Secularized Europe is full of religion again. Not only through migration of faithful Muslims or Hindus from Africa and Asia towards Europe, but through the rise of new religious movements coming from America and through the rapid spread of a specific branch of American evangelical and pentecostal Christianity as well. Europe seems to be, after the breakdown of the iron curtain and the reconciliation of Eastern and Western Europe in a common economic market system, a fertile new mission-market at the same time. Complaints about proselytism belong to the normal agenda of ecumenical meetings. Mission agencies from America, East-Asia and some Arab States have opened their offices in Paris, London, Berlin and Moscow. Fervent traditionalist and charismatic movements beat their thousands. Church-attendance of charismatic groups by far surpasses regular liturgical participation on Sundays, e.g. in Roman Catholic Paris. Popular religion like old and new Marian cults and pilgrimages and somewhat esoteric and magic healing-services and therapy-sessions, imported from California, attract crowds of people and score high attendance figures in the mass-media. In France more people seem to consult so-called alternative doctors and spiritual therapies than regular practitioners or psychiatrists. Computer-games are full of distorted religious imagination like a Big Boss of the Universe, paradisiac rewards for high scores and the eternal dualism of the good and the bad, the ugly and the pretty. Some would even speak of the return of the gods or of neo-paganism.

Of course one must say, that, quantitatively, all of this is still an epiphenomenon in European culture. In Europe, East and West, at least 30% of the population still continues their participation in main-line Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant churches through baptism and public affiliation. In some regions Christianity is still the dominating religion. Culture at large, e.g. in public life and in the educational system, still witnesses to a rich Christian tradition. At the same time we must concede, that figures of church-goers keep declining in most parts of Europe. Catechetical instruction and theological education must do their utmost best to get enough students and participants in order to survive. Religious socialisation of youth in general seems to fail, even in very
committed and practising families. The majority of the Europeans, certain-
ly those in the urban centres, live in a climate of agnosticism and think
and behave *etsi Deus non daretur*. No wonder that bishops' conferences
and the European Conference of Churches come up with plans for the "re-
evangelisation" of Europe.

Such plans, however, meet with uneasiness and sometimes even
cynical reactions in main-line theological circles. Fears of fundamentalist
regression and the return of an irrational fideism go hand in hand with a
cynical attitude over against institutionalized Christianity and a widespread
individualism in matters of faith, which might be interpreted as an
understandable reaction against over-organisation, corporatism, pillarisa-
tion of society and centralized ecclesiastical bureaucracy. Did we really
analyze enough the backgrounds and variables of the actual European
agnosticism?

How can we cope with this new and very ambiguous religious map of
Europe? Is the secularisation-thesis of Max Weber c.s., who predicted the
gradual vanishing of all organized religion through the growing influence
of rationality in all segments of life still valid? Or is it completely false
from the beginning and were we, in the past thirty years or so, only eye-
ewitnesses to a fundamental shift in religious attitudes, a real metamorp-
thesis of a time-bound Christendom-model now definitely gone by? And if
so, which elements of this Christendom-model caused its gradual erosion?
Did it too easily comply in its church-forms, its thought-forms and
standards of behaviour with the successive Jewish, Hellenistic, Roman,
German and Enlightenment-cultures of Europe and could so pass away
with the erosion of those cultures? Could one of the reasons of the procla-
mation of the death of God have been, that European Christianity for
many has been a religion of fear2 rather than a gospel of joy? What type
of "religion" have we been after in Europe thusfar? Must the concept of
religion be given up completely, as some of the theological pioneers of the
20th century, like Barth, Bonhoeffer and Tillich demanded and a life-style
*etsi Deus non daretur*, as it is practised indeed by the vast majority of
Europeans be welcomed instead of blamed? Or must we look, together
with old and new renewal movements in the worlds great religious
traditions, for a new dynamic type of religion, a new religious conscious-
ness and community building culture or spirituality, which abandons the
sacred, but glorifies the holy?

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1 Cf. H. Waldenfels, *Kontextuelle Fundamentaltheologie*, Schöningh: Paderborn
   [etc.], 1985, 39 ff; 118 ff.
2 Cf. J. Delumeau, *Sin and Fear. The Emergence of a Western Guilt Culture 13th-
   Paris: Fayard, 1983.)