mir interessant, in dieser Hinsicht an die Entwicklung des Gedankens von Johannes Baptist Metz im Allgemeinen, in seiner Theologie und insbesondere in seiner Vision des religiösen Lebens, zu erinnern. Tatsächlich beschreibt er diese im Hinblick darauf als „Schocktherapie“ für eine Kirche, die zur Verbürgerlichung neigt, und sieht die Religiösen als „Geburtshelfer“, als diejenigen, die bei der Geburt des neuen Geschöpfes helfen, das aufgenommen und versorgt werden muss. Und besonders bezeichnend ist dann, dass ebendieser Autor der „Theologie der Welt“ und große Inspi-

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Die Eklipse des Lichts Gottes bedeutet nicht sein Verlöschen; schon morgen kann das, was dazwischen getreten ist, sich zurückziehen.\(^5\): M. Buber, Gottesfinsternis. Betrachtungen zur Beziehung zwischen Religion und Philosophie, Milano 1961, 136.


\(^7\) Um das Phänomen zu verstehen, muss man sich vor allem auf den Gedanken Bonhoeffers beziehen, dessen Einfluss auf die spätere Theologie der Säkularisierung, die radikale Theologie usw. unbestreitbar ist: s. A. Gallas, Ántropos Tèleios, L’itinerario di Bonhoeffer nel conflitto tra cristianesimo e modernità, Queriniana, Brescia 1995. Ich beziehe mich außerdem auf Autoren wie Gogarten, van Buren, Cox, etc.
rator der politischen Theologie bei seiner Abschiedsvorlesung von seinem wichtigen Lehrstuhl der Theologie in Münster sagte, dass es das Problem der heutigen Theologie ist, dass sie dazu zurückkehren muss, von Gott zu sprechen. Dies ist die Aufgabe: Wie spricht man in unserer Zeit bedeutungsvoll von Gott?


Damit möchte ich nicht sagen, dass die Rückkehr des Sakralen und der Religion ein einheitliches Phänomen ist. Im Gegenteil zeigt die moderne Theologie deutlich die Notwendigkeit, dies Phänomen kritisch zu prüfen. Man kann sagen, dass es für uns eine Notwendigkeit gibt, sowohl den Prozess der Säkularisierung als auch die aktuelle Rückkehr zum Thema der Religion in allen ihren verschiedenen Fassetten kritisch beurteilen zu können. Unser Aufgabe ist es, alles prüfen zu können und das herauszuziehen, was gut ist (vgl. 1Tess 5,21).

Der Beitrag der Franziskaner im Zeitalter der Säkularisierung


etwas statisches, sondern etwas dynamisches, das uns seine Möglichkeiten gerade dann zeigen kann, wenn es mit großen sozialen und kulturellen Veränderungen konfrontiert wird.

Ich glaube, dass man *den großen Weg der Moderne und der Säkularisierung in einem klareren kritischen Bewusstsein der menschlichen Subjektivität in seiner rationalen Kapazität und vor allem in seinem Wesen als Freiheit zusammenfassen* kann. Der problematische Aspekt liegt in der Tatsache, dass eine bestimmte Darstellung von Gott, der “absoluten” Wahrheit, in einer intellektualistischen und ahistorischen Art und Weise, wie es überwiegend bei der Darstellung in der zweiten und dritten Scholastik der Fall war, im Gegensatz zur Freiheit des Subjekts stand und als solcher wahrgenommen wurde. *Oft lehnt die Moderne die Wahrheit im Namen der Freiheit ab.* Die Moderne gebietet es uns richtigerweise, die Freiheit als Zugang zur Wahrheit und ihr diese als ursprüngliches Ziel anzuerkennen, und nicht als ihre Alternative.


Darauf begründet sich eine mögliche Zweideutigkeit in der schwachen Auslegung der Kenose, die in einigen mehr philosophischen als theologischen Kreisen verbreitet ist (z. B. Vattimo), und die sie von der Einheit des christlichen Mystериums in seiner Gesamtheit trennt und das Konzept der „Liebe“ selbst sehr mehrdeutig macht.

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12 Der Bezug geht zur barocken Theologie, die sich nach dem Konzil von Trient entwickelt hat, und vor allem zum Neothomismus, der sich nach der Aeterni Patris entwickelt hat.


14 Der Turiner Philosoph Gianni Vattimo, der führende Vertreter des sogenannten „schwachen Denkens“ möchte eine Versöhnung der Moderne mit dem Christentum durch das Konzept der „Kenose“ vorschlagen, sich aber strukturell „von der Wahrheit verabschieden“: G. Vattimo, Addio alla verità, Rom 2009. In seinem Denken kann der Gott der Kenose so allerdings weder in persönlicher noch...
Franziskus von Assisi erkennt eher, dass diese Art des Wirkens Gottes die ist, die ihn berührt und bewegt, das heißt, sie spricht ihn als freies Subjekt an, das frei auf diese wahre Liebe antworten soll. Es ist interessant, dass Charles Taylor in seinem letzten Werk *The secular age* oft vom Hl. Franziskus spricht, gerade weil er von der Liebe Gottes und von dem Wunsch, für die Welt das Werkzeug dieser Liebe zu werden, ergriffen und bewegt ist.

Später haben Bonaventura auf eine Weise und Duns Scotus auf eine andere gezeigt, wie die größere Implikation der Kenose Gottes gerade in dem Raum der Freiheit dem Menschen überlassen bleibt, sodass die Offenbarung Gottes selbst diese Freiheit einfordert, um zu inkarnieren (Maria) und um bis heute weiter in der Welt anwesend sein zu können (Eucharistie und ekklesiale Kommunion). In dieser Weise eliminiert oder unterdrückt die geschenkte Wahrheit nicht nur die Freiheit des Menschen nicht, sondern fordert sie ein und erhöht sie.

Dies ist der positive Sinn der „Veränderung“ und der Liebe zur „Kontingenz“, die typisch für unsere spirituelle Tradition sind: Tatsächlich besteht die Kontingenz grundlegend in der fragilen, aber entscheidenden Gegebenheit der Freiheit des Menschen, die man in allen Lebenssituationen ausüben muss. Wenn es also wahr ist, dass es keine vollendete Freiheit ohne die Wahrheit gibt, muss man ebenso sagen, dass es in der Geschichte keine Wahrheit ohne Freiheit gibt, genau so, wie es Jesus Christus nicht gibt, ohne die Freiheit einer Frau, die „ja“ zum Wort Gottes sagt. Aus diesem Grund ist die Wahrheit Gottes keine Wahrheit, die wir ein für alle Mal „in die Tasche stecken“, sondern es ist eine relationale Wahrheit der Liebe, die geheimnisvoll jeden Tag erneut geschieht, indem man die Herausforderung der Veränderung und des Dialogs zwischen den Differenzen annimmt. Auf diese Weise kann man von der Erhöhung der Freiheit des Menschen sprechen, ohne die Wahrheit relativieren zu müssen, weil die Wahrheit kein Konzept ist, sondern eine Person, die man jeden Tag trifft.

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Die Tradition der Franziskaner und Kapuziner: Hilfe oder Hindernis?

Mir fällt die Tatsache auf, dass Dienberg sich in seinem Beitrag oft fragt, ob es einen franziskanisch-kapuzinischen Stil gibt, und ob dieser Stil einheitlich oder vielfältig sei. All dies impliziert auch eine Frage in Bezug auf unser spirituelles Erbe, das gerade die Feierlichkeiten für das 800-jährige Jubiläum der Anerkennung der ersten Ordensregel aufzeigen. Handelt es sich dabei um eine Hilfe für das Leben in der Gegenwart, oder um ein Hindernis? Ist die Gewissheit, Teil einer spirituellen Familie mit einer Geschichte von 800 Jahren zu sein, eine Quelle der Kreativität, oder schränkt sie sie ein?


Die franziskanische Tradition ist ein Hindernis, wenn sie auf den Anfang reduziert wird; im Gegensatz dazu wird sie zu einer Hilfe, wenn sie als Ursprung wiederentdeckt wird, der hier und jetzt Geschichte hervorbringen kann.

**Bruderschaft und Globalisierung**

Zu den bemerkenswerten Punkten, die von Br. Thomas Dienberg in Bezug auf die Veränderung, welche die Zeiten uns abverlangen, angesprochen wurden, zählt die Tatsache, dass unsere Provinzen in Europa auf unterschiedliche Art und Weise Vorgänge des Zusammenschlusses oder gemeinsamer Wege umsetzen. Er erinnert zu Recht daran, dass das nicht als notwendiges Übel angesehen werden darf, sondern als ein Prozess gelebt werden muss, der uns in der Zukunft öffnet und begleitet, obgleich in dem Bewusstsein, dass es sich um einen teilweise schweren Weg handelt, bei dem man unvermeidlich auf Widerstände stößt.


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Dienberg weist darauf hin, dass das Einsetzen von Brüdern aus anderen Kulturen in den Provinzen zu Schwierigkeiten und neuen Problemen hinsichtlich der Anpassung zwischen Personen führen kann, die unterschiedliche Stile, Kulturen und Gebräuche haben, obwohl sie zu dem gleichen Orden gehören. In dieser Hinsicht glaube ich jedoch, dass es notwendig ist anzumerken, dass diese Vermischung genau das ist, was in Europa in der zivilen Gesellschaft geschieht! Auch in dem Bewusstsein der Schwierigkeiten, die dies mit sich bringt, denke ich nicht, dass wir Kapuziner dieses Phänomen umgehen können. Es geht darum, Verfahren und Regeln zu finden, die diese Veränderung lenken. \textit{Ich glaube, dass unser franziskanisches Charisma weitgehend in der Lage ist, in uns einen interkulturellen Lebensstil zu schaffen.}

Das, wovon ich rede, kann in der Realität nicht einfach auf das reduziert werden, was im Allgemeinen „personelle Solidarität“ genannt wird. Ich glaube, dass es sich um ein umfassenderes und komplexeres Phänomen handelt, das sicherlich auch bei denjenigen für Solidarität sorgt, die sie brauchen. Es handelt sich jedoch um eine radikalere Tatsache. Nachdem wir in den letzten dreißig Jahren auf der Vielfältigkeit und der Inkulturation des franziskanischen Charismas bestanden haben, ist jetzt die Zeit gekommen, sich bewusst zu werden, dass auch wir uns auf ein “globales Dorf” zubewegen und dass es erforderlich sein wird, die Interkulturalität des Charismas zum Thema zu machen.

Die Logik, die in den ersten Jahren nach dem II. Vatikanischen Konzil dazu geführt hat, im Orden die Realität der Provinzen zu betonen, muss nun nach und nach aus der Perspektive des Prozesses der Globalisierung überdacht werden. \textit{Heute müssen wir mehr denn je anerkennen, dass wir ein einziger Orden von Brüdern mit vielfältigen Eigenschaften sind, und nicht ein Verband von Provinzen. Dies hat recht starke Auswirkungen auf unsere Lebensform, da es beinhaltet anzuerkennen, dass}

es nicht nur darum geht, “externes Personal” für Provinzen, die sich damit abmühen, ihre Werke fortzusetzen, zu haben oder nicht zu haben, sondern die Idee der Brüderlichkeit aus interkultureller Sicht zu überdenken. Es ist notwendig, auch über die lokalen Bruderschaften aus einem globalen Blickwinkel nachzudenken, oder wie es die Soziologie sagt: es ist notwendig, aus einer g- lokalen Perspektive zu denken, in der global und lokal zusammenwirken.


Tatsächlich besteht die wahre Rückkehr zu Gott nicht in der unmöglichen Rückkehr in die Vormoderne, sondern im Zeugnis der Begegnung und dem Dialog mit dem Anderen, der sich der Begegnung und dem Dialog mit dem Anderen, wer auch immer es sein mag, unbewaffnet stellen und bereit sind, ihr Leben für die Liebe zur Wahrheit Gottes und für die Freiheit des Anderen hinzugeben.

Um uns in diese Richtung bewegen zu können, erscheint der Einsatz für die anfängliche und fortwährende Bildung entscheidend. Ich glaube, dass es notwendig ist, mobiler zu sein; es muss bereits in der Grundausbildung einen regen Austausch von Brüdern zwischen dem Norden und Süden der Welt sowie zwischen Ost und West geben. Außerdem ist eine wirklich gemeinsame Entwicklung von Projekten im Orden in interkultureller Form notwendig. In diesem Sinne ist das „Vernetzen“ und das Auwerten von internationalen Standorten unseres Ordens besonders wichtig. Ich denke hier zum Beispiel daran, welche Bereicherung die Tatsache, dass es Orte

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geben könnte, an denen Brüder aus aller Welt für ein Jahr, zwei Jahre oder mehr zusammenleben und studieren und sich zum Ordensleben, zur Kirche und zur Zivilgesellschaft austauschen, darstellen könnte. Auf diese Weise macht man die Erfahrung, dass die Identität naturgemäß relational ist, worin auch die Eigenschaft von jedem in der Beziehung zu denen des anderen enthalten ist, wobei man lernt, sich gegenseitig zuzuhören durch ein Zeugnis und eine Erzählung, in der man sich dem anderen Bruder öffnet; und indem man sich öffnet stellt man fest, auch etwas Neues über sich selbst zu entdecken.

**Welcher Klerikalismus?**


In diesem Sinne glaube ich, dass das Thema des Klerikalismus nicht grundlegend in dem Prozentsatz der Priester im Orden besteht; diese Zahl kann vielleicht ein Symptom sein, aber nicht die Ursache. Der Klerikalismus drückt sich vielmehr in der Missachtung dessen aus, das nicht auf die kultische Sakralität bezogen ist, wobei vor allem die positive Beziehung zwischen dem Sakralen und dem Profanen negiert wird.


Im Gegensatz dazu glaube ich, dass die Missachtung gegenüber dem Sakralen – die außerdem den Aussagen des Hl. Franziskus in Bezug auf die Eucharistie und den Glaubensorden direkt widersprechen würde – oder genauer, wenn man denkt, dass das Aufwerten der laizistischen Komponente des Ordens sie dem Bruder im Pries-

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20 Vgl. Peguy, Dialogue de l’histoire et de l’ame charnelle: „So pendeln wir beständig zwischen zwei Priestern hin und her, wir fahren zwischen zwei Banden von Priestern hin und her: die weltlichen Priester und die kirchlichen Priester; die antiklerikalen klerikalen Priester und die klerikalen klerikalischen Priester. Die weltlichen Priester, die das Ewige des Zeitlichen leugnen, die das Ewige des Zeitlichen aus dem Inneren des Zeitlichen ablösen und abbauen wollen: und die kirchlichen Priester, die das Zeitliche des Ewigen leugnen, die das Zeitliche aus dem Inneren des Ewigen, aus dem Inneren des Ewigen ablösen und abbauen wollen. So sind weder die einen noch die anderen wirklich Christen, denn die eigentliche Methode des Christentums, die Methode und der Mechanismus der Mystik, der christlichen Mystik, besteht in der Verkettung zwischen einem Teil des Mechanismus und einem anderen. Eben diese Kupplung der beiden Teile, diese sonderbare, wechselseitige, einzigartige, gegenseitige Verkettung, die nicht auflösbar ist: unzerlegbar; die Verkettung des einen mit dem anderen, des einen in dem anderen und des anderen in dem einen, des Zeitlichen in dem Ewigen und (vor allem, was am häufigsten geleugnet wird) (was eigentlich das Wunderbarste ist) des Ewigen in dem Zeitlichen".


Schlussworte
Wir müssen Bruder Thomas Dienberg daher für seine Aufforderung zum Mut gegenüber der Veränderung als lebenswichtige Haltung dankbar sein. Ich glaube, dass dies in dem Bewusstsein geschehen sollte, dass solche Veränderungen ganz anders sein könnten, als wir es uns heute vorstellen. Die Säkularisierung als solche ist ein historisches Phänomen, das Veränderungen unterliegt, ebenso wie die aktuellen Vermischungen von unterschiedlichen Völkern, Kulturen und Religionen. Es ist daher nicht sehr sinnvoll, für oder gegen die Säkularisierung Partei zu ergreifen, sie herzlich willkommen zu heißen oder sie zu verfluchen. Nehmen wir uns lieber die Aufforderung des Hl. Paulus zu Herzen, alle Dinge zu prüfen und das herauszuziehen, was gut ist. Die Moderne hat uns dabei geholfen, den Wert des Einzelnen und

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21 Dies scheint mir auch eine der Bedeutungen des IKMS (Institut für Kirche, Management und Spiritualität) zu sein, das von T. Dienberg geleitet wird.
Franciscan Life between Secularisation and Change

Response to BR. Thomas Dienberg, OFM Cap

Change: sign of life

First of all, I would like to express my deep appreciation of the lecture of Thomas Dienberg on Franciscan life between secularisation and change. His lecture addressed the heart of our debate: change is a fundamental requirement for all living organisms and thus also for our confraternities. Indeed, only what changes and grows will live and stay. Dienberg’s lecture had the courage to clearly confirm this element and indicate its reference structure, thanks to his competence with respect to the relation between spirituality and management. Processes of change require competence in order to also lead to a good result after the desired and joint aim. It is not only leadership competence that is necessary for such purpose but also administrative competence, which cannot easily be identified, as the President of the PTH Münster university confirmed.

On this basis, one can think about the fact that if on the one hand change is an inherent requirement of the church and the order, on the other hand its development and outcome are anything but foreseeable. Not all changes are the same: they are necessary but their determination requires the recognition of a large scope of liberties that interact. Everyone who changes is a living and social person. Change is only possible in a continuum, otherwise it leads away from the inner unity of the person. Continuity and discontinuity mutually belong together.

In order to be able to really change, it is also necessary that the unity of the person is clear, which expresses itself in the regulating elements that identify the person itself, one could say their DNA. Change without rules and without taking into account the unity of the person could ultimately not be real; it would be a “genetic dif-

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ferentiation” or, more simply, a pseudo-change, a kind of “disguise”. A human being that grows, from child to adult, permanently needs to change; however, there still is the continuity of their nature, without which the organism will become a monster if it survives.

In this respect, it is necessary to mention a quite positive polar tension² that exists in Saint Francis of Assisi: on the one hand faith towards the Gospel and the rules “sine glossa”, and on the other hand the deep opening towards the future that lies in the hands of God: “I did my part; Christ will teach you your part” (Legenda Maior XIV, 3).

Secularisation is also changing ...

A critical element of every change certainly is its context, the animated environment in which we live, that is for us today the process of modernity and in particular secularisation. I fully agree with the opinion of Prof. Dienberg with respect to the fact that this is an opportunity and not only a phenomenon against which one has to defend oneself. This is also true since history has shown that a merely defensive attitude does not last and involves the risk that those categories of reality from which one wants to dissociate oneself are adopted uncritically.

Starting from this basis, one must be aware of an important fact: secularisation also changes and does not always appear in the same way in the course of the years. The process of secularisation that existed in the 1950s and 1960s is not the same as that of today. The answers that could be given in those years, including the unanimously benevolent interpretations of secularisation, cannot be applied as easily at the beginning of the third millennium, fifty years later.

We are particularly forced to make such consideration when thinking of the changes that occurred recently: how many economic crises have occurred from the 1960s, when Western Europe experienced an economic boom, including the so-called “baby boom”, until today, when we are in a global crisis and the demography of the old continent is weakening. Furthermore, we should keep in mind the phenomenon of terrorism, which marked Europe in the 1960s, and then the Fall of the Berlin Wall as a symbol of the end of great ideologies exactly twenty years ago, in 1989. And then also international terrorism with its Islamist background that started at the beginning of the third millennium. Following 11 September 2001, people said: “Nothing will be as it was before.” One must also take into consideration the potentials offered by the technosciences, in particular neurosciences and genetic enginee-

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ring, which have been unimaginable before. These are completely new enrichments but also threats. Apart from the resources, globalisation has certainly also globalised injustice and poverty.

Above all, however, it is necessary to think of the changes that currently affect millions of people with different cultures and religions who come to Europe in order to live here and change the composition of society. And, last but not least, one must take into account mobility within Europe, from East to West. Moreover, we should also be aware of the fact that the peoples that have come to Europe during the past decades perceive the relationship between “religion” and “society” differently than we did during the past five centuries.

There is a fundamental convergence in the perception of the phenomenon of secularisation, which is linked to the entire process of modernity and focuses on the necessity to establish new, universally valid plans based on the “etsi deus non daretur” (as if there was no God) natural law\(^3\). Its application underwent very different developments in European and, more generally, Euro-Atlantic philosophy. In relation with the topic of secularisation, it was the topics of privatisation of religious experience and of the “death of God” (Nietzsche) that emerged mainly in the 20th century.

Today it is obvious that the forecasts made by sociology and often also theology on the end of religion in a secular world in the 1950s and 1960s have largely been disproved by facts. Furthermore, authors such as Martin Buber had already spoken of an “eclipse of God” since the beginning of the 1950s in order to point out the temporary and not final nature of the absence of God in modern society\(^4\).

It is significant that an author such as Ch. Taylor currently describes the core of secularisation of today’s Euro-Atlantic societies as a situation where belief in God is considered to be only one option among many; we have developed from a society where it was “practically impossible not to believe in God to one where this is only one human option among several ones even for deep believers”\(^5\). This does not prevent that in our times one clearly arrives at speaking of the “return of the sacred and God”, of the “revenge of God” and of “post-secular society”\(^6\), where various religious

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\(^3\) Cf. P. Hazard, Die Krise des europäischen Geistes, Freiburg/Br. 1946.

\(^4\) *Gottesfinsternis* (Eclipse of God) was written by M. Buber in 1953. “Something is happening in the depth that has no name; a sign might come out of the cave already tomorrow, above the heads of the archons. The eclipse of the light of God does not mean that he is extinguishing; what has come in between might retreat already tomorrow.”: M. Buber, Gottesfinsternis. Betrachtungen zur Beziehung zwischen Religion und Philosophie, Milano 1961, 136.


experiences of different value exist and that also clearly shows that secularisation is not a phenomenon that moves into only one direction.

Therefore, the so-called theology of secularisation today presents itself to us as certainly the most important chapter in the history of theology although it is strongly context-dependant and outdated with respect to certain aspects. Without doubt, the entire process of secularisation must be looked at more critically today, in relation with which everything to be evaluated must be evaluated correctly, however courageously mentioning the problems. It seems interesting to me in this respect to remind of the development of the idea of Johannes Baptist Metz in general, in his theology and in particular in his vision of religious life. Indeed, he describes such as a “shock therapy” for a church that tends to gentrification and sees religious people as “birth attendants”, those who help during the birth of the new creature that must be accepted and cared for. And then it is particularly significant that exactly this author of “Theology of the World” and great inspirator of the political theology said in his farewell lecture from his important chair in theology in Münster that the problem of today’s theology is that is must return to speaking of God. This is the challenge: How does one meaningfully speak of God in our times?

Similar considerations form part of liberation theology, which also had its reference in political theology of European origin. The development of Gutierrez and the recent confrontation between the Boff brothers on the relationship between Christ and the poor provide clear evidence of this. Finally, one must keep in mind that one of the protagonists of the theology of secularisation, Harvey Cox, has basically revised his opinion with respect to the phenomenon of secularisation in the course of the years.


7 In order to understand the phenomenon, one must mainly refer to the idea of Bonhoeffer, whose influence on the later theology of secularisation, radical theology, etc. is undisputable. Also see A. Gallas, Antropos Téleios, L’itinerario di Bonhoeffer nel conflitto tra cristianesimo e modernità, Queriniana, Brescia 1995. I also make reference to authors such as Gogarten, van Buren, Cox, etc.


10 Just think of his book The secular city, New York 1965 (tr. it. La città secolare, Vallecchi, Firenze 1968)
This is not to say that the return of the sacred and of religion is a universal phenomenon. In contrast, modern theology clearly demonstrates the necessity to question this critically\(^\text{11}\). One can say that there is a necessity for us to be able to critically evaluate both the process of secularisation and the current return to the topic of religion in all of its various facets. It is our duty to test everything and hold on to the good (cf. 1 Thess 5:21).

The contribution of the Franciscans in the age of secularisation

What options do we Franciscans and Capuchins have in this process? Br. Thomas Dienberg correctly pointed out the great potential of Franciscan charisma in view of secularisation. And it is interesting that he makes reference to the eight hundredth anniversary of the recognition of the “proto-rule” in this respect. Indeed, the grace of origins is not something static but something dynamic, which can reveal its potentials to us particularly when it is confronted with great social and cultural changes.

I believe that the great path of modernity and secularisation can be summarised in a clear, critical awareness of human subjectivity, in its rational capacity and, above all, in its nature as freedom. The problematic aspect is the fact that a certain representation of God, the “absolute” truth, in an intellectual and ahistorical way, as it was largely the case with the representation in the second and third scholasticism, was in contrast to the freedom of the subject and was also perceived as such. Modernity often refuses the truth in the name of freedom. Modernity rightly demands of us to accept freedom as an approach to the truth and its original goal and not as its alternative.

This is the reason why the spirituality of Saint Francis of Assisi and the theological and philosophical idea by which he is guided are so topical\(^\text{12}\). Indeed, Saint Francis of Assisi emphasises the fact that the Revelations of God are radically made in the form of humility and kenotic love. As the followers of Franciscanism say, Francis sees the cross – the kenosis – in the same way as Saint John, that is being aware of resurrection and the glory of God, and therefore he already considers the “disrobement” to be the

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maximum manifestation of the almightiness of the love of God. However, this humble form of communication must absolutely not be put on par with a kind of uncertainty or nihilistic relativism. The love of God rather reveals itself in a way that it enhances and implies the freedom of the human being and its autonomy.

This forms the basis of a potential ambiguity of the weak interpretation of the kenosis, which is widespread among some rather philosophical than theological circles (e.g. Vattimo) and that separates it from the unity of the Christian mystery in its entirety and makes the concept of “love” itself rather ambivalent.

Francis of Assisi rather realises that this way of ruling of God is the one that touches and affects him, that is it appeals him as a free subject that is expected to respond freely to this true love. It is interesting that in his last work, *The secular age*, Charles Taylor often speaks about Saint Francis, particularly since he is moved and affected by the love of God and the wish to become the instrument of such love for the world.

Later Bonaventura in one way and Duns Scotus in another way showed how the greater implication of the kenosis of God is left to the human being precisely within the scope of freedom so that the Revelations of God themselves require such freedom so that they can incarnate (Maria) and continue to be present in the world until today (Eucharist and ecclesial communion). Thus, the given truth does not only not eliminate or suppress the freedom of the human being but demand and enhance it.

This is the positive meaning of “change” and the love for “contingency”, which are typical for our spiritual tradition: indeed, contingency basically consists in the fragile but crucial fact of the freedom of the human being, which one must exercise in all situations of life. So if it is true that there is no absolute freedom without truth, one must also say that there is no truth without freedom in history, in the same way as Jesus Christ does not exist without the freedom of a woman who says “yes” to the word of God. Therefore, the truth of God is not a kind of truth that we “put into our pocket” once and forever but it is a relational truth of love that mysteriously happens again every day if one accepts the challenge of change and the dialogue between the

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13 Gianni Vattimo, a philosopher from Turin and the leading representative of so-called “weak thinking” wants to propose a reconciliation of modernity with Christianity through the concept of “kenosis” but structurally “part with the truth”. G. Vattimo, *Addio alla verità*, Meltemi, Rome 2009. However, in his thinking the God of kenosis can thus neither be understood in personal nor in transcendental terms. Apart from theological inadequacy, the author consistently and obviously is in contradiction with the ethical principles on which the Christian faith is based: Id., *Credere di credere, È possibile essere cristiani nonostante la Chiesa?*, Milan 1992. Someone who criticises this way of thinking particularly sharply is H. Verweyen, *Theologie im Zeichen der schwachen Vernunft*, Regensburg 2000.


differences. Thus, one can speak of the enhancement of the freedom of the human being without having to relativise the truth since truth is not a concept but a person one meets every day.

The tradition of the Franciscans and Capuchins: help or hindrance?

It strikes me that Dienberg often wonders in his lecture whether there is a kind of Franciscan-Capuchin style and whether such style is uniform or manifold. All this also implies a question with respect to our spiritual legacy, which is currently reflected in the festivities for the 800th anniversary of the recognition of the “proto-rule”. Is this a help for life in the present or a hindrance? Is the certainty to be part of a spiritual family with a history of 800 years a source of creativity or does it restrict creativity?

I am convinced that one can only really be creative if one perceives oneself as a part of history that has shaped us and that allows us to live to see modernity full of values and experiences that it has conveyed to us. Of course each generation must newly appropriate its spiritual legacy. Nobody can relieve us of this perpetual work. Therefore, it is a great problem to confuse tradition and traditionalism. The latter is the uncritical hanging-on to the styles of the past, which must be confronted with the presence. Tradition, in contrast, is a communicative and dynamic truth. It is transmission and conveyance.

In which way is our history a help for facing secularisation and not a burden or strain? In these months, we have often spoken of the “grace of origins”, referring to the entire way of Francis from conversion to the ecclesial recognition of its form of vita evangelica. We often confuse the beginning with the origin. When thinking about it thoroughly, the beginning is a chronological event and as such connected to the past. The origin, however, is a deeper truth, it implies a “genealogy”, a relation and care between generations. The origin forms the basis of the presence in which we live; it is a gift that can create new things. The origin remains present. The beginning is left behind in the past; the origin is reflected in the challenges of today. It is a nostalgic attitude and ultimately not possible to return to the beginning. If adults wanted to go back to see their cradle, they would obviously not find themselves, surrounded by the affection of their parents, but only the signs of an irretrievable past or – even more likely – nothing. To return to the origin means to get into contact with the source, with the grace – the Holy Spirit – that creates life and deepens since it lives in an endless dialogue with the presence.

Franciscan tradition is a hindrance if it is reduced to the beginning; however, it becomes a help if it is rediscovered as an origin that is able to create history here and now.
Confraternity and globalisation

The remarkable aspects addressed by Br. Thomas Dienberg with respect to the change that times demand of us include the fact that our provinces in Europe implement processes of association or joint ways differently. He rightly reminds us that this must not be considered to be the necessary evil but be lived as a process that will open and accompany us in the future, even though being aware that this sometimes is a difficult way on which one inevitably encounters resistance.

In this context, the President of PTH Münster mentions the topic of the strong decline of vocations in the Western world and attributes this to the topic of the so-called solidarity of personnel. In this respect, Thomas raises many questions and doubts. I think that the approach benefits from going further into it, thus reacting to another modern phenomenon: the mobility of the peoples, which does not only affect society but also consecrated life. This development certainly changes the face of Europe, and we cannot remain in a provincial position16.

Of course, there have always been migration processes in the entire human history that shaped the history of the nations and the peoples. However, after we have now entered the third millennium, we face an unprecedented phenomenon: millions of people have moved or will move in order to look for better conditions of living, health, work or education or simply because our times allow for such mobility. More and more people from the southern and eastern hemisphere of the world come into the Euro-Atlantic territories. This phenomenon certainly raises the problem of a new relationship both on a civil level and on the level of the church. One rightly speaks of a “mixture of cultures and civilisations”, which will not be understood as an ideal to be pursued but as an establishment of a fact – the commingling of peoples – that must be conveyed and steered17. Surely the image of such mixture is not very positive; it evokes painful memories of the past but it also clearly illustrates the actual reality of the peoples and cultures that encounter each other, thus giving rise to completely new phenomena. Such development factually also influences the institutions of consecrated life. For example: In the past, candidates for consecrated life were brought to Europe from newly evangelised countries in order to undergo basic education. Today many institutions of consecrated life, such as seminaries, have members of non-European origin since they are descendants of immigrated parents of the second or third generation or since such persons themselves immigrated to Europe in order to study or work.

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16 Cf. Unione Superiori Generali, 73° Conventus semestralis. Nella storia verso il futuro. Cambiamenti geografici e culturali nella vita consacrata, Litos 2009; also available in French, English and Spanish.
17 On this topic, see the essay by P. Gomarasca, Meticciato: convivenza o confusione?, Venedig 2009.
Dienberg points out that the employment of brothers from other cultures in the provinces might lead to difficulties and new problems with respect to the adaptation between persons who have different styles, cultures and customs although they are members of the same order. In this respect, however, I think it is necessary to underline that it is exactly this commingling that is happening in civil European society! Though being aware of the difficulties brought about by such process, I do not think that we Capuchins can circumvent this phenomenon. What is necessary is to find procedures and rules that steer this change. I believe that our Franciscan charisma is largely able to create an intercultural lifestyle within ourselves.

That of which I talk cannot simply be reduced in reality to what is generally called “solidarity of personnel”. I think that this is a more comprehensive and more complex phenomenon that will also cause solidarity among those who need it. However, it is a more radical fact. After in the past thirty years we have insisted on the diversity and inculturation of the Franciscan order, it is now time to become aware of the fact that we are moving towards a “global village” and that it will be necessary to broach the issue of the interculturalism of charisma.

The logic that made us emphasise the reality of the provinces within the order during the first years after the Second Vatican Council will now have to be gradually reconsidered from the perspective of the process of globalisation. Today we more than ever have to recognise that we are a single order of brothers with diverse characteristics and not an association of provinces. This has quite strong effects on our way of living since it implies that we have to accept that it is not the point to have or not to have “external personnel” for provinces that struggle with continuing their works but to rethink the idea of fraternity from an intercultural perspective. It is necessary to also think about the local fraternities from a global perspective or – how sociology says: it is necessary to think from a g-local perspective, where global and local interact.

The current processes that occur on a macro-social level do not only demand of us that we accept that there is no Italian, German, Spanish, French, etc. “type of Capuchin” but also that it is no longer possible today to only be an Italian brother without thinking of those brothers that live their faith and their consecration in Pakistan, in India, in Africa, in South America, etc. Against this background, one must recognise the necessity to implement fraternal interculturalism where the circumstances require so: where our fraternities are located in areas where phenomena of the mixing and commingling of peoples occur continuously, our presence also takes an intercultural shape; here open-mindedness and hospitality must be rediscovered. Such change is much more demanding than simply to accept that one “disappears” or to be supported by some brothers from other provinces. One must rather start to develop and implement intercultural forms of presence of the Franciscans in Europe.
We can all learn from this process and, above all, we can discover new alternatives of testimony that are credible in a society characterised by secularisation.

In fact, the true return to God does not consist in the impossible return to the pre-modern age but in the testimony\(^8\) of those who face the encounter and the dialogue with the others, whoever they might be, unarmed and are ready to devote their life to the love for the truth of God and the freedom of the others.

In order to be able to move into this direction, the commitment to initial and continuous education seems to be crucial. I believe that it is necessary to be more mobile; there must be a vivid exchange between brothers from the north and the south of the world and between east and west already during basic education. Furthermore, a really joint development of projects within the order in an intercultural way is necessary. For this purpose, “networking” and the revaluation of international locations of our order are particularly important. I think, for instance, of the enrichment that could arise due to the fact that there are places where brothers from all over the world live together and study for one year, two years or longer and exchange their views on life in the order, the church and civil society. Thus, one can experience that identity is relational by nature, which also contains the characteristic of each member of the relationship to those of the other one, so that one can learn to listen to each other through a testimony and a narration in which one opens oneself to the other brother; and by opening oneself, one also discovers something new about oneself.

Which clericalism?

I also found the topic of the relationship between priests and laypersons within the fraternity of the Franciscans and Capuchins particularly fascinating. Thomas Dienberg emphatically underlines the permanent risk of clericalism in our order, which is actually intended to be an order of brothers due to its charisma. Here I would like to go further into these considerations and above all remind you that clericalism also is an ambiguous word that cannot easily be deciphered and is particularly linked to the modern process of secularisation. It is very likely that we would have not clericalism, especially in its current form, without secularisation. A certain clerical accent within the church in the institutions of consecrated life, which could increasingly be observed after the council of Trient, is linked with secularisation for certain reasons, due to the creation of separate cultural spaces that isolate (and control) themselves from each other.

Therefore, I believe that the topic of clericalism is not basically reflected in the percentage of priests in the order; this number might be a symptom but not the origin. Clericalism rather manifests itself in the disregard of what does not relate to cultic sacrality, especially denying the positive relationship between the sacral and the profane.

In this respect, one should remember a very famous and strict script by Charles Peguy, a French thinker and poet, who claimed that there are two types of clericalism: one that is formed by “clerical clerical” priests and another one by “anticlerical clerical” priests; the former think about the sacred by contrasting it with the profane, while the latter carry out the same process in the reverse way and contrast the secular with the sacred, thus causing the secular to become a new religion. These two forms of clericalism (the clerical clericalism and the anticlerical clericalism) do not recognise that the unique incarnation of Jesus has united the godly with the human, the spirit and the flesh, eternity and time without confusing them ever since then\(^{19}\). The French poet wrote about these two types of clericalism with respect to the social confrontation that has occurred in Europe in relation with modernity since the beginning of the 20th century. Does that say anything about the issue rightly raised by Dienberg?

First of all, it could make us aware of the fact that the phenomenon is complex and can have surprises in store. The provocation by Peguy could make us move the boundaries that we generally assign to clericalism. For instance, it would not that much be characterised by the fact that the majority of brothers are priests but rather by the question how the relationship between sacral and daily life, between cult and life, is understood.

From this perspective, for example, I cannot see anything clerical about the fact that a Franciscan priest exercises the function of a priest if his office requires so, that he celebrates Mass according to his own interpretation, respecting the interpretation

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\(^{19}\) Cf. Peguy, Dialogue de l’histoire et de l’ame charnelle; “Thus, we are continuously swinging back and forth between two priests, we move between two classes of priests: the secular priests and the ecclesiastic priests; the anticlerical clerical priests and the clerical clerical priests. The profane priests who deny the eternal of the temporal, who want to separate the eternal of the temporal from the internal of the temporal and dismantle it: and the ecclesiastic priests who deny the temporal of the eternal, who want to separate the temporal from the eternal, from the internal of the eternal and dismantle it. Thus, neither the former nor the latter are real Christians since the actual method of Christianity, the method and the mechanism of mysticism, Christian mysticism, consists in the concatenation of one part of the mechanism and another one. It is exactly this coupling of the two parts, this peculiar, mutual, unique, reciprocal concatenation, that is indissoluble, indecomposable; the concatenation of the one with the other, the one with the other and the other with the one, the temporal and the eternal and (above all, which is denied most frequently) (which actually is the most wonderful thing) the eternal in the temporal.”
of the eucharistical liturgy. The problem rather is that a brother who is a priest then considers himself to be privileged in daily life due to his ordination and holds the opinion that he is relieved of carrying out duties in the joint life of the fraternity in which he lives. His potential clericalism depends on how he spends the rest of the day and on the quality of his fraternal relationships.

In contrast, I believe that the disregard towards the sacral – which would, furthermore, directly contradict the statements of Saint Francis with respect to the Eucharist and the order – or, more exactly, if one thinks that the revaluation of the secular component of the order would make it more similar to the brother holding an office as a priest so that it could carry out similar duties during the celebration of the Mass as those carried out by the priest, points into the direction of a “clerical anticlericalism”. I think that leaving clericalism behind has much more to do with grasping the deeper meaning of the world according to the notion of God and, practically seen, with appreciating and encouraging more real, non-presbyterial professional competences with the brothers. The fact that the Franciscans dealt with the secular sciences during the first centuries of our history, studied the theory of interest on capital, asked the “mountains of mercy” to help the poor to take action against too high interest rates on lend money are signs of a healthy non-clericalism and the respect for the human being according to the Gospel.

This awareness must also be present during education. It must rightly be possible to study theology not only in order to become a priest but also in order to demonstrate how theological thinking can have a positive influence on other fields of knowledge since the mystery of Christ really leads to the humanisation of the world. Christ is a part of all and our vocation as friars minor demands of us that we care for everything in accordance with the Gospel. Thus, one arrives at an interesting comparison with secularisation: Such process underlines the significance of the world, the secular realities, freedom and reason. Religion must not shut itself off in the sacral. It must show that following Christ really makes life more human and more beautiful.

Closing words

Thus, we must thank Brother Thomas Dienberg for his call to be courageous towards change as a vital attitude. I think that this should happen while being aware that such changes can differ very much from what we imagine today. Secularisation as such is

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20 For me, this also seems to be one of the meanings of the IKMS (Institute of Church, Management and Spirituality), which is led by T. Dienberg.

21 This perspective, which is emphasised in L. Schulte, Gott suchen – Mensch werden. Vom Mehrwert des Christsein, Herder, Freiburg/ Br. – Basel – Vienna 2006, seems interesting to me.
a historical phenomenon that is subject to change, such as the current commingling of different peoples, cultures and religions. Therefore, it is not very sensible to take sides with or against secularisation, to sincerely welcome it or to demonise it. Let’s rather take the request of Saint Paul to our heart to test everything and hold on to the good. Modernity has helped us to discover the value of the individual and freedom; Franciscanism has all characteristics in order to make evangelical life contribute much to the church and to the society of the third millennium. Indeed we should not testify a God that is alienated from life and neither dissolve our Christian and Franciscan identity in an “earthly world” that has become indifferent towards all differences. We should rather feel encouraged to show that there is nothing more beautiful and humane than to encounter Christ and to follow him oneself with everything, such as Francis of Assisi did.
Verzeichnis der Mitarbeiter

MICHAEL W. BLASTIC OFM

Ph.D. (Historische Theologie), bis 2010 Dozent am Franciscan Institute der St. Bonaventure University N.Y., seit 2010 Direktor des Programms Franziskanische Theologie und Spiritualität an der Washington Theological Union, Washington D.C., Schriftleiter der „Greyfriars Review“.

ERIK BORGMAN

Dr. theol., Laiendominikaner, Professor am Departement Religionswissenschaften und Theologie der Universität Tilburg/Niederlande mit dem Lehrauftrag „Theologie der Religionen unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Christentums“.

RICARDO DE LUIS CARBALLADA OP


THOMAS DIENBERG OFMCA

Dr. theol., M.A. (Arbeitwissenschaften), Professor für Theologie der Spiritualität an der PTH Münster, Gastprofessor an der Päpstlichen Hochschule Antonianum in Rom, Rektor der PTH, Mit Herausgeber der Zeitschrift „Wissenschaft und Weisheit“.

List of Contributors

Ph.D. (Historical Theology), lecturer at the Franciscan Institute of the St. Bonaventure University N.Y. until 2010, director of the Franciscan Theology and Spirituality programme at the Washington Theological Union, Washington D.C. since 2010, editor of the “Greyfriars Review”.

Dr. theol., Lay Dominican, professor of the Department of Religious Studies and Theology at the University of Tilburg, The Netherlands with the professorship “Theology of Religions with specific Emphasis on Christianity”.

Lic. theol., Lic. phil., lecturer of Systematic Theology at the Theological Faculty of San Esteban, Salamanca, director of the “Editorial San Esteban“ publishing house, member of the editorships of “Ciencia Tomista” and “Acontecimiento”.

Dr. theol., M.A. (occupational sciences), professor of Theology of Spirituality at the PTH Münster and rector of PTH, guest professor at the Pontifical University Antonianum in Rome, president of the PTH, co-editor of the journal “Wissenschaft und Weisheit”.

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M I C H A E L  N .  E B E R T Z
Dr. rer. soc., Dr. theol., Professor an der Katholischen Hochschule Freiburg/Br. und Privatdozent an der Universität Konstanz; Leiter des Zentrums für kirchliche Sozialforschung (ZEKIS).

T H O M A S  E G G E N S P E R G E R  O P
Dr. theol., M.A. (Philosophie, Spanisch), Geschäftsführender Direktor des Institut M.-Dominique Chenu, Berlin, Dozent für Sozialethik an der PTH Münster, Hauptschriftleiter der Zeitschrift „Wort und Antwort.

U L R I C H  E N G E L  O P
Dr. theol. habil., Direktor des Institut M.-Dominique Chenu, Berlin, Lehrstuhlvertreter für Dogmatik an der Universität Münster, Lehrbeauftragter für Philosophisch-theologische Grenzfragen an der PTH Münster, Hauptschriftleiter der Zeitschrift „Wort und Antwort“. 

S T E F A N  K N O B L O C H  O F M C A P
Dr. theol., bis 2002 Professor für Pastoraltheologie am Fachbereich Katholische Theologie der Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz.

M I T A R B E I T E R

Dr. rer. soc., Dr. theol., professor at the Catholic University of Applied Sciences in Freiburg im Breisgau and private lecturer at the University of Konstanz; manager of the Centre for Ecclesiastical Social Research (ZEKIS).

Dr. theol., M.A. (philosophy, Spanish), managing director of the Institut M.-Dominique Chenu, Berlin, lecturer in social ethics at the PTH Münster, general editor of the journal “Wort und Antwort”.

Dr. theol. habil., director of the Institut M.-Dominique Chenu, Berlin, deputy chair for dogmatics at the University of Münster, assistant professor for philosophical-theological crossroad issues at the PTH Münster, general editor of the journal “Wort und Antwort”. 

Dr. theol., professor of pastoral theology until 2002 at the Faculty of Catholic Theology at the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz.
NIKLAS KUSTER OFMCAP

Dr. theol., Lehrbeauftragter für Kirchengeschichte und Spiritualität an den Universitäten Luzern und Freiburg/Schweiz sowie an den Ordenshochschulen der Kapuziner in Venedig, Madrid und Münster.

PAOLO MARTINELLI OFMCAP

Dr. theol., professor at the Pontifical University Antonianum, head of the Franciscan Institute of Spirituality at Antonianum, consultor for the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

JEAN-LOUIS SCHLEGEL

Dr. rer. soc., sociologist of religion, publisher at the Le Seuil publishing house, Paris until 2009, member of the management committee of the journal “Esprit”, founded by Emmanuel Mounier in 1932.

ROBERT J. SCHREITER C.PP.S

Dr. theol., professor for systematic theology at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago I.L., 2000–2006 holder of the chair for theology and culture at the Edward Schillebeeckx Foundation at the Theological Faculty of the University of Nijmegen.