

THE POLITICAL PAGE¹

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Europe Throughout the Ages²

PREFACE

This issue of “The Political Page”, which addresses “Europe”, deals with a theme that is continually current because Europe is momentarily again in transformation, in a crucial time of testing, in which some say is the biggest since the Second World War. Outwardly it’s about saving Greece from national bankruptcy, behind it however, is the salvation of the Euro as the common currency of 16 countries belonging to the European Union. If the Euro-Net rips – so the concern – the economic damages are incalculable (especially since other national bankruptcies could follow), above all, the idea of solidarity, which holds the EU together, would be ruined. In May 2010 in Aachen during the “Charlemagne Prize” ceremony, which was awarded to Poland’s Prime Minister, Donald Tusk, Angela Merkel commented: “If the Euro fails then Europe will fail.” For over 65 years post-war Europe lives increasingly with *one* thought: *We belong together*.

As such, the so-called Iron Curtain was something artificial and historically temporary because the history of the European nations, from the Urals to Gibraltar, was, throughout the millennia, a common, reciprocal history, which found its manifestation and significance in the common roots of the Indo-European language and the common Christian religion, through which the European culture grew.

In 1950, Robert Schuman, at that time French Foreign Minister, developed from the sources of his own religious belief the idea of solidarity between the two “archenemies” in the heart of Europe, France and Germany, the idea of an economic solidarity, which however, was clearly based on the desire for reconciliation and peace. Through this, step by step, the “European Union “ of the European countries was developed, from treaty to treaty strongly uniting themselves as mutual trust grew. Out of a closer growing cooperation grew the idea of a common currency, which, since its implementation, brought both the economy and the people major relief in the area of financial transactions.

Why is the European idea currently crumbling? Why are the European people falling back into disinterest, into nationalism, yes, into open anti-European rejection?

THE EUROPEAN IDEA WOBBLES

There are current happenings, which have caused tears in the European Idea. However, there also are reasons, where the origins date back, which cause the effects to manifest more and more. A look into the history helps.

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“The Political Page” also appears on my homepage: www.beter-im-aufbruch.de. There, in the archives, all of the previous issues, as well as the English translations of nearly all the issues, also can be found.

² The theme „Europe“ already has been addressed several times in “The Political Page”. All of these issues are available in the archives of www.beter-im-aufbruch.de, including the English translations.

1. Christianity

From the Middle Ages to the Reformation

The Middle Ages achieved, throughout centuries of detailed work, the acceptance of Christian moral values into the masses of society, which were demonstrated in godly organized groups. All thinking and working was centered around God.

In the 14th century in Italy **the Renaissance** shattered this established cultural regime of the Middle Ages. “Re-naissance” means “born again”. What was born again? Answer: ancient Greece. In light of the Greek classic, in philosophy, art and literature appeared, suddenly, humankind, the autonomous human being, the human-being, as he is, as an individual. The human being moved into the middle of observation. Humanism was “born” (lat. Homo=the human being) and defined itself, henceforth, in antithesis to God-centered Christianity and to the Church.

The Reformation seized the fundamental idea of the Renaissance from the importance of the individual but totally subordinates these individuals to the will of God, in other words, joins the new with the old. The best example of this was in 1521 in Worms as Martin Luther stood in the Reichstag before the Emperor, the Empire and the Church, and stated that the Pope and the Council could delude themselves (meaning the world order of the Middle Ages). And in contrast he put the Bible – but in the way that he understood it – and ended with the words:

“... my conscience is captured in the Word of God; I will not and do not want to revoke anything because acting against the conscience is neither certain nor harmless. God help me. Amen.” In deliberate obedience of the individual to God the Reformation was able to push open the door to the modern era and still remain committed to the faith.

If the Reformation had become a revival movement in which the individual followed Christ with a deep, personal conviction, as did Kaspar Schwenckfeld or the Baptists, then the Reformation would have become like sourdough, similar to Christianity in the first centuries, which was able to penetrate society. In 1525 Luther still thought of structuring the new movement as a spiritual revival movement, into extensive independent house-churches. “But I do not have the people yet for this”, he sighed in his opening speech to the Deutsche Messe.

The circumstances – Peasants’ War; the princes; and much else, however, forced Luther to organize the grassroots movement differently, namely politically: He made the respective local rulers “bishops” for their territories. And if the princes became Evangelical, then all of his subjects also were automatically Evangelical (“cuius regio, eius religio”). From the spiritual awakening, which seized and changed person after person, came, again, a “Church” like in the Middle Ages, to which one belonged through baptism and inhabitancy.

In addition, along with the political development during the following centuries came the theological path of Lutheranism, namely in the dogmatic rigidification of Protestant Orthodoxy. In this, as well, lies a return to the Reformation, to the mentality of the Middle Ages. (“Belong to the Church, then you will be blessed”).

From the Reformation to the Enlightenment

Both correlation of the new faith in political centers of power and orthodox dogmatism with its corresponding enemy image, noticeably escalated the situation after Luther's death in 1546. The Reformation became a threat to Europe: The Catholic Southern Europeans and France stood in opposition to the Protestant German princes, the Scandinavians and Anglican England.

The conflict lightened during the 30-years War (1618-1648), which primarily took place on German soil, meaning in the original country of the Reformation. A destroyed and devastated country, like an abused woman, was left behind.

Out of this destitution grew two new movements – along side of the continuation of Orthodoxy – in regression of the Renaissance and the Reformation of the 16th century, during the 17th century. Both of them, in like manner, drew their consequences out of those happenings.

One of the movements was *Pietism*. Pietism placed the individual before God and directed him towards a conscious life of faith through conversion and sanctification. Therein, Pietism resorts back to Luther's original church order of house groups.

Since then, all of the spiritual awakenings always follow this Lutheran-Pietism heritage: the *individual* challenge to believe, out of the general Catholic or orthodox churchliness, as well as providing a spiritual home in a concrete household. Both elements correspond with the Biblical model of the original Church.

The other movement, which followed the 30-years War was the *Enlightenment*. It also emphasized the individual but without God. After 150 years, during which the Reformation repressed the Renaissance, it violently broke forth, after the catastrophic failure of piety, as that which it always appeared to be: a new religion that very consciously put man and not God at its center. "Religion", according to the *Enlightenment*, was the self-chosen imprisonment of the human spirit, from which he must separate himself. The *Enlightenment* detached man from God: here is where "secularism" began, the view of the world without a God who is above it or behind it. Now, for coexistence with individuals, tolerance was established as the highest social principle, which, since then, has become the highest social standard.

300 years ago and until today, this has remained. From an initially philosophical movement, secularism has become the worldview of the masses.

The problem that arises for Europe is that secularism is, in itself, only a resistance-movement against religion, so at the core it is only a negation. It can state *what* it is against but, despite some attempts, it does not have the same positive defining power as does faith. Admittedly, secularism has seized extensive parts of the occidental society. But this is exactly the problem: the freedom of an individual and the tolerance in coexistence are certainly high commodities, basic European values. However, since the Enlightenment, Europe is lacking the great spiritual bracket of a common conviction and, therefore, a roof for that common European house, under which security and fellowship can be experienced, much less a mission to the world, for which one could live and die.

Europe Today

Europe is crumbling, because Europe is in the process of losing its deepest calling, the Christian faith. The deepest foundation is shaking. Christianity is no longer a social consensus.

Certainly, the established institution of the Church exists in all European countries: the Greek resp. Russian Orthodox, the Roman Catholic and the Evangelical-Lutheran. And the largest part of the European population also belongs to one of these institutions.

However, the average churchgoer, in comparison to the total number of church members, or even to the total population, shows, for the average European, how marginal Church and faith are. Basic Bible knowledge, Christian customs, prayers and songs, etc. are in the process of rapidly disappearing. This corresponds to the loss of Christian standards in daily life.

But still this was not enough. Two ethical tsunamis completely tore away the remaining bit of Christian-bourgeois conviction.

The late-occidental culture dealt a blow to the Revolution of the 68-ers, who, in general, questioned all previous values and their negative effects still are noticeable today.

During these years, a second wave of the conversion of all existing values makes its way through "Gender Mainstreaming", where the gay movement and feminism have joined together to form a penetrating reevaluation (per-version), in every area, of the existing values of creation in the relationship between man and woman. Protest against it was shut off soon enough by an "antidiscrimination law".

2. Islam

During the last 3 centuries, Islam inconspicuously infiltrated European society and poses an obvious reality in nearly all of these countries today.

Quite often in the 3rd generation in this country many Moslems have European passports. But does that make them Europeans? How do they feel? And how are they treated?

Have they recognized and adopted the basic laws and rules of Europe: beginning with the Christian holidays, the role of the woman, the freedom to change religions right up to the separation of religion and state?

The question whether or not there ever will be an Islam that will conform to these basic European principles is totally open. It is certain, however, that in some Turkish and Arabic ministries the conquest of Europe is reflected upon, rather than the reverse. For sure, until today, Islam is not contributing towards building a unified Europe.

3. The European Union

As paradox as it may sound: The political instrument of the European Union, which unites the peoples of Europe and, in many respects, strengthens and advances it, is in the process of standing in its own way and preventing Europeans to grow together.

- Factor 1 is the skepticism of the population against the enthusiasm for unification of the political elite, who, with a wink, ignore the criterion for admittance i.e., in the case of Romania and Bulgaria and in the case of Greece did not notice that the balance sheets were doctored up. The conclusion of this development provided the offer to Turkey for membership negotiations, which was refused by a wide majority of the population.
- As well, a majority of the population in Germany refused the adoption of the Euro (“Teuro” = expensive Euro), which, nevertheless, was carried out.
- When it came to the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty the sense of having to “defend” national competency against an increasing EU centralism was obvious right up to the decisions of the Federal Court.
- The vote of “no” to the “Constitution” in the year 2005 from France and Holland and in 2008 from Ireland to the Lisbon Treaty showed how far removed the political decisions-makers were from the citizens.
- Initially, the common currency proved to be a great advantage to the freedom of travelers but especially for the export economy. However, since appropriate control and penal mechanisms were not simultaneously established and implemented, nor were they compulsory – neither in the public nor in the private banking sector – the threat of bankruptcy to the Southern European economies, all of whom belonged to the Eurozone, was detected too late. Without the Euro the Greek Denar plainly would be devalued, respective to its real value. Since, however, it concerns the Euro all Euro partners are affected and must support the “Greek Euro”, which became worthless, so that it would not crash and take them all along with it.

It is – at least in Germany – proven by a survey that the Greek crisis has dramatically worsened the attitude of the Germans towards the EU.

To the question: “How much trust do you have in the EU?” the following answered in

March 2010	37% great and 51% little
May 2010	26% great and 63% little
January 2011	25% great and 67% little

To the question: “When someone says: “Europe is our future”, is that correct?” the following answered in

April 2005	62% yes 19% no
April 2010	53% yes 19% no
January 2011	41% yes 34% no

The way in which the Euro crisis was handled, the hectic, the disagreement between Merkel and Sarkozy, the brunt being on Germany – all of this undermined the remaining trust in the EU, which, on the other hand, for further aid, put the German government under strong political pressure.

4. The Populists

In light of the rapid growth of Islam, the increasing number of migrants, the endlessly expanding financial aid to Southern Europe and Ireland, the rescue of banks with billions and cutbacks in the social budget, etc.; in light of all of this, in many European countries, right-wing populists have spoken out and, with their parties, have won seats in their parliaments. In most cases this means a rejection of Europe, the EU

and also of the Euro. The growth of these parties shows the current protest mood of many voters in Europe.

In the meantime, these parties are sitting in parliaments in Sweden, Finland, (Norway), Lithuania, Latvia, Belgium, Austria, Slovenia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Greece. In Italy (and Switzerland) they are within the government. In Denmark and Holland they tolerate the government.

THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE TO A UNITED EUROPE

And even though – as just pointed out in detail – the enthusiasm for unification yields to disillusionment and the costs of unification are relentlessly manifested;
Even though the form of government of this unifying Europe, in spite of the Lisbon Treaty, is still in progress;
Even though the spiritual bracket of Christianity around Europe has become weaker (see: the waiver of the reference to God in the preamble of the “Constitution”); This, then, is Robert Schuman’s idea of a Europe that, through the close economical cooperation of the peoples, can achieve lasting peace without alternative and which can endure.

Now, whoever complains about the billions, which (presumably) will be sunken into Greece irretrievably, he alternatively should bear in mind the costs of the Second World War and what it cost the European countries, much less the millions of dead, the millions of those in exile and the costs of the redevelopment of Europe. Since the fury of war no longer devours national wealth, we are the generation that is able to inherit that which our parents and grandparents worked for. All of the European economies are better off today than ever before, foremost Germany!

Economically

The cooperation among the European countries – especially between France and Germany – has bestowed Europe with secured peace and prosperity.

Exemplarily visible was the value of the joint European cooperation of countries in 2008/09 to mutually overcome the worldwide finance crisis. This was the greatest difference to 1929. And the success was apparent.

The introduction of a common currency also must be valued as a further historical step towards the formation of a common “European House”. The problem of the Monetary Union is not the Euro, but rather the neglected control mechanism!

Politically

We Europeans belong together. Politically, Africans and Asians look at Europe as a model since they themselves still are far from the measure of trust, integration and cooperation that takes place in the form of the European Union.

In the future, in the EU, tension fundamentally will remain between the national states and the headquarters in Brussels. In this sense, the Lisbon Treaty defines the task of the collective as supportive (“subsidiary”) in regards to the competence of the national states. The principle of subsidiarity implies that the European Union is allowed to pass laws only in the areas that are not able to be better regulated on a regional or national level.

But to what does this apply? Most clearly, it applies to the areas of culture and religion. However, nearly all other areas of state trade recognized, more and more, that joint trade, in itself, is more effective and advantageous for the people: whether in questions concerning energy, crime fighting, consumer protection or climate issues – more and more areas have been incorporated into joint trade. The newest example, which is currently up for discussion, is the question of a common economic government.

Culturally

We Europeans belong together, not only politically and economically, but also culturally. This emerges most clearly when we compare Europe, as a cultural circle, with other large cultural circles like Africa, China, India or the Moslem Mideast and North Africa. Through such a comparison it immediately becomes clear that we Europeans have a common basic idea on ethics – regardless of how “Christian” each one of them, who originates out of Christianity, may be.

As such, the Union no longer sees itself alone as an economic union but particularly as a community of values. These values are contained in the “Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union”. It justifies these values, such as human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity, “in the awareness of the spiritually-religious and ethical heritage of the Union”, in which the common history of the European people is addressed.

Final Thoughts

Although Europe is not the birthplace of Christianity it is, however, its cradle. The man from Troas, who asked Paul in Acts 16:9 to come to Europe “and help us” is the voice of Europe that God answered. In the depths of the soul of Europe there is a longing for God that pleases Him and that He gladly answers, even until this day, when and wherever He hears it.

Europe’s true and deepest calling is to faith in the Trinity, in the God of the Bible, in the God of the Hebrews.

The man who called to Paul spoke Greek. He knew the Greek gods and still he was unpacified. That’s why he called: “Help us!” And then it says (v. 10) “we were certain that God had called us to preach the Gospel to them.” To preach the Gospel aloud and to spread it throughout Europe is a direct calling from God.

Next to the man stands a woman, the first female European, Lydia, who says: “Come and stay at my house.” Like the man, this woman also stands for Europe: She invites the messengers, she invites the Gospel of Jesus to stay in the house of Europe. And ever since then God’s calling to the house of Europe has the right to stay.

However, there were, and still are, other powers at work in Europe that directly retaliated.

- V. 16 ff spirit world of the fortuneteller
- V. 21 the pride of the Romans, the elite
- V. 17,32 the arrogance of the scholars, the Greeks

The controversy with these three centers of power continues until today and this means suffering for the messengers. Prison also is the “house of Europe”, the place of the oppressed and hopeless, the underclass. But in the middle of the night, in the

darkest place, they proclaim Jesus' victory over this Europe. And God answers by shaking this house, by which spontaneous faith is manifested, right in the middle of the prison.

PRAYER:

1. "For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Rom. 11:29). Even though these verses are aimed at Israel, it is helpful to read the verses 28-36 in light of Europe and to pray fervently.
2. On his second missionary journey how did Paul come to know the Europeans? Which situations, that are typical for Europe, did he meet up with in Acts 16-18? A good reason to pray for these situations, however and wherever they appear today. How did Paul handle these situations?
3. Where does the Lord call us to substitute repentance? For the distortion of the reformation – for the ossification of the faith into "mere teaching" – for the massacre of the Thirty Year's War in the name of Faith – for the reaction towards the development of the aggressive unbelief during the time of the "Enlightenment" (18th century) out of disappointment (Voltaire: "Ecraser l'infâme", "exterminate them, the vile", the Church is meant) – Receive blessings from the fathers and mothers of the revival movement from many European countries – Call of the Holy Spirit over Europe, because only He can cause an eschatological revival (Joel 3:1-2), so that faith will become a bracket, a foundation for Europe, once again. Formulate Europe's cry of the heart for God, for the living God (pray Psalm 42 over Europe!).
4. Let us thank God for "the European Idea", for the collaboration among the peoples, the unquestioned, secured peace, for the transnational friendships and marriages, for the diversities of the people and their special talents, for the possibility to travel and the practical, common currency, etc.
Let us bless, by name, the nine peoples surrounding us.
5. Pray for wisdom for all the Christian child care workers, teachers and other pedagogical professions to know how to impart the mandatory "Gender Mainstreaming" material so that God's calling for men and women remains clear and transparent and without contempt for otherness.
6. Let's pray that Islam, which isn't historical but certainly sociological and which belongs to Europe today, finds a lifestyle which is compatible with our culture (Integration) and that many Muslims come to know vibrant Christians and through them learn to love Jesus.
7. What does God, the Lord over Europe, want to tell us with the increasingly more difficult Euro crisis? Let us pray for the people in the affected countries: Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Greece, especially for the youth who, despite good education, are unemployed and without perspective. (In Portugal 27% are under 25 years of age, in Spain 44% are unemployed!). Pray that there will be no hate among the Germans towards the Greeks and among the Greeks towards the Germans.
8. Let us pray for "Brussels", for those in a position of responsibility in the institutions, for a mind-set without centralistic exaggerations for all of Europe. A regular prayer breakfast takes place in Parliament with the representatives from various parties. The Polish Parliament President, Buzek, is a born-again Christian. Likewise, the President of the European Council, Herman van Rompuy, is a praying Catholic Christian.

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