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**The religious exceptionality of Europe**

In the European democracies of Western Europe new developments in the relations between religions and societies, between God and Caesar, are now under way in an unprecedented fashion in mankind’s history. This will be my essential purpose before you today. In that domain, too, to put it with a slightly ironical play on words, Europe can be considered as being “in a terrible state”. In contrast with the situation in the United States or that of the Islamic countries, the Europe of the founding countries follows her own way and keeps apart. The authors who dissect her with a sharp scalpel readily speak of her “exceptionality”. The borders between public space and private sanctuary are being drawn afresh. Religious freedom is more emphatically recognized as one of the Rights of Man in western countries but at the same time, political authorities drive it back towards the private sphere with sometimes the explicit or implicit connivance of the believers themselves. A number of studies try to grasp the evolutions now under way and to sketch out a possible future. The Gospel maxim “Render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s” (Mt 22, 21) is susceptible of many interpretations and assumed, by the way, various forms in history. It presupposes a proper consistency to Caesar, a specific political field and at the same time the refusal to lock up God in the sole intimacy of the hearts, since he is celebrated in the Christian liturgy and dogmatics as the Lord of events, the Sovereign of all, the source and end of the whole history of mankind.

In Eastern Europe, the Caesars who had been supporting a form of a religious Marxist-Leninist doctrine were compelled into the background under the pressure of the 1989 events. Politics everywhere recovered its rights. But by definition a monolithic regime of a Leninist type did not prepare successors able to live up to the demands of democratic life. And the religions also have been weakened after the long ordeal they have just gone through. The Orthodox churches are beginning in their turn to be shaken by the pressure of a conquering individualism and the ascent of a new type of secularization (b). Everywhere too sectarian bodies try to infiltrate churches and compel recognition. Running counter to the present trends, they claim to be in favour of framing everybody’s life through collective practices and rites, through simple and clear-cut assertions of the principle of authority of which “gurus” claim themselves to be the officially recognized possessors. As an answer to unfulfilled cravings for fraternity in the ambient individualism they mean to fill up the gap of unrecognized or frustrated expectations brought about by a speedy modernization and the entry into globalization. Our hypothesis is that on that ground the countries of Eastern Europe follow the same path as their western counterparts, but with a time-lag more marked for Poland and Slovakia, but a similar one for the Czech Republic.

Europe, it must be recognized at once, is a diverse and complex continent, including on the religious plane.(1) In the relationships between religions, civil societies and states, the evolutions are, moreover, of necessity linked to history and cultural traditions.

*As a consequence of the principle* cuius regio, eius religio, *there resulted a territorialisation of religious belonging which fashioned the denominational geography of Europe. It ushered in various forms of national (or regional) religion, in which politics and religion were as a matter of fact closely associated and in which the recognition of religious pluralism, in one and the same territory, was from the start a political issue (2).*

Modern politics had to confront itself everywhere to a pre-existing religious reality (a). Heine said that religion was a “portable homeland”. That became obvious with the conflagration that broke out in the Balkans and the claims expressed over and over again of a Croatian, Serb and Muslim specificity in Bosnia and from then on in Kosovo and Albania. Particular religious cultures enter into the composition of regional or national identities, even when they are secularised.

**A rapid secularisation** (b)

In this pluralistic universe, historically fashioned by religions, the ancient figures are fading away. René Rémond (e) describes the movement of secularization in Western Europe (3) in the way Alexis de Tocqueville in the 19th ct. described the movement of democracy: a stream carrying away everything in its flood and bursting one by one the dams that were to contain it. We from now on live in a universe in which a certain rationality has broadened out in its sway over the whole sum of the productions of man in society: economic organization, political sphere, social action, transmission of the whole range of knowledge through education, culture and morals. The movement went through three essential stages. The liberal age of secularization wound up into a disengagement from the denominational State to the benefit of a neutral State, henceforth freed from any kind of religious belonging. Great Britain, Sweden and Denmark have not on this point gone as far as their neighbours. The Queen of England is still at the head of the Anglican Church. After this separation of State and Church came another stage: that of “disestablishment” (b).

The law of a now pluralistic State is to stand aloof from Christian morality, especially as regards the status of persons and the institution of marriage: divorce, civil marriage, abortion, new rights won over by homosexuals, new patterns of alliance and affiliation, soon the access to euthanasia and possibly to-morrow reproductive cloning…The liberalisation of divorce, under way for over a century, is the most revealing symbol of that trend. It makes manifest a dissociation between the moral principles taught by the Churches and personal types of conduct. The latter are egged on to emancipate themselves from the judgment of the ecclesiastical institution, and with the PACS (d), from a global outlook of the family held by the State. The dissociation between institutions and individual types of conduct was initiated with the progressive legalization of divorce. “Endorsed today by the quasi majority of the European States – only Malta today conforms its legislation to the teaching of the Catholic Church - it had opened a breach which has been broadening out ever since”. To designate this dislocating phenomenon, the former Archbishop of Canterbury even coined a striking formula, marked with a touch of British humour when he spoke of “a logic of privatization (b) of the ten commandments” (4)!

While the former institutional frameworks are undergoing alterations everywhere, Greece has long been the only member of the European Union to maintain the mention of religion on identity cards, thus following the practice of Saudi Arabia. But contrary to the latter country, the former has been the object of recourse by national members to European legislations and the Greek government is gradually aligning itself with other member countries, thereby bringing upon itself the wrath of the representatives of the Orthodox Church, edgy as regards her age-old privileges.

We are now in a third stage of religious (a) estrangement. After the “intrusive” secularisation (b) that essentially bears upon mores, there emerges a kind of secularisation of the whole social fabric which aims at preventing any encroachment of religion on the public sphere. No doubt however a more radical age now belongs to the past of European history, that of the triumph of the Nazi or Leninist regimes. The latter meant to implement a real uprooting of religion in accordance with a totalitarian conception. That promethean enterprise is now behind us. So long as it keeps alive in the memory of the Churches and the politicians, there subsists a kind of safety catch against a new limitless drift, incompatible with a pluralistic democracy. Politics to-day has shed its ideological garb towards the religious phenomenon and is no longer seen as a new religion of secular salvation.

**A progressive marginalisation**

The phenomena we have just been describing have each and all a common feature: the political determination to recover from the Church her sway over society. But to be complete, the picture must include another aspect. It should be called “de-religionisation” (b), an ugly but revealing term. It is no longer the result of a separation of religion from society, as willed by politics, but the progressive marginalisation of religion in modern society. One must read here “the consequence – as well as the index- of a growing indifference towards the religious factor which unresponsively records the regress of its presence and the vanishing of the signs which manifested its presence in society” (5). The time of secular life, for instance, is no longer scanned by the regular recurrence of the cycle of religious festivals, so constitutive of rural Catholicism; the liturgical calendar is no longer adhered to by a whole society; school rhythms are henceforth disconnected from that symbolic pattern, now ascribed to the private sphere of worship: the week’s rhythms with an ever increasing disappearance of a time reserved to the catechizing of children, school holidays so determined as to fit imperatives other than religious, the respect of a workless Sunday gradually eroded to suit trade interests and imperatives dictated by the legislator in compliance with the demands of King Consumer…

Religion thus loses some of its former hold on social activities and public forms of behaviour. It more and more feebly inspires collective beliefs and the values common to any society are deviating from it. In France, for a whole time, the surge of Halloween in replacement of All Saints was a notable instance of this, rapidly propagated as it was through the influence of American fashions and the publicity campaigns of the major chain stores. It is also in accordance with that logic that the French heads of government asked the drafters of the European Chart to erase any religious reference from the preamble: “Europe’s cultural, humanist and religious heritage” has been replaced by a vaguer allusion to a Europe “conscious of her spiritual and moral patrimony”.

How also not to notice that “collective beliefs” are themselves less collective than they used to be? Islam, nearly totally absent from the religious convictions of the Europe of the Six in the nineteen fifties, has become half a century later the second religion of many countries in the western part of the Union.

**Benedict XVI’s questioning**

“I wanted to take the name of Benedict XVI”, proclaimed John Paul II’s successor during his first general audience on April 27th 2005. The name he chose refers back to that of Benedict XV, his predecessor at the outset of the 20th century. Benedict XV was plunged into the turmoil of the First World War. He was fiercely contested by the yet very Christian nations involved in the conflict, which did not care at all to know his efforts to end a conflict that was bleeding their peoples. The logic of warfare sought to stifle his voice.

Today, with Benedict XVI as sovereign pontiff, this Europe is at peace, but it is hardly so with those who beg her hospitality. It is in permanent conflict with those newcomers that knock at her door and whose entrance she tries to prevent, at the risk of being unfaithful to her tradition of hospitality and adherence to human rights in favour of any person, whatever his/her sex, colour, religion or country of origin. Besides, as a consequence of the assaults of terrorism organized on a planetary scale and become manifest in 2001, Islam is more than ever suspected to connive with Islamism and is therefore repudiated by a large majority of western public opinions and their leaders.

Religions are henceforward in the grip of an identitarian itch (d). Christianity is possibly the least affected, for the time being, by that phenomenon, to the notable exception of the Evangelical and Pentecostal currents. Europe is becoming relativist in every field but the 15 million Europeans who profess the Muslim religion claim themselves to be more conscious of their religious belonging. According to a recent survey, religious practice has been on the ascent among Muslims since September 2001. Attendance in the mosques would have increased by 50% since that date. (7)

Benedict XVI seems to be conscious of the discrepancy among Europeans between their cultural belonging and their low religious practice. Ever since the beginning of his pontificate, more than his predecessor, he has shown his preoccupation with the existing fractures within European Christianity. He is not unaware of the new category, clearly present in all countries of the continent, in which can be brought together the people that stand at a distance from religions but are in quest of a meaning in their lives, all those who endeavour to live up to a spirituality “out of all frontiers”. These men and women actually correspond to the “men of good will” dear to the social encyclical letters, or to those whom the *Gloria* of dominical liturgies calls “the men beloved of God”. Having realized the present rifts, Benedict XVI confesses to be conscious that “the outer deserts multiply in our world because the inner deserts have grown very large” (8). In that same homily delivered at his inaugural Mass, the pope therefore speaks on behalf of “that part of today’s mankind who, perturbed by uncertainties and fears, ponder over their future”. Soon after that he adds: “Fully conscious of that, I address myself to all, including the disciples of other religions and those who simply look for an answer to the fundamental questions of existence and have not found it”(9). Those non-religious people finally belong to an existential category open to the issues posed to their conscience by the course of their lives in a world where the individual has become the sole sovereign of a universe perturbed by the speed of changes and the broadening out of horizons.

When the Catholic Church sees herself as working for “the unity of mankind” as Vatican II claimed and as it suddenly dawned on the minds of the crowds at the time of John Paul II’s funeral, it is convenient to find room not only for the “religious” (b), but for those, more numerous in Europe than on other continents, who cannot adhere to the present day message of the Churches.

**A deferred judgment**

Such being the developments, religions find themselves everywhere in a state of reorganization but they are not in the throes of death; they are everywhere in search of new identities, especially in Europe (10). Scientifically to begin with, they have gone out of the insulated (d) sphere in which they were confined. The religious phenomenon is the object of high quality works which have nothing to do with pious books or apologetic treatises. It is hunted down in surveys and quantitative analyses. It is set to the question by sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists. As a matter of fact, everybody intuitively realizes that religion yields more data on man and his evolutions than do specialized and documented treatises from other spheres.

As regards Europe, the report remains ambiguous, because one witnesses at the same time a dilution and a reconstruction of religion. As for Western Europe, the question has been over several decades to know whether the Christian Churches were not stricken with degeneration and whether, by slow stages, religion was not to be shed by its adepts as one sheds a suit that corresponds to a former figure and is no longer fit for wearing. What with the relentless thrusts of secularization (b) and thanks to the progress of sciences and technology, individualism was triumphing with the complicity of an omnipresent reason. For one who spoke of irresistible progress, the past seemed to be vanishing and the present just a transition towards a future relieved of all religious burdens. Such was the belief in the years that followed the victory of 1945 and the three decades of economic development and general rise in living standards. Religion seemed to lead mankind to the exit door of religion.

But forms of resistance soon became manifest and new forms of belief cropped up; especially in the Balkans and in the Eastern countries freshly freed from communism, in the new requests of Orthodoxy, in French Jewish communities. And in a scattered way in Western Europe, identities that were believed to be dead and gone have surfaced again. On the other hand, the Muslim religion has gradually become established among nations and is characterized by gestures, rituals that affirm themselves in the public space and question the previous dividing lines between private and public spheres, between individuals scattered over the social field and collective gatherings for prayer, a demonstration or an act of cult. It jars with a secular approach thought to be inseparable from social life. Beyond the present juxtaposition of dissolutions and reconstructions of religious phenomena, we are witnessing a degeneration of religion on grounds where it used to be thriving; in the meantime a flourishing market is getting organized in which in well-stocked supermarkets, one can buy and sell an “affordable believable” made out of a prefabricated “religious” (a) and in accordance with a tinkering about of religious practices, with accessories and directions for use.

To take up a phrase from Michel de Certeau (e), it all looks as though the elements of the European religious constellation “were going out of their orbits”. On the one hand, a demolishing and scattering of the beliefs has become manifest and on the other hand, the traditional and institutional regulation is at pains to ensure its grip on a reality which largely evades its control. Grace Davie (e), for instance, readily speaks for the British of a still lively religion, but disconnected from the institutions which are supposed to support and organize it. She therefore speaks of a *believing without belonging* which is vastly predominant in Europe, prevails in Britain, subsides in Scotland and is hardly ever relevant for Ireland or Ulster. As for the Danes – and the Scandinavians in their wake - they more readily accept the reality of institutional belonging to official Churches, but scarcely care for the consequences upon their private lives. The framework lives on but the beliefs empty of their former substance. It looks as if the European masses meant to make the established (b) Churches pay for their former authoritarianism and determination in imposing themselves as the guides of consciences in everyday life.

**A European “exceptionality”**

It must be added that the sociologists of religion contrast a “European exceptionality” with the rest of the world, especially the United States. Because of its history, European society is more “secular” (b) and anticlerical than its American “daughter”. For the Catholics the American percentage of religious practice is nearing 40 %; those of Europe on the contrary fluctuate between 10 and 25 %, with the exception of Ireland where they are still close to the American figures. In western Europe again, Calvinists and Lutherans, Jews and Anglicans have a scale of practice more and more on the wane in comparison with that of Catholics, whereas the United States do not know of such gaps between denominations. As says, with a touch of humour, David Martin (e), one of the high priests of secularization (b): “The chief danger facing a European religion probably lies in its established character.”

Indeed, according to Jean-Paul Willaime (e), Europe, in her turn, in order to ensure her coherence, calls for the support of the Churches; but the task is uneasy, because the religious Europe of the European nations cannot be superimposed on the religious conscience of European individuals. On the one hand the concern to tighten up belongings; on the other hand the need for many to do the gathering of their beliefs on their own. The relationships Churches-State cannot thrive while ignoring the presence of those civil (b) societies made up of individual citizens with pretty much diversified religious identity cards. Even on religious grounds Europe is first and foremost the product of a complex history in which the thirst for permanent autonomy and cultural requirements are highly valued. It is at once a respect of traditions, that is “authorization of a memory”, and utopian invention of a model, distant from the religious (a), which has yet to be born in History.

**Marcel Gauchet’s (e) considerations**

In our time, tensions between God and Caesar in European democracies, even secularized ones, are far from disappearing and are preparing a still unheard-of future. In a brilliant book which made quite a stir Marcel Gauchet presents Christianity, the matrix-religion of western peoples, as “the religion of the exit of religion” (10). His work hinges round a twofold thesis which he introduces in the very first pages:

*I think that behind the Churches that go on living and faith that subsists, the living trajectory of the religious within our world has essentially come to an end; and that the radical originality of the modern West wholly consists in reincorporating at the heart of the bond and activity of men the sacral element which has for ever modelled them from the outside. If there be the end of religion, it is not to be judged by the decline of belief but by the recombining of the social-human universe, not only outside religion but from and contrary to its original religious logic.*

In yesterday’s societies religion was an integral part of the global functioning. The “exit from religion” which is supposed to characterize our time is to be understood as the passage to a world in which religions go on existing but are no longer able to determine the political form and collective order of a democratic society. The passage is from a religion giving structure to a majority of people to religions chosen by individuals and minority groups, thus finding an identity of their own which is not necessarily shared by a large majority of their fellow citizens. The “return of the religious (a)” or the emergence of sects does not seem to be able to challenge a process of such a scope. They are rather to be seen as hardened reactions to the “disenchantment” of the world which goes along that movement. But we should not expect from such evolutions a triumph of secularity (b) as it has been experienced, especially in France for over a century in reaction to the generalized hold of the Catholic Church on society.

If Marcel Gauchet in a later book does by the way speak of the “exhaustion of the Churches” in their capacity to inflect the public course of a society, he straightaway adds that such a process can only “catch on the hop” a “secular party” hard pushed to define an identity. Facing weakened Churches,

*The exhaustion of the intellectual and spiritual resources of militant secularism is no less patent. Suffice it to enumerate the footholds that used to be theirs to gauge their subsidence: Science –and by way of it Reason, Progress; the nation, the Republic – namely patriotism and civic virtue; Morals. Do we need to detail the factors which for so long and for so many reasons have conspired to strip of their crowns those capital letter entities? ... The school of personal blossoming or individual success no longer is or can be the School of the Republic in charge of meeting through morality the challenge of founding the social bond. All the sources and references which made it possible specifically in France to embody the secular alternative against the claims of the Churches are equally stricken with disbelief. And so, in parallel with the marginalization of the Churches, secularism has gradually become a fact devoid of principles (11)*

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**The rise of indifference**

The classical pattern of French secularism has, even more than others, come amiss by reason of the displacements of its former adversary. Still, the relationships between the Churches and the State seem even more perturbed in a country like the Netherlands where a fruitful cooperation used to operate between the Churches and the powers. Cardinal Simonis, the archbishop of Utrecht in 2001, complained that Wim Kok’s government, by refusing to receive him, was actually trying “to keep the Catholic Church in the background”. It felt neglected and seen as a “non-entity” in a country where Catholics however represent more than a third of the 15 million inhabitants. In an interview the Cardinal declared:

*Originally the separation of Church and State meant that the State was not to interfere with the affairs of the Church. But things have gone so far that Christian belief and the Church have no longer any public significance for the government. The government merely sees in its citizens individuals, whether they are believers or not (12).*

In every European country, the Churches are faced with a kind of social marginalization which arises from the distance set towards them by the powers, from the individualism of the believers they bring together, from the difficulty of going through the Brussels authorities still considered as too remote and bureaucratic.

Observers speak of a gap that can be great between the religiosity of the peoples and the state of the relationships between the Churches and the State. In England and Scandinavia the percentage of believers who attend the services is very low – something like 1 to 2%; nevertheless the Church enjoys a very favourable status. Those countries are still in the situation of a “confessional State and Christian society” which has been forsaken elsewhere.

According to a recent survey, which the daily *La Croix* of Tuesday February 2012 briefly accounted for, which was carried out in 2011 concerning over 1500 Belgians, only 3% of them would describe themselves as practising Catholics. If a broadcast by RTBF, the French-speaking Belgian radio-television network, is to be believed, the Belgian population describing themselves as Catholics has passed from 72% in 1982 to 50% in 2012. Over the period here considered the number of atheists has doubled and that of people who claim to have no longer any link with the Catholic Church is even greater, since it would amount to 70% of the young people born after 1984. But these figures have been at once corrected by two sociologists in charge of the dossier. They accuse the network of having “falsified their figures”. They declare: “First of all, the journalist spoke of 4% practicing Catholics when that percentage corresponds only to the people with a regular practice and engaged in some activity of the Church. In order to speak correctly of “practising Catholics”, there must be added to that figure 11% of regularly practising Catholics but with no such activities and 39% “peripheral” people with an occasional practice. Hence a total of 54%! ”.

As in other countries of western Europe in which the Catholic Church had up to now enjoyed a nearly “monopolistic” position, it appears that there are more and more children in urban areas who are brought up outside any contact with the Church, which can be read in the speedy decrease of the catechizing rate in urban areas now fallen under the 50% line. In 19th century France and in a number of southern Catholic countries, governments practiced a hostile policy towards the Church and attempted to weaken her; to-day it is likely to be the reverse. Governments are generally no longer hostile, their relations to the Churches have mellowed, but the greater number of individuals are indifferent to religion and no longer feel obliged to observe the Church’s dictates in matter of worship and private morality. As René Rémond (e) points out, the outstanding factor is not so much the complex relations between Church and State as the presence of a third party: civil (b) society. One would nearly forget that a short while ago “civilian” stood opposite to “religious”. Traces still subsist in our vocabulary: civil status, civil wedding, civil funeral. “Civil” has also been opposed to “military”. Today civil society is more often set on the opposite side to politics, including Poland, however steeped in Catholicism it may be. And it is in that civil society that it has become important to observe the religiosity, earnest or ambiguous, in the body politic, rather than that of individuals. As regards religious adherence proper, it coils up within the pluralistic body of civil society.

According to an offhand viewpoint of the history of the last two centuries, a hypothesis might be ventured that the relations between the body politic and the religious body built up contrariwise:

*In the 19th century the relationships were often odious between the authorities of the two protagonists, while the populations remained chiefly religious; in the 20th century the feuds grew more peaceful, a modus vivendi gradually got established, but the peoples in bulk detached themselves from religious belief* (13) *.*

**An open future**

Over against those disconcerting observations about the standing of religions on the public forum, in view of the risks of a fast-growing privatization (b) and of an institutional loss of vitality, other more positive factors need to be taken into consideration, while keeping to the ground of observation which is ours in this lecture.

We first emphasized that Churches and democracies underwent disastrous experiences in the last century with the triumph of totalitarian states, which purported to eradicate religion from institutions, collective symbols and even the heart of each individual. The lesson has been kept alive by either partner and led to new forms of alliance between the Churches and the supporters of the democratic project of societies. The purpose is to preclude the renewal of such mischief, not only on the religious plane but also in social and political life. Consequently, the link between religion and extreme right has been removed to the museum of antiquities. Such interdict opens up a new space in which believers, cleansed of the many previous suspicions, can knit up new relations with democrats of all opinions, without any prerequisites. Hence has become highly relativised the memory of the last century’s confrontations between secularity and clericalism, the former supposed to occupy the space of the left and progress, the other allegedly restricted to a conservative state of tension. The Churches moreover have a global perspective and they are highly present in the global field and engaged in various forms of social aid, which makes it permanently possible to relativise and outflank a state management which intended to be exceedingly nationalistic and averse to religion. The call to foreign experiences might supply critical leverage in unhinging regressive populist temptation. Christians can no longer be mobilized for far too suspect causes. They are loyal citizens in the functioning of democratic rules, but they also belong to a “spiritual republic” which adheres to particular laws, as the *Epistle to Diognete* puts it, an inspired text which dates back to the beginnings of the Catholic Church.

More than before too, as an effect of the separation of Churches and State, what the Churches have lost in political aura has been regained in freedom of conduct. They henceforward decide for themselves and in connection with the universal centre which links them together (Rome for Catholics). They have therefore freed themselves of political influences in the appointment of their officials, the formation of their members, the contents of their public speech. In a society “begging for meaning” they can become “purveyors of meaning”. Freed from the pressure of secular powers, and not being associates in applying political constraint, they can recover a new freshness and the sense of gratuity in order to act and speak in accordance with their deep sources. The clericalism of former times is on the wane and makes room for more formidable forms of secular clericalism. More and more does believing adherence become the object of personal choice and less and less the consequence of a domestic social heritage. In the triangle that links together civil polity, political decision and personal consciences, individual beliefs gradually fall on to the side of freedom and the defence of one’s personal sanctuary, of the respect of the dignity of each individual and the concern for all. Which is a still unheard of social pattern in religion in the West.

Madeleine Delbrêl (e), a great awakener for new times, had had a presentiment of this when she wrote, in the years of harsh confrontation with Marxism at the end of the Second World War:

*In so far as our world wants to break away from God, when people intend to do without God, to organize themselves outside God, God becomes for the world a new reality, and the God of the Gospels becomes again a piece of news. The Christian man, confronted with dechristianisation, often struggles against new facts and events in order that faith may last where he is: he appears as the man of the past. On the contrary, in front of atheism, a believing Christian, because he is a believer, sets through his life a living hypothesis of God, even where there is no longer any hypothesis of God. His faith in God is for this new world a still newer phenomenon. Christian man is for his brothers a man who loves the things of the world at their value and in their reality, but he is also a man who prefers to these things the God in whom he believes. His preference leads him to certain options. Thus we see him opt for God invisible. These options mean new questioning for the world about what is beyond the world. (14)*

Today, Christians are no longer where their former adversaries think they still are. And there are not yet enough of them to have reached the place where they ought to be, in view of the conditions to which they are submitted in the present world.

**Notes**

1. In 1995, according to the available statistics, The Europe of the Fifteen numbers 53% Catholics, 20% Protestants, 9% Anglicans, 3% Orthodox, 2% Muslims and O,5% Jews.
2. According to Jean-Paul Willaime, “Religions and the European unification”, p.293, in *Religious identities in Europe*, under the direction of Grace Davie and Danielle Hervieu-Léger, La Découverte, col. Recherches, 1996.
3. René Rémond, *Religion and Society in Europe*, Le Seuil, 1998.
4. René Rémond, *op. cit.*, p.266-67
5. *Ibidem*, p. 268.
6. *Spiegel special international*, 9/2006, p.9.
7. Inaugural Mass of Benedict XVI’s Pontificate, in *La documentation catholique*, June 5th 2005, N°2237, p.547
8. Ibidem, p. 548
9. *Religious identities in Europe,* op. cit.
10. Marcel Gauchet, *The disenchantment of the world. A political history of religion*, Gallimard, 1985 (1st edition).
11. Marcel Gauchet, *Religion in democracy. Route of secularity*, Le Seuil, 1998, p.29-30.
12. Isabelle de Gaulmyn, “The Dutch Church complains of her estrangement”, *La Croix*, Friday March 16, 2001, p.16.
13. René Rémond, *Religion and society in Europe,* op. cit., p.16
14. Madeleine Delbrêl, *We people about the streets*, Ed du Seuil, 1966, p.207.

**Notes of the editors on a few technical or rather unusual words, on the mentioned authors**

1. “**le religieux”** the word does not refer to a male member of an order or religious congregation. It refers to everything that constitutes the space of religion or religions, just as the word politics refers to everything that makes up the space of political life.
2. We here bring together some terms which bear on the social marginalisation of religions as above defined. They help define different, often overlapping aspects of the process of exit from Christendom: the latter is a society wholly ordained to the church that characterized the society of the Middle- Ages, which the European countries have gradually distanced themselves from.

- **secularisation** is used to mean that the ways of life of a society no longer organize themselves in accordance with what is religious, the “secular” standing in opposition to religion. We then speak of secular society.

- **disestablishment** is used to mean that the Church is no longer “established” –“establishment” in English- that is officially recognized as an element of the fabric of the State and a motor of national life.

- **laicisation** is used to mean that the juridical structures are no longer those of the Church; laicization involves a separation of religions and State inscribed in the legislation or even the constitution.

- **laïcité** French fashion, as a consequence of a secularizing process, rests notably on the non-interference of the State into the religions, and the religions into the State, a separation effectively respecting religious freedom and institutions. Religions do not participate in public life, only in case of exceptional events, and public funds do not contribute to their functioning. This laïcité distinguishes itself from laïcisme which is a world outlook that intends to rid life of any form of religion.

- **dereligionisation** is spoken of to mean that one detaches oneself from religion

- **privatisation** is used to situate religious life in the sole private domain; it is then a personal affair which concerns the public community only in so far as are involved one’s individual religious freedom and the freedom of worship of which it is a guarantor.

- the lecturer speaks of **civil society** to qualify a polity which builds itself up merely on the basis of the citizenship of the inhabitants without any religious references. In current language civil society designates the social authorities which animate public life outside the political parties.

(c) the PACS (PActe Civil de Solidarité) is in France a contract of union whereby a couple obtains recognition as such with more restrictive rights than in matrimony. It is contracted between persons of different sexes in most cases, or of the same sex before a solicitor or through a declaration deposited in the law court; it breaks through the same procedure. Civil marriage is reserved to persons of different sexes and is broken by a divorce decreed by the judge.

(d) an **isolat** is an isolated group.

 **Prurit** refers to some uncontrollable urgency, itching for instance

(e) **The quoted authors**: The first ones are eminent historians or sociologists of the contemporary religious factor. René Rémond is a historian of 20th century political and religious life and an outstanding figure of mid-century Catholic intellectuals. Fr Michel de Certeau, a Jesuit, was a philosopher of modernity. Paul Willaime is a Protestant sociologist and a fine connoisseur of religions, of Protestantism in particular; Marcel Gauchet is a historian and an agnostic philosopher. Grace Davie and David Martin are British sociologists of secularization.

Madeleine Delbrêl (1904-1964) is a major 20th century spiritual figure. She lived in Paris suburbia as a social aid in the communist city of Ivry-sur-Seine. She is on the way to beatification.