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Religious values in the European being

Introduction

With the fall of the Berlin wall, in 1989, the European community faced a challenge: as the opposition between socialist and liberal democracies vanished, with the fall of the socialist project, what could be the link between all European countries, including eastern countries? The Cold war, and the soviet threat, has been one of the most important motives to unify European countries in a political community. Do Europeans need a new threat (economical crisis, terrorism, uncontrolled immigration, revolutions on the Border States, etc.) to remain Europeans, to continue the building of a European identity?

Maybe a new project… Not a new political (or religious) adversary, but a cultural (in every sense of the word) link, something able to unite people and invent a new, a larger identity. It is the purpose of the policy introduced at the end of the Eighties, with the Charter of Fundamental Rights (and, in 1995, the European citizenship of the Maastricht treaty), to form what the German philosopher Jurgen Habermas call "a constitutional patriotism" at European scale. That project begs the question of religion, as a culture (religious views and values) or as something more transcendent, linked with sovereignty by tradition. Why ?

The building process of a European nation, even if it is recent, still depends on the ancient idea of nation, as a complex of common and cultural values shared by a determined group of people. As for the construction of the European identity, because the common background constituting the European community is linked, among other things, to religious practices, it is unquestionably rooted in religion. We can remember, here, that it is in a political treaty of 1458 that the future pope Pie II – the humanist cardinal Enea Silvio Piccolomini – sees Europe for the first time not as a simple geographical expression, but as an area of civilization, confronted to the risk of a complete collapse (and, consecutively, becoming conscious). The intimate relations between religion and politics profoundly affected the construction of the states in Europe, since the Middle-ages.

In order to guarantee individual rights to all citizens of a country, modern revolutions tried to separate state and religions, by providing secularism. My hypothesis is that the significant importance of religion for the Europeans, in History, however, made it impossible to establish a real secular state. European reality, despite formally being oriented towards secularism, comprehends religious differentiations. So the relations between religion and the construction of a federation of nation-states are problematic and, in addition, its relations with democracy raise issues of their own. So, again and again, the religious question is coming out… for example with the Turkish dilemma

The Turkish dilemma

The discussions, in France, Italy or Germany, in fact in all the Europeans countries and public opinions, about Turkey's application for membership of the EU are acute/sharp. The religious and cultural dimensions of the debate are of course predominant... a strange situation, for a state which claims his secular tendencies and traditions since 1924 and Ataturk. Turkey first submitted an application for membership of the EU back in the 1960s, but it was not until December 2004 that the EU Council made Turkey an official "candidate" by voting to begin formal accession negotiations. A long period, unusually long for the seventeenth power of the world...
And yet, for Europeans, the Turkish problem is a sharp one: hidden behind this candidacy (and his demographic danger), there is the question of the European borders and identity ...

and specifically a Christian identity, based on Christian roots. Is the Turkey a "European" country? There is a bunch of books, speeches, media coverage of the subject and they all ask the same question: is there any European identity, shared by 492 millions of Europeans and 27 states?

Of course, we all know why EU has been created, and what the background of the European integration was. The wars of the twentieth century have favoured the idea of a union between European states, in order to guarantee peace in the continent, and also the power and the democracy. After the second WW, it appeared to every government victorious or defeated, that only conciliation between old enemies could preserve peace. So, a group of countries fostered by the United States, finally unit themselves in a sort of confederation to become the European Union. That building is the conclusion of a European dream… only the conclusion. But it makes us wonder to know the real task dedicated to the European Union, and what kind of identity the European citizen can proclaim.

A political or a religious identity ?

The concept of European identity: the 1973 declaration

A first part of the answer has been expressed at the Copenhagen European Summit in December 1973, when the Heads of State or Government of the nine Member States of the enlarged European Community affirmed their determination to introduce the concept of European identity into their common foreign relations. The declaration was to achieve a better definition of the relations of Europeans with other countries and the place which they occupy in world affairs. The nine have decided to define the European Identity with the dynamic nature of European unification. This declaration must be mentioned here, because it will inspire my line of argument.
It begins by referring to the European history: *"The European States might have been pushed towards disunity by their history and by selfishly defending misjudged interests. But they have overcome their past enmities and have decided that unity is a basic European necessity to ensure the survival of the civilization which they share."*
This quotation is significant of the influence of the long story of the subcontinent, and the Nine are aware of that influence.
Secondly, the declaration distinguishes between national cultures and a hypothetical European culture/identity (a strange kind of cultural subsidiarity?) and underlines the diversity of cultures within the framework of a common European civilization. It underlines too the attachment to common values and principles, the convergence of attitudes to life, the awareness of having specific interests in common… all of these characteristics are making up the European identity.

This identity / common culture is based on a determination to build a society which measures up to the needs of the individual, to defend the principles of representative democracy, of the rule of law, of social justice — conceived as the ultimate goal of economic progress — and of respect for human rights. All of these are fundamental elements of the European Identity, or maybe, one of the deepest aspirations of European citizens (even if the European citizenship appears only in 1995, with the Maastricht treaty). And it is obviously the definition of democracy, that Alexis de Tocqueville, or the Enlightenments philosophers could have written.

So back to the European history, in order to understand how that political identity has been formed and how it became a real political culture. I will present a rapid history of the

European idea, and show the various models and ways of a European unity. If there is something common to all citizens, maybe it is a common history and a political agreement about the best way to build union.

Political identity or "Constitutional Europeanism" ?

The European idea is an old one, maybe an ancient one: the myth of Europe, told by the Greek poet Hesiod dates from the Greek antiquity. The idea of Europe as a political entity is a bit more recent and dates from the second century of our era: the Roman Empire is maybe the first European political structure, covering the whole of the Mediterranean basin. Then, in the year 800, Charlemagne becomes, with the help of Church, the new emperor of occidental Europe: exactly, the *Pater europae* (founding father of Europe)... The Carolingian empire, during the eight century, is, moreover, an attempt to revive the Roman Empire: a successful attempt. His reign will be short, but founder and remains in the memory of the Europeans as a second attempt of territorial and political unity, based on a political model – the empire – and a religious model – the Christianity. But in the XVIth century, the dream, made by the emperor Charles the Vth, to unify under his own rule the entire continent – and recreate a "roman like" empire – comes up against a lot of new obstacles, particularly the division / schism between Catholics and Protestants is ruining the religious unity and the power of the Church.
It is a crisis: a political crisis, a religious crisis, and the European idea is sinking, except when a Turkish invader try to conquer territories in the subcontinent. A fact we can underline. In the modern ages, as in the medieval ages, the only way to unite Europeans and stop internal wars is the call for crusade against Muslims (called "God peace")… The numerous battles and wars between Europeans and Ottomans – from Turkish Empire – defined, again and again, the borders of Christendom… which are, from now on, the borders of Europe !

But let's come back to the political question. The possibility of a real European empire, straighten by catholic faith is over: the other way to build Europe is the maintaining of peace. In fact, that is also an inheritance of the ancient "pax romana", the roman peace.
But from the seventeenth century, the theoreticians of a European unification are searching a new political and philosophical model, able to preserve the balance of powers, religions. Within those intellectuals, the lawyer Johannes Althusius (1557-1638) is the inventor of the principle of subsidiarity, the heart of the federal link. The principle of a European federation becomes – slightly – apparent. In the same way, in 1693,William Penn facing the devastation of war in Europe, is calling for a European parliament, to prevent further war, without defining how such an institution would fit in to the political reality of Europe at the time (we could notice that the European idea is more enduring in war times that in peace times). In 1713,a priest, Charles de Saint Pierre , proposed the creation of a European league of 18 sovereign states, with common treasury, no borders and an economic union. A project taken up by the philosophers of the Enlightenments: Montesquieu, the French philosopher and Immanuel Kant in 1795, with his proposal for an "eternal peace congress". Europe is divided between religion – as an identity – and federal peace – as a project.

The result – after centuries of conflicts – is that the federalist model wins... In the XIXth century, philosophers and politicians are all in favor of such solution. Moreover, we could consider that the Vienna congress – in 1815, which concludes the Napoleonic wars – is an attempt of a European cooperation between the powers: the so called "concert of nations" is organizing, in Europe, the first congress of all powers, to discuss of political and economical matters.

Europe as a political matter

The first XIXth century is rich in theoreticians of a European structure. Europe is becoming a political object, discussed in parliaments, in the academies, in the newspapers. The modernization of the political life, the development of the constitutions in the European countries during the revolutionary wave of 1848 - the year of "the spring of the peoples" – all those new political phenomenons favored the politicization of the Europeans… and a peaceful Europe, after the Napoleonic wars, is a good goal for political debates.

The European project will, however, benefit of the war, the first one, the great one: the catastrophe of the Great War offers the proof, for a lot of Europeans intellectuals, that Europe must be more than a political utopia, a banality for the speeches of congresses. Paul Valéry, a major French thinker, says, for example*: "We later civilizations . . . we too know that we are mortal."* (*Crisis of the mind*, 1919). In the same text, he gives us a fine summary of the European mind after that war : " *And in the same disorder of mind, at the summons of the same anguish, all cultivated Europe underwent the rapid revival of her innumerable ways of thought: dogmas, philosophies, heterogeneous ideals; the three hundred ways of explaining the World, the thousand and one versions of Christianity, the two dozen kinds of positivism; the whole spectrum of intellectual light spread out its incompatible colours, illuminating with a strange and contradictory glow the death agony of the European soul. While inventors were feverishly searching their imaginations and the annals of former wars for the means of doing away with barbed wire, of outwitting submarines or paralyzing the flight of airplanes, her soul was intoning at the same time all the incantations it ever knew, and giving serious consideration to the most bizarre prophecies; she sought refuge, guidance, consolation throughout the whole register of her memories, past acts, and ancestral attitudes. Such are the known effects of anxiety, the disordered behaviour of mind fleeing from reality to nightmare and from nightmare back to reality, terrified, like a rat caught in a trap. . . .".* In a second letter, Valery summarized the fears of all the Europeans: "*But can the European Mind -- or at least its most precious content -- be totally diffused? Must such phenomena as democracy, the exploitation of the globe, and the general spread of technology, all of which presage a* deminutio capitis *(loss of influence) for Europe...must these be taken as absolute decisions of fate? Or have we some freedom* against *this threatening conspiracy of things?"*

The second part of the XXth century is the time of the founding fathers: the political values of EU are already defined. The time of the construction is coming. From 1945, we could say that the genetic code of Europe is ready, and that it is a democratic one: as the Copenhagen summit said, the identity of EU is a set of values, built by a long history, and centuries of disasters and wars. In the same way, the French historian Pierre Nora noticed, in an article dedicated on the memory places of EU, that "*the idea of a European decline, the WW and the struggle against authoritarianism are the real matrix of European identity*".

The question of the Christian roots

European reality, despite formally being oriented towards secularism, comprehends religious differentiations. So the relations between religion and the construction of a federation of nation-states are problematic and, in addition, its relations with democracy raise issues of their own.

This question is far more difficult: there is not a consensus between Europeans about this subject. In a first time, I will use history, not to answer, but to propose a point of view.

The Christian roots are there really an historical question?

Church has played a role in the birth of the European idea, and, until the XIXth century, Europe, as a territory, is linked with Christendom. From the Christianization of the Roman Empire, under the reign of Emperor Constantine (321) to the destruction of the Holy Roman Empire by Napoleon in 1803, the religion plays a major role in the European institutions, preserving the legal heritage of the Roman Empire, inspiring humanism and guaranteeing royal sovereignty with rituals (the absolute monarchy, later theorized by Bodin and Hobbes). The international laws are born in an ecclesiastical framework, with the Spanish school of international law (Vitoria, Suarez…). Even when Europeans are split into Catholics and Protestants, and suffered religion wars, the conscience of being citizens of Christendom, confronted to the Ottoman Empire (Turkey at present) is real. In fact, the religious question inspired – with the Westphalia treaty of 1648 – the first attempt to create a European community of states. As the German author Goethe said once, "*Europe was born in a pilgrimage, and Christianity is its mother language.*" Undeniably, Christian roots are a historical reality… but not the only one, and the European civilization has much more roots.

On this last point, the European (or not) historians are all agree. For the great historian Paul Veyne, specialist of the Roman Empire, the present Europe is democratic, secular, liberal, in favour of feminism, sexual freedom, socialism… some values which are far away from Catholicism… The Christian ethics is a forgotten legacy, and maybe the other roots of Europe could be the philosophy of Kant and Spinoza, the Enlightenments and the French Revolution… If there are Christian roots, it is among a lot of other sources: in the story of a civilization, religion is a consideration among powers, institutions, traditions and its influence on the European way of life is limited.
The historian and Israeli diplomat Eli Barnavi is also convinced that Christian roots are a reality, that Christianity is one of the bedrocks of Europe… not the only one. And in an interview (January 2006), he also noticed that the fact that Europe has Christian roots doesn't mean that Europe must remain Christian…

From another point of view, the expression "Christian roots" could refer to the political background of the Founding fathers. We notice that a lot of European project, developed by campaigners as Coudenhove Kalergi, are based on a christian vision of Europe, as Christendom (as it is claimed during the first Pan-European congress, held in Vienna in 1926). More significant, the founding fathers of EU –Alcide de Gasperri, Robert Schumann, Conrad Adenauer, Paul van Zeeland… - belong to the Christian democrat party… and their political opponents call them – and their projects - the "pontifical Europe". Robert Schumann, French foreign minister and the father of the CECA, said, for example: "*All the European countries have been mould by the Christian civilization: this is the soul of Europe we have to revive… the Gospel is the matrix of the culture and institutions in Europe*".

We should also notice the role of the Holy See, from the end of the XIXth century and the encyclicals *Inter sollicitudinis*, *Rerum Novarum*, which recognized some political and social aspects of modernity. More relevant, the international strategy of the Holy See at the end of 2nd WW consists in defending systematically the Christian civilization against communism. The Church accepts the federal idea for Europe. And in 1948, pope Pie XII sent a representative off to the European Congress of La Haye : the members of the Catholic Church keep up the project of European integration for economical, political and military reasons. For Pie XII, the danger is the growing expansion of communism. The Christian Democrat are also

convinced that only a united Europe, supported by America, could resist to the soviet ambitions.

Even the symbol of EU refers to religion and Christian roots: the flag, blue with a golden crown of 12 stars, created in 1986, could refer to an element of the Christian symbolic, the crown of the Blessed Virgin, and the blue colour could also refer to the colour of the coat of the same Blessed Virgin… a slight sign of the Democrat-Christian origin of the founding fathers. And in the late 60's, the Council of Europe had to find a European day… among the 3 propositions, there was the Saint Benedict Day (11th of July) because Benedict had been nominated by the pope Pie XI as "father and patron saint" of Europe.

Is it a political question or an institutional one ?

The question of the religious views, in the European institutions has been dealt rather belatedly. The question emerged at the end of the Eighties, with the fall of the Berlin wall, and, consecutively, the question of enlargement of the European community towards East. The dialogue with religions is a part of the answer and at the end of the Eighties; the question of the enlargement of the European Community presupposed an exchange of ideas about the implications of the European project and, by this way, a regular dialogue with churches. The Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) was the first European treaty to deal with the status of churches, providing that "*the European Union respects and does not prejudice the status under national law of churches and religious associations or communities in the Member States*".

Then the *White paper on European governance* (in July 2001), a draft for the European Council, brought up the contribution of the churches in the domain of governance. Third, on 7 December 2001 the Charter of Fundamental Rights was proclaimed at the Nice European Council. Article 10 on freedom of thought, conscience and religion says "*Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right includes freedom to change religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or in private, to manifest religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance*".

Finally, the Treaty of Lisbon explicitly introduces the idea of a Dialogue between European institutions and religions, churches and communities of conviction (Article 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union).

1.   *"The Union respects and does not prejudice the status under national law of churches and religious associations or communities in the Member States.*

2.   *The Union equally respects the status under national law of philosophical and non-confessional organizations.*

3.   *Recognizing their identity and their specific contribution, the Union shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with these churches and organizations".*

All these steps are important, in the debates, and the drafting of the Constitutional Treaty of the European Union. It shows that the real question is not an historical one: probably it is a political question, raised during the debates about the Constitutional Treaty in 2004.

On 15 December 2001, the European Council, meeting in Laeken, decided to convoke a Convention on the Future of Europe, which decided in turn to draft a constitutional treaty. After undergoing some amendments following the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC), the

Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe was adopted by the European Council in Rome on 29 October 2004.

But one of the most discussed texts was the preamble. In 2003, the drafting of the preamble of the Constitutional project provoked very sharp discussions in Europe. The problem was to claim, or not, Christian roots in that preamble.

Why not ?

The opponents are hostile to a mention that shows an influence and can drive the European Union to a close relation with Church… The accusation of "clericalism" – the political power exerted by Church – has been evoked. My theory is that the preamble is not the very heart of the problem… because the same discussion has occurred for the first time in the drafting of the preamble of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Nice, 7 December 2000), and the solution, adopted by the commission, was a very neutral formulation :

Conscious of its spiritual and moral heritage, the Union is founded on the indivisible, universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity; it is based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law.

So the problem is elsewhere, probably in a re-emergent anticlericalism. Because the project of Constitution concerns a major aspect of the Union: the separation between religious and political fields. This is the really problem, hidden behind the question of the Christian roots. For the opponents and for the Church itself, the article 1-51, paragraph 3, the status of the Churches can lead to collaboration, even a form of influence of the Church in the European affairs (and legislation)

Recognising their identity and their specific contribution, the Union shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with these churches and organizations.

That paragraph had been probably misinterpreted in June 2002 by the COMECE (Commission of the episcopacies of the European Union) as an agreement, a promise of cooperation between the European commission and the COMECE. An interpretation taken up again by Pope John Paul II in *Ecclesia in Europa* (2003)

In carrying out their functions the various national and European institutions should act in the awareness that their juridical systems will be fully respectful of democracy, if they provide for forms of "healthy cooperation" with Churches and religious organizations.

For the opponents, in the tradition of Spinoza, the European Union has to preserve its neutrality towards the spiritual convictions and involvements. This neutrality is a guarantee of religious freedom. In this discussion, the comparison with the specific status of the Holy See at the UNO, a status denounced and criticized by some countries, played a sharp role. And the claim, from the Holy See, to be involved in the elaboration of the European law, is – at least – clumsy, and questionable.

So why?

For the supporters of Christian roots, it was originally the recognizing of a major, predominant influence on history, culture and habits. John Paul II –a "son of Poland» as he used to introduce him – and Benedict XVI – a son of Germany" as he introduced him later – are two deep supporters of European Union.

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In his apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa* (2003), one of the major pontifical texts about Europe, pope John Paul II talk about a "spiritual vocation" of Europe:

"There can be no doubt that the Christian faith belongs, in a radical and decisive way, to the foundations of European culture. Christianity in fact has shaped Europe, impressing upon it certain basic values. Modern Europe itself, which has given the democratic ideal and human rights to the world, draws its values from its Christian heritage. More than a geographical area, Europe can be described as "a primarily cultural and historical concept, which denotes a reality born as a continent thanks also to the unifying force of Christianity, which has been capable of integrating peoples and cultures among themselves, and which is intimately linked to the whole of European culture".

This claim accompany a real European program: after noticing that with the enlargement of Europe, the European union seems to suffer from a profound crisis of values, John Paul II suggest to give new impetus to Europe's history, by putting into practice the ecclesiastical principles of subsidiarity and solidarity. But for that result,

"Europe must "recognize and reclaim with creative fidelity those fundamental values, acquired through a decisive contribution of Christianity, which can be summarized in the affirmation of the transcendent dignity of the human person, the value of reason, freedom, democracy, the constitutional state and the distinction between political life and religion"

And as a conclusion for this real European prayer, John Paul II gives his own vision of the European Union, a spiritual and political vision:

In the process of the continent's integration, it is of capital importance to remember that the union will lack substance if it is reduced to its merely geographic and economic dimensions; rather, it must consist above all in an agreement about the values which must find expression in its law and in its life.

(And also : *This dialogue should aim at building a Europe seen as a community of peoples and individuals, a community joined together in hope, not exclusively subject to the law of the marketplace but resolutely determined to safeguard the dignity of the human person also in social and economic relations*.)

This is a direct reference to an old text written some months before the Maastricht Treaty (1992) that shows us that the Holy See fells itself constantly involved in the European integration, despite the fact it is not a part of the European Union.

"*In a Europe which is proceeding towards political unity can we accept that the very Church of Christ is a factor of division and discord?*" (Homily at the Ecumenical Celebration for the First Special Assembly for Europe of the Synod of Bishops on 7 December 1991).

In the debate, the Holy See has increased the number of speeches, rituals, books to defend the claiming of Christian roots. A real political campaign… The campaign started in 2001, with a common declaration, in Athens in may 2001, at the Areopagus from pope John Paul II and and Christodoulos, Archbishop of Athens and All Greece. A common declaration of the orthodox and catholic authorities is a rare event, supposed to strike the public opinion of Europe.

"We rejoice at the success and progress of the European Union. The union of the European world in one civil entity, without her people losing their national self-awareness, traditions and identity, has been the vision of its pioneers. However, the emerging tendency to transform certain European countries into secular states without any reference to religion constitutes a retraction and a denial of their spiritual legacy. We are called to intensify our efforts so that the unification of Europe may be accomplished. We shall do everything in our power, so that the Christian roots of Europe and its Christian soul may be preserved inviolate."

In the same way, a symposium on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of *Pacem in Terris*, one of the major papers of the 2nd council of the Vatican organised by the Spanish Episcopal Conference was held in Madrid on the 20th of November 2003. Peace, human rights, and European identity were some of the main themes of the congress. Cardinal Paul Poupard spoke about the Christian Roots of Europe, and explained why the future European Constitution should make explicit reference to these roots. *"I do not believe in the future of a Europe that abandons Christ and tries to go it alone"*.

Among a lot of speeches referring to Christian roots, I will present you some of then : For example, a letter to cardinal Schönborn, archbishop of Vienna, on the occasion of the day of Central European Catholics in 2003, where John Paul II said :

"The common journey towards the future will be all the easier once Europeans remember their Christian roots and in them find the parameters for their social and political action. Europe urgently needs to recover its Christian identity and live it anew; only then will it be able to communicate to the world the values on which peace among peoples, social justice and international solidarity are founded."

The reference to Christian Democrat at first, then to a Christian identity – a word which is stronger than "roots", and a bit exclusive, is interesting for us. It shows the way the Holy See interpret the challenges of the Christian roots, even the proper notion of "roots". We could also quote the Angelus, for example the Angelus of October 2003 :

For her part, the Catholic Church is convinced that the Gospel of Christ, which has been a unifying element of the European peoples for many centuries should be and continue to be today too an inexhaustible source of spirituality and fraternity. Taking note of this is for the benefit of all, and an explicit recognition of the Christian roots of Europe in the Treaty represents the principle guarantee for the continent's future.

Another great pontifical text about the question of the Christian roots is the conference of the cardinal Martino, from the pontifical council "Justice and Peace", in January 2003, about the European values. Taking up the ideas of John Paul II, the cardinal Martino put the emphasis on the role of the Christianity of the founding fathers (Robert Schumann, Konrad Adenauer, Alcide De Gasperi), quoting a papal letter to the bishops (6 January, 1984). But this text is more interesting for us, because, in the same time, card. Martino is enquiring about the status of the Church in the new constitution… Maybe the defence of the Christian roots could be – from the pontifical point of view – also the sign of a special fear of the secularist tendencies in Europe… and not only a claim to play a larger role in the European works..
This is also the opinion of Benedict XVI… and a tradition in pontifical diplomacy:

Likewise, peace is rooted in respect for religious freedom, which is a fundamental and primordial aspect of the freedom of conscience of individuals and of the freedom of peoples. (Address to new ambassadors, 18 may 2006)

Conclusion

Finally, the project has not been drafted in the specific sense of the Christian roots:

"Drawing inspiration from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe, from which have developed the universal values of the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law…"

And in May 2005, the French citizens reject the project by 55% of No to the constitutional referendum. A brutal conclusion for the discussion, which does not re-emerge in the drafting of the Lisbon treaty, signed the 13th December of 2007.

But ironically, it remains a political discussion: in France for example, President Sarkozy is in favor of these Christian roots, and in a speech in Germany, in December 2008, he considered that the withdrawal of this mention from the constitutional project was an error and a denial. But his predecessor, president Chirac, was opposed to the Christian roots…

There is, here, a duel between two memories and histories, two visions of the European Union… as Benedict XVI has understood :

Benedict XVI and the Christian roots: Europe as a modern Christendom

Pope Benedict XVI has also largely developed the question: more than his predecessor, he is a European, convinced that the Church has a role to play. For example, his speech in the Clementine Hall of the Vatican, the 26th January of 2006, evokes a "spiritual heritage" and the necessity, for Europeans, to rediscover their Christian roots.

His particular connection with the European history (as John Paul II, he lived, children, in a dictatorship and, like a majority of his German fellow citizens, he has a guilty conscience about the history of his country) explain his specific vision of Europe. In his proper texts, he calls for a purification of the memory (as John Paul II called for a purification of the hearts) prior to a real European Union.

For my part, I come from a Country where peace and brotherhood are treasured by all the inhabitants, especially those who, like myself, lived through the war and the separation of brothers and sisters belonging to the same Nation because of destructive and inhuman ideologies that, beneath a mask of dreams and illusions, burdened men and women with the heavy yoke of oppression. Thus, you will understand that I am particularly sensitive to dialogue between all human beings in order to overcome every kind of conflict and tension and to make our earth an earth of peace and brotherhood.. (Discours aux membres du corps diplomatique 12 mai 2005)

In the question of the Turkish candidacy to European Union, Benedict XVI has also a specific position (a moderate opposition) and we could conceive that in the papal conception, the European Union, as a Christian community, is called for the propagation of values and for the dialogue with others religious traditions (a cautious ecumenicalism…).

 necessary dialogue between cultures and religions. Indeed, the history of the Old Continent,

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In our uncertain and troubled world, Europe can become a witness and messenger of the deeply marked by divisions and fratricidal wars but also by its efforts to overcome them, invites it to carry out this mission as a response to the expectations of so many men and women in many countries of the world who are still aspiring to development, democracy and religious freedom. (Address to the new ambassador of Bulgaria, 13 may 2006)

In this conception, European Union is, in the same way, a modern Christendom and a link, with Arab world… The third way ?