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Eucharistic Life and Christian Martyrdom: the Challenge of Europe's Secular Ethos

Abstract

Eucharistic union with Christ also unifies Christians with the saints who followed Christ. The recent martyrs under Communism turn His distant cross into a reality of our day. Their relics bring the witness of un-reduced Christianity to deeply secularized societies. This essay reflects on the importance of these relics for a European Union that discounts Europe's Christian past. The spiritual basis and moral implications of their veneration disclose the incoherence of that Union's secular ethos: While



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affirming religious freedom, that ethos subjects the exercise of such freedom to the conditions imposed by its own secular commitments. Such subjection happens in the name of respect for a pointedly secular human dignity: Respect for such autonomy imposes disparaging the Christian exercise of authority; it is also taken to impose an affirmative recognition of non-Christian uses of autonomy, which obviates proper Christian discernment. Taking its bearings from the witness of the recent martyrs, this essay shows how the conflict between secular and Christian understandings of freedom surfaces in policies of public school education, policies of cultural re-education, and in the distorted witness of the post-traditional Christianities dominating the Union.

Keywords

human dignity, authority, discrimination, sin, re-education, government neutrality, secularization

1 Introduction

By participating in the body and blood of Christ, the Eucharist, Christians celebrate their thanksgiving for their Divine creation, vocation, and redemption: "For it is not His will that the grace we have received should be unprofitable; but He requires us to take pains to render Him His own fruits."¹

By participating in the Eucharist, Christians partake in Christ's resurrection. They enter into His promise of eternal life in the glory of God. But this promise must be actively expected at every moment of a person's life (Mt. 24:42). Beyond mere

¹ Cf. Athanasius of Alexandria, „Letters” (A. Robertson (transl.), P. Schaff, H. Wace (eds.), *Nicene and post-Nicene fathers*, second series, vol. 4, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1995), (495-581), p. 521.

mental consent, such expectation requires doing the will of God (Mt. 24:45 ff.), as revealed to the Church. This will invites humans to embrace the promised eternal life by "dying" to the death their fallen nature imposes (Lk. 9:24). For such dying, Christ, Who restored that nature, provides the pattern (Lk. 9:23) of kenotic love: "For he who is made like Him in His death, is also diligent in virtuous practices" (Athanasius, p. 523). In following that pattern, the Christian "confesses in" (ομολογησει) Christ, thus gaining confidence that He will "confess in" him at the final judgment (Mt. 10:32).

Eucharistic union with Christ also unifies Christians with the saints who became one with Christ (1 Cor. 10:16-17). Those saints not only confirm that unifying through their continued intercession. The many and diverse ways of their perfection also offer guidance about how sinful humans can seek to follow Christ (Mt. 16:24). During times of persecution, such Christian discipleship can lead to the martyrdom of suffering and death, a high calling, given to only few. Here as well, the Holy Eucharist provides powerful support;² even those who previously failed are rendered worthy of participation by their mere willingness to stand another trial.³ The model provided by such willingness is especially powerful when offered by the martyrs of recent times: They struggled in a world that is still close to our own. Their tortures under Communism turn Christ's distant cross into a reality of our day. These martyrs suffered in place of brothers in faith, who are still alive to tell their victories. The

² Thus Cyprian of Carthage, "The Epistles" (E. Wallis (transl.), A. Roberts, J. Donaldson (eds.), *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1995), (275-420), p. 347, advised his parishioners to strengthen themselves through the Holy Eucharist "for the reason that they themselves also may be able to shed their blood for Christ."

³ Cf. Peter of Alexandria, "The canonical epistle with the commentaries of Theodore Balsamon and John Zonaras" (J. B. H. Hawkins (transl.), A. Roberts, J. Donaldson (eds.), *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 6, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1995) Canon VIII, (269-279), p. 272.

sanctifying presence of those martyrs is powerfully felt at the places of their struggles; it sanctifies even the distant places to which their relics are brought.

Today, these relics bless Orthodox Churches all over Western Europe. They bring their own, disturbing witness to deeply secularized societies. This essay reflects on the importance of their veneration within a federal Union that no longer bears witness to Europe's Christian past.

That Union affirms religious freedom. But it confines the exercise of that freedom to the space allowed by its own secular ethos. This ethos refers to a dignity that is ascribed to (born) humans as inherent quality. Dignity here no longer reflects man's Divine creation and calling. Instead, it surfaces as an entitlement for societal recognition. This recognition grounds claims to "dignified" living conditions and to "fair" opportunities for social inclusion. Respect for the corresponding human rights is expected to facilitate human 'achievement' and 'meaning': Under conditions of moral and religious pluralism, such objects of human yearning are conceived by reference to individual choice. The human calling pursued along the lines of such yearning thus reduces to self-defined self-development and self-realization.

Within a European Union that discounts its Christian past,⁴ the purely immanent focus of secular self-development and self-realization, so this essay argues, renders 'respect' for human dignity incompatible with real (as distinguished from merely purported) religious freedom. Outside of orientation to a God

⁴ A powerful symptom of such discounting is the omission of any mention of God in the draft for a planned constitution of Europe (whose ratification later failed for other reasons), cf. The European Convention, *Draft Treaty establishing a Constitution of Europe*, 2004, <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/industrialrelations/dictionary/definitions/treatyestablishingaconstitutionforeurope.htm> (accessed September 2014).

Whose saving cross restores broken mankind to ecclesial unity, the exercise of authority, whereby families are integrated into a hierarchically structured Church, is no longer merely recognized as vulnerable to fallen humans' distorted passions. Even more, all exercise of authority within family or Church appear systemically suspect: It is taken to hinder members' pursuit of individual selfhood. Outside of orientation to a God Whose holy will reveals the path of holiness to each human, according to his personal and unique Divine calling, moral and spiritual discernment is no longer a human goal (to be carefully separated, to be sure, from the temptation of judgmentalism). Instead, such discernment is accused of reducing to mere judgmentalism, and thus of disrespecting, and discriminating against, those who deviate from 'merely contingent' social norms. In the purely secular perspective, both the Christian exercise of authority and the Christian witness to the truth of Christ thus are taken to violate human rights to un-hindered self-realization and affirmative social inclusion.

Christians and non-Christians disagree on human freedom. Europe's secular liberalism discounts man's fallen nature. That liberalism celebrates freedom under the heading of 'autonomy.' Christian freedom, in contrast, seeks to liberate fallen man from enslavement to distorted passions. Here properly designed therapies of obedience are offered for increasing believers' receptivity to the Divine grace. In such a horizon, obedience can be welcomed as nurturing growth in true freedom. The Christian vision of human flourishing is not hedonistic (and confined to immanent concerns with this world) but Eucharistic (and oriented to the eternity of a renewed world); this vision establishes liturgical fellowship with the Christian martyrs.

This essay focuses on Germany, a country whose secularity is widely acclaimed as particularly religion-friendly.⁵ Still, a

⁵ E. Eberle, *Church and state in Western society* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011).

profound hostility to Christian martyrdom surfaces in (1) public school education, (2) policies of secular re-education, and (3) the resulting re-adjustment of what the majority takes Christianity to be all about.

2 Public school education

Europe's Union member states take themselves to be morally obligated, and hence authorized, to implement respect for what they view as "human dignity". They not only frame their governance in terms of such respect, and not only sanction trespasses of the laws prohibiting "disrespect". Even more, these states seek to inculcate their own moral commitment to that dignity among their constituents. They seek to influence not only behavior but also attitudes.

The most promising addressees for such inculcating are children whose yet undeveloped capacities for judgment can still be formed by effective guidance.⁶ The educational authority of parents is recognized (*Basic Law*, Art. 6), but its use for the

⁶ This "vulnerability" of children to external "manipulation" presented one of the motives behind the German Constitutional Court's decision to deny the authority of the state to order crosses to be affixed to classroom walls, cf. Bundesverfassungsgericht (BVG), „Dokumentation: Beschluß“ (H. Maier (ed.), *Das Kreuz im Widerspruch*, Freiburg: Herder, 1996), p. 148 (132-150). The same vulnerability, of course, also enables the state to influence children's values. Its authority to do so according to that state's secular commitments has so far never been questioned. One of the major reasons for that failure lies in the assumption that those commitments are 'purely rational' (see e.g. E.-W. Böckenförde, *Der säkularisierte Staat* (München: Siemens Stiftung, 2007), pp. 35 f) and that they reflect Europe's canonical "occidental" anthropology (A. Vellmer, *Religiöse Kindererziehung und religiös begründete Konflikte in der Familie* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 55 f.). The manipulative character of this kind of influencing is generally overlooked in the legal literature.

"wellbeing of the child"⁷ placed under state supervision: Parents must respect their children's basic rights. Central among these is the free development of their personality⁸ which, with increasing maturity, is approvingly expected to embrace what parents disapprove of (Vellmer, pp. 63, 65 f).⁹

The state's own educational goals are implemented through compulsory public schools,¹⁰ designed to secure an 'integration,' in the course of which children from diverse family, cultural and ethnic backgrounds learn to settle for what the secular ethos stipulates as 'shared values.' Up to the end of the last century, those values still reflected (already weakened but still recognizably) Christian intuitions.¹¹ Today, increasingly de-Christianized federal German authorities define those values in quite anti-Christian ways.

The discrepancy between Europe's confessed commitment to religious freedom and the school policies compromising Christian freedom comes to light, if we attend to the Christian guidance offered by one of the most glorious new martyrs, Valeriu Gafencu. This saint attained holiness through the love of his enemies, to which his own repentance opened his heart. He knew that, in order to acquire such love and repentance, the

⁷ M. Jestaedt, „Das elterliche Erziehungsrecht im Hinblick auf Religion“ (J. W. Listl, E.W. Friesenhahn (eds.), *Handbuch des Staatskirchenrechts der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, vol. 2, Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1995), (371-414), p. 377.

⁸ A. Vellmer, *Religiöse Kindererziehung*, p. 59.

⁹ On the unrealistic assumptions undergirding the implied attribution of "maturity" see B. Partridge, Adolescent psychological development, parenting styles, and pediatric decision making, *JMP* 35 (2010), pp. 518-525.

¹⁰ M. Hundt, *Religionsrecht in der Schule* (Kronach: Link, 2011), pp. 42, 79.

¹¹ J. Isensee, „Bildersturm durch Grundrechtsinterpretation“ (H. Maier, ed.cit.), (2-27), p. 23, see also T. Würtenberger, „Zu den Voraussetzungen des freiheitlichen, säkularen Staates,“ (W. Brugger, S. Huster (eds.), *Der Streit um das Kreuz in der Schule*, Baden Baden: Nomos, 1998), (277-296), p. 282.

reality of sin had to be confronted. Some of the sins he identified have come to be either discounted, or even affirmed as desirable, to be either condoned or intentionally nurtured within German schools today.

2.1 "Sin is (...) placing too much faith and confidence in oneself, such that a man becomes a law unto himself"¹².

Respect for human dignity in Europe affirms human autonomy, already in school children¹³. While St. Valeriu recognizes parental authority as condition for freedom (Moise, p. 234), school programs promote emancipation (Jestaedt, p. 378, cf. p. 382). They confront the young with visions of human flourishing, which disagree with those endorsed by their families (Vellmer, p. 220). Home-schooling, an option which e.g. in the United States is widely and successfully adopted by religious parents in order to combine academic training with support for their children's moral and spiritual integrity, is prohibited offhand: Home-schooled children are proclaimed to get "exposed to rigid constraint" and "kept in incompetence".¹⁴ Christian parents whose faith commitments nourish some distance from the cultural mainstream are charged with imposing religious heteronomy (Jestaedt, p. 386). Such parents are accused of violating their children's right to religious self-determination (Vellmer, pp. 66, 68) by depriving them children of important alternative influences and options. Children from traditionally religious families are required to "mature" by exposing their beliefs to discussion with non-traditional class

¹² Moise (Monk), *The Saint of the prisons* (Sibiu: Editura Agnos, 2009), p. 310.

¹³ BVG, „Dokumentation: Beschluß“ (ed.cit.), p. 148.

¹⁴ C. Waldhoff, *Religionskonflikte und staatliche Neutralität* (München: Beck, 2010), p. 113. The allegedly implied imposition of "familial dependency relationships" counts as violation of proper child care (Vellmer, p. 57).

mates (cf. Waldhoff, p. 114).¹⁵ The possibility that such imposed "rational openness" and training in mutual recognition may change their beliefs is welcomed.¹⁶ By alienating children from their parents' faith, such methods encourage these children to 'choose on their own.'¹⁷ They are educated to become „a law to themselves".

2.2 "Have you committed fornication? Do you live as a concubine? Do you sin against nature - masturbation or homosexuality?" (Moise, p. 322)

In its decision on the display of crucifixes in school rooms, Germany's Constitutional Court affirmed parents' right to protect their children against religious influences they consider harmful (BVG 1996, p. 144). Yet parents' right to protect children against sexual education they consider harmful is denied. By imposing 'sexual education' curricula at all levels of

¹⁵ Obviously, claims about the desirability of such 'maturing' reflect a secularizing bias: Not only are few traditionally Christian parents both dedicated enough and intellectually able to teach their children how to argue for a theology that runs counter to the mainstream. Even more, the very project of discoursing about what is known only noetically is misconceived. Children will experience their inability to effectively argue for their faith as an argument against their faith, and they will be tempted to regard the impotence of discursive reason in the face of transcendent truth as evidence for the irrationality of that truth.

¹⁶ A. Angenendt, T. Habel, „"Das christliche Europa"?" (H. Noormann (ed.), *Arbeitsbuch Religion und Geschichte*, vol. 1, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2009), (163-194), p. 192.

¹⁷ Obviously, the traditional endorsement of the need to educate children in a Christian conduct of life does not repudiate recognition that these children will eventually have to personally adopt what they were trained in, and transform what was imposed on them from without into what their better self imposes on themselves. Such transformation in fact relieves them from their own tendency to become a „law to their own fallen passions." But it is also hard to deny that an early training in that conduct of life, if realized with proper love, gives such children a significant advantage over those others who have never been offered the soil needed to „develop their roots" (Mk. 4:6).

public schools, German administrative agencies impose the liberal views affirmed by the mainstream of public media (and advertised as 'generally accepted') on children whose moral and religious diversity these agencies claim to respect.

Information about human sexuality is often can surely be defended as a way to protect children against exploitation by others (outside and even within dysfunctional families). But the proclaimed 'sex education' pursues other goals: It is to enhance responsibility¹⁸ in the sexual activities school children are expected to engage in. The focus on venereal diseases and contraception, and on an ethos of negotiation, signal that sex outside of marriage is "normal". The co-educative setting of such instruction is designed to lower modesty barriers between boys and girls. Sexual experimenting and experience are promoted as ways of supporting self-discovery and psychic health (Ministerium für Schule, pp. 13 ff.). These programs, advertised as "open in view of diverse value commitments" and "tolerant" (Waldhoff, p. 111), overrule parents' judgment about their children psychological and moral readiness for, and spiritual benefit from, the subjects taught. Christian children here learn to regard their parents' norms as excessively confining. Such enforced education programs compromise children's ability to situate sexuality in a life of holiness. They encourage children to sin.

¹⁸ Ministerium für Schule, Wissenschaft und Forschung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, *Richtlinien für die Sexualerziehung*, 2011, <http://www.schulministerium.nrw.de/docs/Schulsystem/RuL/Richtlinien-fuer-die-Sexualerziehung-in-NRW.pdf>, (accessed September 2014), p. 6. On the encouragement to sexual self discovery even among pre-school children, in order to withdraw such issues from parental supervision, see Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport Baden Württemberg, *Arbeitspapier für die Hand der Bildungsplan-kommissionen als Grundlage und Orientierung zur Verankerung der Leitprinzipien*, 2013, [bw.de/site/pbs-bw/get/documents/KULTUS.Dachmandant/KULTUS/kultusportal-bw/Bildungsplanreform/Arbeitspapier_Leitprinzipien.pdf](http://www.bildungsplan-bw.de/site/pbs-bw/get/documents/KULTUS.Dachmandant/KULTUS/kultusportal-bw/Bildungsplanreform/Arbeitspapier_Leitprinzipien.pdf), (accessed September 2014).

2.3 "Have you attended gatherings of non-believers? (...) read their books with the intention of discovering another truth other than that of the Church? (...) defended lack of faith or sects or Islam?" (Moise, p. 316) "Do you believe that some men (...) have the same value that Christ had?" (Moise, p. 317)

Pluralist Europe seeks to safeguard social peace by discouraging the proclamation of any truth as "absolutely valid". After Vatican II, Roman Catholics and Protestants (in almost all of Western Germany's federal states) replaced their previous confessional schools by inter-denominational "Christian community schools": The embeddedness of Christian education into a specific dogmatic and liturgical tradition was sacrificed in favor of training in inter-denominational communality. The goal was to allow pupils to feel at home in a denominationally diverse society.¹⁹

Today, such prioritizing (endorsed, e.g., by Waldhoff, p. 115) of social integration over religious integrity also encompasses inter-religious communality. It frames even (the still denominationally organized) religious instruction: The directives issued by the Protestant Church in Germany²⁰ envisage a "competence" that requires inner distance from one's faith, and "critical formation" over against any "closed religious formation": Religious instruction is "not to communicate teaching about the faith in an affirmative manner and to canvass future members for the churches." It is instead to support the state's welcome of "religious and world view plurality".²¹ "Openness for a broad spectrum of opinions and

¹⁹ E. Lohse, „Stat crux dum volvitur orbis“ (H. Maier, ed.cit.), p.127.

²⁰ Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD) (ed.), *Identität und Verständigung, Standort und Perspektiven des Religionsunterrichts in der Pluralität* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1994), # 5.2.1.

²¹ H. Noorman, *Der rechtliche Rahmen für den Religionsunterricht an staatlichen Schulen in Deutschland*, 2010.

views is an essential concern of a public school in a free democratic commonwealth" (Hundt, p. 81, cf. pp. 71, 98).²² "Respect" here translates into an affirmative recognition not only of people with different faiths, but also of their faiths (EKD, 1994, p. 61). Such pursuit of ecumenical (*ibid.* # 4.6) and interreligious learning (*ibid.* ## 4.7, 5.2.1 ff.) invites Orthodox children to celebrate non-Orthodox (and even non-Christian) religious feasts or to attend inter-denominational (and even inter-religious) worship sessions (*ibid.* # 4.9): These children are taught to look for "valuable insights" in non-Orthodox religious literature. They are implicated in the sins St. Valeriu identified.

2.4 "Sin is treading upon the law of God" (Moise, p. 310)

Secular respect for human dignity imposes non-judgmental acceptance of others' choices (as long as these other choices also manifest the same kind of respect). Separated from Christian discernment (Moise, p. 230), such 'respect' affirms unlimited moral and life style diversity. Special anti-discrimination programs and 'diversity education' curricula seek to normalize alternative sexual orientations and family models.²³ Pupils are encouraged to explore without prejudice their own possible homosexual inclinations.

http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_3902-1442-1-30.pdf?110615121258, (accessed September 2014), # 1, 8.

²² Private primary schools with religious orientation will receive government authorization only if their educational program affirms the equal right of all religions (Hundt, *Religionsrecht*, p. 81). This requirement, which also holds for regular public schools, is not limited in view of modern democratic liberal states' acknowledgment of religious freedom: Instead it includes an acceptance of equal acceptability.

²³ Good examples are Ministerium für Kultus, pp. 12, 23, 25 f., 29, or Berlin, Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung (ed.), *Lesbische und schwule Lebensweisen. Handreichung für die weiterführenden Schulen*, 2010,

While the advocates of such instruction insist that the goal is not to advertize any particular sexual orientation (e.g. Waldhoff, p. 111), they also want such instruction to enjoin students not to disparage any sexual orientations either. In this way, what St. Valeriu (Moise, p. 331) identified as the sin of failing to "prevent someone from sinning" if one is able to, and failing "to try to tell someone that he should not sin," is even rendered obligatory.

2.5 "Sin means slavery to the devil" (Moise, p. 311)

Apart from school teachers' generally accepted use of yoga, esoteric relaxation methods, or fantasy-trips (cf. Vellmer, p. 226), the official reading curriculum²⁴ includes books and projects which cater to the misguided yearning that comes with lacking spiritual guidance. While most children outgrow their

http://www.berlin.de/imperia/md/content/lb_ads/gglw/themen/lesbische_und_schwule_lebensweisen_2010_ohne_cartoons.pdf?start&ts=1267459438&file=lesbische_und_schwule_lebensweisen_2010_ohne_cartoons.pdf, (accessed September 2014), and Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft, *Lesbische und schwule Lebensweisen - ein Thema für die Schule*, 6th edition, 2013, <https://www.gew-bw.de/Binaries/Binary20121/L-S-Lebenswesen.pdf> (accessed March 2014). Because of widespread internet protests, this document was removed from the website in April 2014 and is now available only as printed brochure (cf. Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft, *Publikationen Frauen- und Antidiskriminierungspolitik*, 2014, https://www.gew-bw.de/Publikationen_Frauen-_und_Antidiskriminierungspolitik.html#Section16627 (accessed September 2014).

²⁴ Cf. e.g. the reading contest about witches' children and demons' dance (A. Heininger, *Hexenkinder und Dämonentanz, Vorlesewettbewerb in der Liebigsschule*, 2013, <http://www.liebigsschule-frankfurt.de/index.php/aktivitaeten/veranstaltungen/146-hexenkinder-und-daemonentanz-vorlesewettbewerb-in-der-liebigsschule> (accessed September 2014), or the witch-workshop offered by Landesbildungsserver Baden Württemberg, (n. d.) *Lernwerkstatt Hexen*, <http://www.schule-bw.de/schularten/grundschule/2gsunterricht/1projekte/hexen/>, (accessed September 2014).

fascination with witches, magic, and ghosts, the entertainment market for young adults seek to keep that yearning alive by channeling it into 'new religious' pseudo-cults. Public schools, with their undiscerning design of learning materials and methods, fail to protect children against mental habits that render them vulnerable to the demonic powers unacknowledgedly at work in a de-Christianized culture. Even more, such design actively discourages spiritual sobriety, compromises children's receptivity to the holy, and tempts them to sin through believing in "charms and magic spells" (Moise, p. 315).

Christian private schools which exclude such materials²⁵ are persecuted by hostile media whenever a disgruntled parent publicizes reports about "fundamentalist" i.e. "missionary" activities. These schools risk losing their (subsidies and) accreditation, if a religion teacher can be accused of "threatening" his pupils with talk about hell.²⁶ Even in schools that are legally allowed to take their moral and religious orientation from the Bible, Christ's frequent warnings about the consequences of a sinful life must be suppressed.

To summarize, secular education under the European Union's ethos of respect for human dignity not only fails to protect children against the evil of sin. That education even leads them into sin.

3 Europe's Ethos and the goals of communist re-education

The reports about Communist persecution in Romanian prisons describe not only deprivation, solitary confinement, starvation,

²⁵ I. Resch, *Stellungnahme zu dem Artikel "Himmel und Hölle" aus der Süddeutschen Zeitung vom 10.10.2012*, 2012, <http://www.lukas-schule.de/images/stories/food/sz.pdf> (accessed September 2014).

²⁶ Cf. e.g. F. Brüning, *Wenn Moralvorstellungen zum Problem werden*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 28 October, 2012.

and cruel tortures, often continued for many years. Even more, special "re-education" programs targeted Christian faithfulness. A new, Communist being, purged from its former 'values,' would then be re-programmed (Moise, pp. 111 f).

It is difficult even to refer to the methods used under these programs in a scholarly paper. One would rather cover these horrors in silence, keeping only victims' struggles and victories as a constant reminder for deepening one's own Christian life. On the other hand, Eucharistic union with those martyrs imposes an obligation to explore the conditions under which their example can be followed today. Christian life today is still, or almost still, contemporary with the life those martyrs could have lived. The culture which caused their suffering, the mindset which endorsed that suffering or imposed carelessness about it, still lingers among those around us. Fellowship with Christ and His saints requires an effort of love to confront that culture in its hidden presence, even in countries that had fought and politically overcome official Communism.

Western Europe was spared Communist rule. But its own liberal ethos of respect and tolerance sprang from the same roots: Both ideologies grew out of the Enlightenment's rationally re-framed and distorted Christian commitments. Both proclaim a pseudo-eschatology that surrounds their atheism and deification of man (Moise, p. 248) with a deceptive halo of moral uprightness and humane care for those in need. The one worked through cruel violence, and eventually failed. The other works through the law, and thrives. Both promise liberation. The communist persecutors sought to liberate their victims from a faith they saw as pernicious delusion. Still, they implicitly acknowledged that faith as their most powerful enemy. Europe's culture of religious diversity, by contrast, renders faith impotent. It accepts Christianity as a cultural given, but exorcizes the scandal it was to present to the world (1 Cor. 1:23). Secularly speaking, the outcomes are diametrically opposed: Communist deprivation and enforced uniformity looks the very opposite of liberal affluence and

encouragement to self-directed creativity. For Christians, however, both ideologies impose a betrayal: in the first case of the Christian faith, in the second of faithfulness itself. The greater moral innocence of policies enjoining respect for human rights (as compared with Communist suppression) is compensated by greater depth of the resulting spiritual distraction. Primary targets are in both cases the Christian family (1), chastity (2), repentance (3) and the notion of truth (4).

3.1 Family

The managers of the Communist prisons knew how deeply their victims' faith connected them with their faithful families. Re-education sought to force these victims to denounce their parents, to invent discrediting lies, and to disgrace their own attachment to their families.²⁷ Yet in spite of their evil design, such strategies did not destroy the viability of family life. Even though many martyrs and confessors thought that they would never again be able to look into the eyes of those whom they had been forced to denounce (Geisler, p. 34), and even though in some cases prisoners' own families broke up, other survivors were able to build up new families, and to raise children in the faith.

Western Europe's ethos of individual self-realization also welcomes young people's wish for a family. It merely compromises their ability to sustain its challenges. Liberalized marriage laws have rendered marriage contingent on its ability to sustain partners' separate self-development and growth. Such self-development, moreover, is conceived in ways which radically differ from those which are endorsed by traditional Christianity.²⁸ Equality between the sexes,²⁹ a constitutionally

²⁷ R.-N. Geisler (ed.), *Durch die Hölle der kommunistischen Umerziehung* (Wachtendonk: Hagia Sophia, 2011), p. 21.

²⁸ St. John Chrysostom ("Homilies on the Gospel according to St. John", 'The Oxford translation', G. B. Stevens (revised), P. Schaff (ed.), *Nicene*

anchored "state-goal" in Germany,³⁰ instead encourages women to seek a career.³¹ The vocation of the housewife is discredited.³² The resulting increase in marriage instability³³ in

and post-Nicene fathers, 1 series, vol. 14, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1995, p. 225 (1-334)) encourages wives to emulate the monastic pursuit of wisdom. He takes their very remaining 'riveted' to the home as offering access to an ascetical desert which can enable them to collect their thoughts within themselves, learn how to pray, and to acquire those virtues which can also strengthen their husbands' faith.

²⁹ Equal rights between both sexes have their primary legal salience on the level of international anti-discrimination agreements (see e.g. the United Nations General Assembly, *Convention on the Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women*, 1979, <http://www.hrweb.org/legal/cdw.html> (accessed September 2014)), as endorsed by the European Union (Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, *Treaty of Amsterdam amending the Treaty on European Union, the treaties establishing the European Communities and certain related acts*, 1997, http://europa.eu/eu-law/decision-making/treaties/pdf/treaty_of_amsterdam/treaty_of_amsterdam_en.pdf (accessed September 2014)), which added to the earlier articles 2 and 3 special commitments to promote occupational equality between the sexes. But in public discussion this focus on employment has been extended to the private realm, and to the legal recognition of equality between husband and wife. It is this type of extended equality which limits religious freedom. Thus for example, private religiously oriented schools will receive government authorization only if their educational program endorses such equality (Hundt, p. 81).

³⁰ Article 3, *Basic Law*, was accordingly adjusted after unification with East Germany in 1994.

³¹ Cf. e.g. U. Nothelle-Wildfeuer, "Familiengerechtigkeit und Zivilgesellschaft" (N. Goldschmidt, G. Beestermöller, G. Steger (eds.), *Die Zukunft der Familie und deren Gefährdungen*, Berlin: Lit, 2002), (203-216), p. 212.

³² See e.g. C. Schnabl, "Fürsorgearbeit in modernen Gesellschaften: Eine sozialethische Reflexion" (B. Edmunds, H. Ludwig, H. Zingel (eds.), *Die Zwei-Verdiener-Familie*, Berlin: Lit, 2003), (52-86), p. 53.

³³ In Germany, more than a third of a year's marriages end in divorce, cf. J. Huinink, "Warum noch Ehe und Familie?" (Sekretariat der

turn has the effect of encouraging partners from the very start to think in terms of minimizing risks for themselves, should their union fail, thus rendering failure still more likely. The liberal egalitarianism thus in effect destroys the social capital of marital trust.³⁴

Increased outsourcing of early child care in addition weakens ties between parents and children.³⁵ Such weakening is

Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, Bereich Pastoral (ed.), *Ehe und Familie, unser gemeinsamer Auftrag*, 2005, <http://www.ehe-familie-kirche.de/files/dokumentationsband.pdf> (accessed September 2014), (19-28), p. 20.

³⁴ A more thorough discussion is offered in C. Delkeskamp-Hayes, T. Imrény, Claims, priorities, and moral excuses: A culture's dependence on abortion and its cure, *CB 19/2* (2013), (198-241), p. 211.

³⁵ Such outsourcing, advertized under the heading of „compatibility of work and family life,” is politically desired: Increasing the rate of people available for employment, especially in areas which had traditionally been taken care of by unpaid family labor, increases (other things being equal) the state's income from taxes (cf. Deutscher Bundestag, "Stellungnahme der Bundesregierung", (Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen, und Jugend, *Siebter Familienbericht: Familie zwischen Flexibilität und Verlässlichkeit*, 2006, http://www.bmfsfj.de/doku/Publikationen/familienbericht/download/familienbericht_gesamt.pdf (accessed September 2014), p. xxv (xxiii-xxxv)). Female employment, even beyond appeals to the individual's desire of economic independence and professional self-realization, is therefore also recommended as responding to society's general economic and special expertise 'needs'. Even more, societies' investment in women's professional education (which is largely free in Europe) transforms the latter's expertise into a public good that should not be 'wasted' during their years of motherhood.

For a European perspective on efforts at streamlining European member states' family policies to the overall goal of enhancing Europe's economic performance see M. Smet, "Evolution of the family and policy answers", 2006, http://www.um.edu.mt/europeanstudies/books/CD_CSP2/pdf/conf-msmet.pdf (accessed September 2014), pp. 8 f.

powerfully furthered, to name just one example,³⁶ by the United Nation's declaration of children's rights,³⁷ which was ratified throughout the European Union. This declaration encourages children to seek support from government authorities against restrictions on sources of information and personal contacts imposed by their parents. While the institution of resources for such support is defended in view of cases of parental neglect or abuse, their ready availability at the same time weakens the institution of parenthood: In an environment in which children are offered the option of turning to authorities outside the family, the style of parental education unconsciously takes account of the attending risk.

Both with regard to the lifelong faithfulness of husband and wife, and with regard to intergenerational cohesion, the traditional family has eroded. Christian children rarely find their turn to the Church supported by the 'household church' of

³⁶ Another important motive encouraging such outsourcing lies in the liberal state's egalitarian commitments. These tend to place not only families' educational under-achievement, but also their over-achievement under a hermeneutic of suspicion (see e.g. M. Veil, "Familienpolitische Erneuerung des Sozialstaates - aktuelle Debatten und Maßnahmen in Europa", (B. Edmunds, H. Ludwig, H. Zingel (eds.), *Die Zwei-Verdiener-Familie*, Berlin: Lit, 2003), p. 201 (194-211). Both, after all, generate 'injustices,' inflicted in the first case on families' own (disadvantaged) children (see e.g. Bundesvereinigung der deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände, *Bessere Bildung durch frühe Förderung*, Berlin: Haus der deutschen Wirtschaft, 2006, p. 21), and in the second case on other (less well supplied) children (see e.g. H. -P. Blossfeld et al, *Bildungsreform 2000 - 2010 - 2020: Jahresgutachten*, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2011, p. 42.)

³⁷ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Convention on the rights of the child*, 1989, <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx> (accessed September 2014).

their family.³⁸ They no longer learn that real love differs from compliance or complicity. Without sustained parental authority, children lose the context in which a momentary strictness can still signal stable, and trustworthy, care. When facing suffering and disappointment in later life, these children can no longer accept such burdens as a loving Divine therapy: By discounting fathers' rule in the family, secular liberalism destroys the basis on which humans can recognize true Fatherhood in God.³⁹ The lure of autonomy alienates would-be believers from a god whom their un-trained judgment discards as 'unhelpful'. In this soft and morally respectful way, the atheism communists failed to establish through threats and torture finds much more powerful support.

3.2 Chastity

The managers of the Communist prisons knew how deeply sexual purity informs a life of obedience to the Divine will. They recognized the support such a life provides for the faithful witness they sought to destroy. By compromising victims' chastity, re-education sought to crush their sense of self-worth (Geisler, pp. 27 f). Unable to conceive of a faith that is not sustained by pride, the persecutors hoped that by degrading their victims they could generate despair, and induce the desired breakdown.

While their method succeeded with those whose faith was not yet purified, it left the link between chastity and true, God-given human dignity intact. Those persecutors thus unwittingly

³⁸ St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis 1-17* (R. C. Hill (transl.), Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1986), hom. II, p. 37, see also his "Sermon on Marriage", (C. P. Roth (transl.), C. P. Roth, D. Anderson (ed.) *St. John Chrysostom: On marriage and family life*, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press 1986, pp. 81-88.

³⁹ For a more in-depth discussion see C. Delkeskamp-Hayes, Resolving family disagreements in bioethical decision making: The spiritual source of paternal authority, *CB 17/3* (2011), (206-226), p. 212 ff.

retained the moral framework in which Christians envisage their body as a temple of God. The satanic strategy still acknowledged what it sought to destroy: the structure within which a life of holiness can grow.

Europe's secular ethos, on the other hand, spiritually and morally trivializes humans' embodied life.⁴⁰ Moral salience here reduces to interpersonal respect. Respect imposes obligations in view of social inclusion; especially for alleged victims of "social ostracism", i.e. "sexual minorities".⁴¹ Tendencies for such ostracism are associated especially with the (so-called) monotheistic religions, and with Christianity prominently among them. This is why the recent legalization of homosexual unions must be supplemented by additional protection: The European Parliament recently passed a recommendation⁴² demanding that any public denouncement of homosexuality (and thus also any Christian objection to homosexual acts) should be classified as "hate language" and legally prosecuted.⁴³

⁴⁰ H.T. Engelhardt, *Dopo Dio* (Turin: Claudiana, 2014), chap. 2.

⁴¹ See e.g. C. Laudrup, "A European Battlefield: Does the EU have a soul? Is religion in or out of place in the European Union?" (L. N. Leustean, J. T. S. Madeley (eds.), *Religion, politics and law in the European Union*, New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 51 f. (45-58).

⁴² U. Lunacek, *Report on the EU Roadmap against homophobia and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation*, 2014, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A7-2014-0009+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN> (accessed September 2014).

⁴³ Since Union documents (e.g. the Council of Europe's, *Treaty of Lisbon*, 2007, http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/;ELX_SESSIONID=p1LGjSvjxqrp6N8dPTjsTZv20XyygQD8tCj22Pjfp2qT4sDn4c!366771403?uri=OJ:C:2007:306:TOC (accessed September 2014), Art. 5b) have included the right to self-determination in view of sexual orientation, and prohibited discrimination on that basis (cf. Council of Europe, *European Social Charter*, revised 1996, <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/163.htm> (accessed September 2014), Art. II-81, III-118, III-12), this would imply that the Church's public teaching on the sinful nature of

While this recommendation has not yet been legally implemented, it manifests a growing political consensus about the moral limits for freedom of speech.⁴⁴ In confining the morality undergirding its laws to the horizontal sphere of social interaction, Europe enforces policies of anti-discrimination and sexual liberalization. The very notion of chastity, along with that of ritual purity and holiness, thus surfaces only as repressive and hostile to human flourishing. Europe's robustly secular ethos may in the end prove much more efficient in alienating man from God than the distasteful practices invented by Communist persecutors.

3.3 Repentance

In their attempt to destroy Christianity by destroying believers' ability to strengthen one another, the re-educators first encouraged the development of mutual trust (Moise pp. 107 ff.). They then proceeded to force their weaker victims to betray, and subsequently to hurt their spiritual friends. In this way, re-educators used these victims for the purpose of de-stabilizing the latter through the experience of finding their trust betrayed. At the same time, those weaker victims were exposed to the

homosexual acts can easily often be accused of engendering 'hate speech.'

⁴⁴ An example of the power of such consensus can be seen in the fact that the teacher (and father) who took the initiative to raise protest against the education reform draft paper (issued for inner-administration consultation by the Green Party government of Baden Württemberg, but leaked to the public), and who alerted the public to that draft's emphasis on normalization of sexual deviance, had to resign from his position as head of division in the association of middle school teachers (SIR, Debatte über "sexuelle Vielfalt" Initiator der Petition gibt Posten auf, dpa, 14.01.2014, <http://www.stuttgarterzeitung.de/inhalt.debatte-ueber-sexuelle-vielfalt-initiator-der-petition-gibt-posten-auf.95fc936e-b526-4b91-895e-37acd2fe5cab.html> (accessed September 2014).

shame of having to witness the sustained integrity of those whom they had consented to torment. Confronting their own failure, as witnessed by their betters, they were led to a self-hatred they could escape only by re-directing that hatred to those who still resisted. Such victimized tormenters thus came to internalize the very purpose of their re-education (Geisler p. 45).

In spite of its satanic design, the strategy of utilizing the guilt that attends moral failure left the meaning of moral failure intact. Even the systematic implication of victims in victimizing others could not annihilate their memory of Christ, Who had taken up all human sin onto His redeeming cross. Even those who failed, in the very midst of their shame before self and others still retained the ability to repent, to hope for forgiveness (cf. Moise p. 113), and in some cases even to attain holiness (Geisler pp. 145 ff.).

Here again, the European ethos threatens to be more effective: Instead of discouraging hope in salvation, that ethos both (1) discounts opportunities for, and (2) blurs the very concept of repentance.

3.3.1 By limiting all morality to immanent concerns, that ethos accepts exposure to force as acircumstance that repudiates accountability. Such exculpating is not limited to constraint by others. Once the human condition is assessed exclusively in terms of the findings of natural and human sciences, man's genetic heritage, early experiences, physiological and psychological health, social environment, and even his own victimization by the systemic givens of politics and the economy, provide further grounds for excuse. The wrongs a person finds himself involved in because of factors beyond his control are taken to have no impact on his moral standing. Personal (as distinguished from anonymously societal)⁴⁵

⁴⁵ A sense of the need for repentance is still alive in politics, where the moral obligation to make amends for past injustice is recognized, and

accountability thus gets limited to the known and intended. Since few people are aware of knowingly and intentionally harming others, this ethos destroys the basis for, and discourages training in, proper self-knowledge and repentance (cf. Moise, p. 230).

3.32 In addition, the very project of repenting is rejected. It is taken to hurt the capacity for self-acceptance, on which persons' ability to respect human dignity in themselves is thought to depend. An ethos that renders dignity contingent on human recognition, even in view of oneself, must discourage the humiliation that comes with acknowledged personal failing. A person's burden of guilt, even at the brink of death, must be removed by teaching him to "forgive himself".⁴⁶ The endorsement of pride that attends the idolization of fallen humanity discredits the very idea of turning to God for forgiveness. If Communists had vainly sought to destroy the notion of God by destroying hope in the Divine forgiveness, secular liberalism renders already the quest of such forgiveness pointless.

3.4 Truth

Communist re-educators sought to seduce, constrain, or brutally force their victims to exchange the transcendent Truth in Christ for the immanent "truth" of Communism. While succeeding in turning many around, the persecutors did not deny the notion of truth itself. Their open opposition could awaken victims' watchfulness and strengthen their will to resist. In such a battle, the persecutors' victory would never be

where collective guilt is taken to call for ritual confession and commemoration. On this level, symbolic and material compensation is accepted as a penance. But of course, such collective self-cleansing further distracts persons from the need to attend to their personal failings.

⁴⁶ H. T. Engelhardt, C. Delkeskamp-Hayes, „Der Geist der Wahrheit und die ‚Legion‘ der Spiritualitäten“ (E. Frick, E. T. Roser (eds.), *Spiritualität und Medizin*, Stuttgart:, Kohlhammer, 2009), (72-80), p. 78.

final: Some prisoners resisted, others, who had fallen, later turned back. The great martyrs among them kept the options open for all, providing guidance, intercession, and hope. Europe's welcome of pluralism accommodates 'any old' "truth". It even imposes respect for all such "truths", as confessed in any one of their various renderings. Europe's welcome embraces all diversity as culturally enriching. It imposes on member states and their constituents the moral obligation to abstain not only from persecution but even from social exclusion on grounds of religious (or non-religious) beliefs. While confessing commitment to unlimited religious freedom for those who respect everyone's civil right to use such freedom, Europe's secular ethos nevertheless opposes all beliefs which might weaken social cohesion. Such cohesion is believed to require shared values: Any belief which fails to accommodate those values is taken to jeopardize social peace. Europe's religious tolerance thus in particular excludes those who confess their truth as absolute (and are therefore disparaged as "fundamentalist", cf. Waldhoff, p. 52). It is such confession which singles believers out as 'threats to social peace', -- an accusation which St. Valeriu (Moise, p. 232) discerned as covering the accusers' own quest for domination (alive not only among Communists but equally among proponents of Europe's secular ethos).

The secular ethos of Europe thus does not oppose Christian truth; it merely "civilizes" its proclamation. All religious proclamation must reflect awareness of the historical and contemporary multiplicity of competing truth claims. Such awareness imposes an "Enlightenment-informed" inner distance from what is confessed. In political discussion, religious truths may be invoked, but only as expression of a subjective choice. Such relativizing 'rules of decorum' obfuscate the implied betrayal: In confessing his faith as valid within one perspective among available others, a believer reduces its validity to the circle of those who chose to adopt the corresponding perspective. As chooser, he assumes authority

over that faith. Such a person may (in rare cases) still be willing to die for what he personally identifies with, and (in even rarer cases of accomplished heroism) may even persist under prolonged suffering. His suffering and dying however will not be for Christ, but for himself. Even in such an extreme (and unlikely) case, the enemy would have won.

To summarize; as the example of school policies in Germany already illustrated (see section 1 above), Europe's secular ethos disparages precisely those Christian commitments which Communist re-education in the Romanian prisons sought to destroy. The agents of that re-education recognized the crucial significance of family, chastity, personal faithfulness, and truth for a Christian conduct of life. While their threats and brutal violence were meant to close victims' personal access to such resources, the primitive design of their conditioning strategies left the meaning of these resources intact. While being forced to exchange Christian solidarity, Christian sin, Christian confession, Christian penance, and Christian truth for Communist solidarity, sin, confession, penance, and truth, the victims could still retain the general framework of human existence between perdition and redemption. That very framework would allow them, after the fall of Communism, to return to the Church and to place their hope in the intercession of those whom they had been forced to hurt.

No such dramatic experience of personal failure is available in a social environment which has reduced Christianity to morality and morality to an affirmative respect that idolizes fallen man. And since Europeans today are systematically kept from noticing their betrayal, the door to repentance remains closed. In that sense, the liberal re-education of Christians is conceivably more effective than the brutal Communist one ever was. By replacing open hostility with friendly distraction, the European Union's ethos of respect for human dignity blinds its victims to the losses they are suffering. This is not to suggest a conspiracy theory. There are no powerful agents behind the

Europe's cultural warfare seeking to destroy Christianity. The advocates of the Union's moral policies mean well. They seek to nurture what they associate with human flourishing. It is just that in trying to achieve "the good" on one's human own, and without support from the Divine source of all good, one eventually may wind up supporting the enemy.

4 The Christian Disavowal of Martyrdom

While facing the powers of evil in Romanian prisons, Valeriu Gafencu recognized that even those who call themselves Christians have become the enemies of Christ (Moise 311). His words disclose their prophetic meaning today.

The Christianities ruling Western Europe have survived the bureaucratic persecution of "Enlightened Absolutism", the violence inflicted by the French Revolution, and the subsequent secularization. In Germany, they managed to restore their organizational presence and public influence by internalizing Europe's secular ethos into their faith.⁴⁷ Even though Roman Catholics still remember, and venerate, their own recent martyrs, and even though Protestants still recall a Paul Schneider and a Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the majority of Enlightenment-enhanced Christians discounts martyrdom as a risky side effect of claims to absolute truth..

A recent handbook for high school teachers places Christian martyrs alongside Islamic suicide terrorists:

"The down side of convictions which are proclaimed with absoluteness and connected with the willingness to die is presented ... by suicide assassins, who stand up for their case

⁴⁷ J. Casanova, „Chancen und Gefahren öffentlicher Religion,“ (O. Kallscheuer (ed.), *Das Europa der Religionen*, Frankfurt: Fischer, 1996), (181-212), p. 197.

not only by offering their own life but also without regard for the life of others"⁴⁸.

With Assmann,⁴⁹ the author claims that not only Islam, but all monotheistic religions have this violent potential, "not excepting martyrdom as manifestation of an intolerant certainty about truth, since the step from dying for god is not far from killing for god" (Tloka, p. 62). Persecution of Christians in ancient Rome is referred to political, social, and economic motives "largely lacking in religious significance" (*Id.*, p. 66). Christians' absolute truth claim is accused of having kept them from complying with "what from the perspective of the majority of the time constituted a rather harmless and simple request to evince a loyalty (...) they themselves endorsed, a request that had been imposed on all" (Tloka p. 68): In other words: As long as there was no discrimination, Christians had no reason to complain! Another Protestant theologian identifies Christian Europe's "Golden Age" with Islamic rule in Cordoba, an age of "cultural penetration and religious conversion".⁵⁰ Here Christians "assimilated" in order to secure their economic opportunities and partake of the superior Islamic culture. Here they learnt to look for truth independently of religious boundaries (Noormann, 2009, p. 211)!⁵¹

Such 'Christian' voices promise no welcome for the relics of recent martyrs. These voices reflect (1) mainline Christians' endorsement of a secular concept of freedom, (2) their disregard for a Divine will as manifest in creation, and (3) their unconcern about a Divine judgment.

⁴⁸ J. Tloka, „Märtyrer,“ (H. Noormann, ed.cit.), (61-82), p.62.

⁴⁹ J. Assmann still maintains the claim quoted by Tloka in a recent essay which received wide public attention (Gotteszorn und Apokalypse: Über den Ernstfall totaler Religion, ZIG 6/3, 2012, pp. 67-82).

⁵⁰ H. Noormann, „Das goldene Zeitalter,“ (H. Noormann, ed.cit.), (195-224), p. 207 ff.

⁵¹ Such endorsement of mutual penetration among religions views meets with wide support today, cf. e.g. B. Laux, *Exzentrische Sozialethik* (Berlin: Lit, 2007), p. 233.

4.1 Christian Endorsement of Secular Freedom

The 1995 school cross decision (BVG) charged the symbolic message (and missionary impact) of the displayed crosses with violating Europe's overriding commitment to religious neutrality. The "cultural revolution"⁵² presented by this decision rescinded Germany's traditional tolerance for Christian school laws in its federal states. Yet even official 'Christian' protest against this breach of the German constitution did not target that neutrality which mainline believers have long since come to embrace.⁵³ Instead, Bishop Huber, the later chairperson to Protestants' leading body, argued that crosses could be supplemented by pictures of Mekka in classes with Muslim majorities,⁵⁴ thus endorsing a "bazaar of religious arbitrariness" (Isensee, p. 24). And the chairperson of the Catholic Bishops Conference, Lehmann, defended nothing beyond the cultural values invoked by the Christian symbol, since these are embodied in Germany's secular constitution.⁵⁵

Catholics have embraced the principle of government neutrality ever since Vatican II renounced Rome's traditional reserve against religious freedom in the secular state. Its *Declaration on*

⁵² H. Lecheler, „Kirchen und staatliches Schulsystem," (J. W. Listl, E.W. Friesenhahn, ed.cit.), (414-437), p. 430.

⁵³ E.-W. Böckenförde, *Der säkularisierte Staat*, pp. 68 f.

⁵⁴ F. Weber, *Religiöse Symbole im öffentlichen Leben*, 2011, http://www.landeskirche-braunschweig.de/uploads/tx_mitdownload/Vortrag_Koenigslutter_06_11.pdf (accessed September 2014), p. 5. This rendering of neutrality also frames the 2011 decision by the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights on crosses in Italian schoolrooms, cf. R. Wiedemann, *Der Streit um das Schulkreuz in Deutschland und Italien* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2012), pp. 209, 300 f.

⁵⁵ K. Lehmann, „Das Kreuz als Herausforderung," (H. Maier, ed.cit.), (109-120), p. 111 f.

*religious freedom*⁵⁶ no longer merely accepts, as an inevitable evil, citizens' civil right to believe what Christians know to be wrong. Instead, that document adopts the "Copernican turn"⁵⁷ Protestants had initiated in welcoming the Weimar Republic's alleged liberation of the church from the state in 1919: Even Catholics now prioritize the authenticity attributed to a religious choice made in a manner that remained un-influenced by governmental bias over the right direction of that choice.⁵⁸ The endorsement of "psychological freedom" (*Vatican Council II*, # 2), moreover, confirms that very tendency to identify persuasion (or policy-supported nudging) with force,⁵⁹ which also undergirds Europe's disparagement of authority in Church and family today. Those mainline Christians thus no longer support social conditions which for centuries had powerfully supported believers' training in, and ability to preserve the integrity of, their faith.

To be sure, the *Declaration* still asserts a (religiously grounded) "moral" obligation to believe only what is true. But it derives the human right to believe wrongly from "human dignity." The document thus signals Catholics' willingness to engage the

⁵⁶ Vatican Council II, "Dignitatis Humanae," (N. Tanner (ed.), *Vatican II*, New York: Random House, 2012), pp. 299-318.

⁵⁷ K. Lehmann, „Probleme und Perspektiven des deutschen Staat-Kirche-Verhältnisses,“ (I. Dingel, C. Tietz (eds.), *Kirche und Staat in Deutschland, Frankreich und den USA*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2012), (139-158), p. 142 f.

⁵⁸ Thus the principle of the religious and world view neutrality of the state is now proclaimed as a Christian thing to affirm (Böckenförde, pp. 68 f) in the interest of Christian freedom itself.

⁵⁹ For a discussion of this contrast between traditional and post-traditional Christian conceptions of freedom and its political and social salience see C. Delkeskamp-Hayes, "Pluralism, tolerance, and Christian freedom: Cooperation between Church and state under Constantine the Great and in the European Union" (D. Vanca, M. Cherry, A. Albu (eds.), *Religion and Politics: The Church-state relationship from Constantine the Great to post-Maastricht Europe*, Alba Iulia: Reintregirea, 2013, pp. 63-80).

secular discourse in the terms imposed by that discourse. What might have been offered as a concession (and a painful one, given the misuse of freedom when pursued outside of Truth in Christ) was now affirmed as a good in itself. Freedom was now endorsed "even for those who fail to seek the truth." In the literature, this very endorsement could be interpreted as affirming human freedom "independently" (Böckenförde 2007, 20 f.) of religious orientation, and thus as supporting Protestants' already established acceptance of religious pluralism.

In offering their 'Christian' moral support for the secular state's own "basic values",⁶⁰ Vatican II Catholics failed to take their stand for Truth in Christ like the metaphorical "political men" of St. Valeriu (Moise, p. 229), who are ready to confront and eliminate the "freedom of evil" (Moise, p. 234). This is why mainline Christians in Europe today affirm, and even present as genuinely Christian (Böckenförde, pp. 68, 72, cf. also Laux, p. 239), a secular ethos that implicitly disparages as secular heresy any faithful honoring of martyrdom.

4.2 Christian Rejection of the Normative Impact of the Created Order

Many Christians in the West today no longer accept the Tradition's account of creation as heuristic for the Divine will. Preferring the autonomy of fallen man to the Divine offer of deifying love, they reject the traditional teaching about that will as confining.

These Christians endorse equal rights even within marriage.⁶¹ Woman's creation as "helper" for man (Gen. 2:18) and St. Paul's

⁶⁰ A. Liedhegener, *Plural und politisch. Der Katholizismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland seit 189/90*, JCSW 44 (2003), (53-72), p. 69.

⁶¹ *Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD) (ed.), Zwischen Autonomie und Angewiesenheit Familie als verlässliche Gemeinschaft stärken*, 2014, <http://www.ekd.de/EKD-Texte/orientierungshilfe->

ecclesiological model for marriage (1 Cor. 11:3) are discounted, as is Paul's teaching that wives are saved by raising faithful children (1 Tim. 2:15).⁶² While official Catholic teaching still affirms the ontological salience of sexuality, the purely moral focus of its opposition to disordered sexuality underemphasizes the liturgical relevance of chastity (cf. Rom. 12:1).⁶³ This is why most Catholics today join mainline Protestants in endorsing

familie/familie_als_verlaessliche_gemeinschaft.html (accessed September 2014). Even Catholic leaders who still affirmed women's role as wife and mother, demanded a mere "harmony" between that role and women's professional life, as for example in John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio, Apostolic Exhortation*, 1981, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio_en.html (accessed September 2014). Some years later that same pope considers the Divine injunction that woman is to "desire" for the man who will "rule" over her as contrary to human dignity, and he even speaks of "the rightful opposition of women" against the rule of their husbands (John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem, Apostolic Letter*, 1988, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_15081988_mulieris-dignitatem_en.html (accessed September 2014), # 10). Even the most faithful (and authoritative!) representatives of Christianity in the West have placed the Divine will into the procrustean alternative of "equal rights" and suppression, disregarding the third alternative of a specifically sex-differentiated Divine economy of grace, as as realized precisely through such desire and obedience within the authority structure of marriage.

⁶² As St. John Chrysostom makes clear ("Homilies on Timothy", (P. Schaff (ed.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 1st series, vol. 13, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1995, p. 436, (407-518), the point is not only that the woman herself continues in "faith and charity with holiness and sobriety", but that she imparts such virtues to her children. Women's praise thus concerns their having "trained up wrestlers for the service of Christ".

⁶³ For details about the theological dimension of human sexuality see C. Hayes, „Er schuf sie als Mann und Frau,“ (C. Hayes (ed.), *Mann und Frau. Aus Orthodoxer Sicht*, vol. 1, Straelen: Hagia Sophia, 2011), pp. 41-87.

disordered sexuality and non-traditional family models⁶⁴. To be sure, leading Catholic, even Protestant bodies in Germany still signal support for the petition issued by an evangelical Christian⁶⁵ in protest against the sexualized *Bildungsplan 2015* mentioned above. But their written support is compromised by their failing to invest further effort in the political resistance to which they are legally entitled, given their recognized educational authority.⁶⁶ Public protest from conservative Christians encounters a veritable media persecution by

⁶⁴ Cf. EKD 2013, pp. 13, 22, 46 ff, 54, 59 f, 66 ff, 130 ff, 147, and H. Langendörfer (ed.), *Die pastoralen Herausforderungen der Familie im Kontext der Evangelisierung*, 2014, http://www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/diverse_downloads/Dossiers_2012/2013-Vorbereitungsdokument-Bischofssynode.pdf (accessed September 2014), pp. 2, 4 f, 9, 13.

⁶⁵ G. Stängle, *Petition zum Bildungsplan: Kein Bildungsplan 2015 unter der Ideologie des Regenbogens*, 2013, <https://www.openpetition.de/petition/online/zukunft-verantwortung-lernen-kein-bildungsplan-2015-unter-der-ideologie-des-regenbogens> (accessed September 2014). A typical example for mainline Christian opposition to such traditional Christian protest, on the other hand, is the declaration of the Freiburg Diocese section of the Bund Deutscher Katholischer Jugend (Union of German Catholic Youth: BDKJ, *Respekt und Toleranz in der Schule stärken*, 2014, http://www.kja-freiburg.de/html/aktuell/aktuell_u.html?t=&tto=0e7c5f48&&cataktuell=&m=45959&artikel=29937&stichwort_aktuell=&default=true (accessed September 2014)): Here young people's insecurity in view of their sexual orientation and identity is claimed to call for support (not from parents and families but) from schools, where "un-prejudiced" information is available. Here as well the Christian vision of man is argued to be incompatible (not with a lack of discernment, but instead) with "exclusion and discrimination". Every human must be accepted and valued (not in view of his endowment with freedom that can however be abused, but) in view of his personal identity.

⁶⁶ Cf. Lecheler pp. 420 ff. The author concedes however that the Christian commitments which were theoretically endorsed by the various federal school laws in Germany are no longer practically implemented anyway (p. 430). He recognizes the consequences as "cultural revolution".

homosexual interest groups, condoned by the political authorities. The overwhelming majority of the mainline bishops either no longer supports the Christian teaching or shuns the burden of confessorship. They no longer hear Christ's call to martyrdom.

4.3 Christian Disregard of a Final Judgment

Many Christians in Europe today no longer either confess Christ's bodily resurrection or believe in an eternal life. Those who still do, adjust their expectations for self and others to their own views about the Divine goodness and mercy. Even Catholics tend to disconnect their celebration of 'communion' from confession and repentance. The very idea of hell (and of the evil power in charge of hell) is rejected as a remnant of repressive traditions.

Paradoxically, such advertised 'freedom from worries about eternity' relies on God's – as it were - forcing His eternal presence even on those who, while still on earth, freely refused the offer. Most Protestants, of course, claim to have accepted that offer by their mental (and publicly expressed) "yes." They expect that 'yes' to guarantee the 'justification' that secures their place in heaven. To be sure, their salvational self-assurance leaves room for, and even inspires, labors of taking responsibility for the world.⁶⁷ That same self-assurance however also underemphasizes any thought about accountability for one's continued personal sins. Stated regrets in view mankind's fallen state world remain limited to the unavoidably meagre political impact of Christians' combined efforts to make this world a better place. Europe's mainline Christians thus encourage what Saint Valeriu identified as the sin of placing "too much trust in the goodness of God and in this way not [to] fear judgment" (Moise, p. 316, cf. p. 152).

⁶⁷ T. Rendtorff, „Kirche und Staat,“ (O. Kallscheuer, ed.cit.), (141-160), p. 154.

Such careless trust is encouraged by a misguided piety that relegates God to an unreachable transcendence.⁶⁸ The very specific Divine Self-revelation in Christ, in the Prophets, and the Saints building up His Church, is here discounted.⁶⁹ The generally recognized academic Bible criticism encourages placing Christian accounts of such Self-revelation on a level with other mythologies. A plurality of equally legitimate religious approaches to that divine transcendence (Rendtorff 1996, p. 159) is thus affirmed. The profound opposition between true faith and idolatry, or of Orthodoxy and heterodoxy, even heresy, is replaced by the variety of allegedly complementary cultural perspectives. It is precisely this perspectivism which invites efforts at inter-denominational, even inter-religious penetration and assimilation, and which interprets efforts to preserve and protect the undistorted Christian witness to the Truth in Christ as a breach of peace, and martyrdom as a scandal.

To summarize: In claiming that their opinions represent the Christian faith, a great number of mainstream Christians in Europe in fact trivialize (or abuse) the name of Christ. They claim that the European Union's secular ethos rests on genuinely Christian commitments. To be sure, they will admit that these commitments must be reduced to a merely immanent level, in order to serve that function. Yet many have come to take such a reduction to present Christianity's own inherent *telos* (Böckenförde, pp., 68, and 72). By thus embracing that secular ethos, these self-termed Christians misguide those whom they should lead to salvation.

⁶⁸ M. Reder, *Religion in säkularer Gesellschaft* (Freiburg: Alber, 2013), pp. 409 ff.

⁶⁹ Unspecific revelations, leaving "god's freedom" intact, are conceded, but left strategically open for arbitrary interpretation (see e.g. EKD 1994, ## 5.1.2, 5.1.3, cf. also Laux (p. 153) about the "inherent ambiguity" of all Christian revelation).

5 Conclusion

The European Union welcomes religion because it enhances cultural diversity. Europe also imposes limits on religious freedom in order to protect that diversity: Believers must welcome the plurality of other faiths and non-faiths. Since the ruling Christianities comply with that condition, they are appreciated as a social resource. They are hoped to keep democratic liberalism from eroding its moral capital.⁷⁰ All the same, Europe's welcome of religion requires abstinence from a robust Christian witness. Believers are required to offer to "the emperor" a restraint (euphemized as "reflective consciousness") that muffles the confession they owe God.

None of this makes for outright betrayal. It just normalizes the temptation to fall short. Christian life, as envisaged by the Christian majority in Western Europe, has lost contact with the fullness of Eucharistic experience. Where that experience is still taken for real among Catholics, it has been separated from the fullness of ascetic self-offering that informs a truly Christian love. Outside of ascesis, there is no hope for turning from self to God. The Eucharistic offer of thanksgiving here no longer connects the union with Christ's body and blood with the call to die to one's fallen self by following Christ. As a result, the martyrs depicted under the altar of Christ's own priestly sacrifice (Rev. 6:9), whose sufferings proclaim His transcendent and yet eschatologically present Truth, are no longer taken seriously as guides and intercessors.

Orthodox Christians in the European Union are aware of the disguised hostility attending that Union's secular ethos and of the distracting influence of its mainline Christianities. In venerating the new martyrs who suffered and died, so that their own parents and brothers would not be lost (Geisler, pp. 60 ff.), East European newcomers to that Union find the needed

⁷⁰ J. Habermas, *Die Zukunft der menschlichen Natur: Auf dem Weg zu einer liberalen Eugenik?* (Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 2001), p. 50.

support. In refusing to pay the required respect to the idol of a God-forsaken human dignity, they will forego their 'interreligious welcome.' They will be challenged to offer the modest witness that comes with social exclusion and material sacrifice. "Christianity means bearing witness, searching, boldness, perseverance, work, struggle, self-sacrifice" (Moise, p. 231). Through such offering, so St. Valeriu reminds us (Moise, p. 246), we can follow those who protect the Church, and realize Eucharistic gratitude.

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