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'Europe: Values and Identity'

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The more that I have reflected on this lecture the more I have been struck by how alien and even destructive it may sound in Britain. Religion and values have not formed part of the narrative here of the troubled relationship between Britain and the process of European integration. But if the EU is no more than a Common Market as many here believe why should they be part of the story? In fact these subjects may be seen rather as added complications to a debate by those who seek a more constructive dialogue on European issues. The result of this is they are not much spoken of particularly within and by the Churches. While this lecture is not intended to be exclusively focused on Britain in the European Union (which is not in any sense "Europe"), I will initially look at this issue.

Perhaps, there is an unspoken suspicion that the whole business of European integration is a little too Catholic for British tastes. Even though the religious influence of the Reformed Churches particularly in Germany was profound in its creation and development, this would not be at all visible here whereas the Founding Fathers, as they are perhaps annoyingly described by Europhiles like me, were to a man Catholic. Monnet, Schuman, de Gasperi and Adenauer were all Christian Democrats too and only Paul Henri Spaak in the early European pantheon was a socialist. But others from the reformed tradition such as the Danes, Swedes, and Fins, however reluctant initially, have begun to put suspicions of this kind behind them. Increasingly they demonstrate a real belief in the integration process. This is particularly true of Finland.

It is indisputable that the United Kingdom has a fundamental problem with European integration. The evidence of polls suggests that the negativism here is qualitatively different from all other cases not merely in its consistency but in its depth. Thus it remains at the lowest position in Eurobarometer polls in its positivism towards the European Union. Indeed it is far from clear what the result of a referendum on membership would be today.

This ambivalence has been evident from the earliest days. In the lead up to the Treaty of Paris that created the Coal and Steel Community and started the whole process, Dean Acheson counselled the French not to inform London because he foresaw its potential for destructive opposition.

The reasons for this antipathy are many, varied and in part understandable. It is apparent that history plays a substantial part in this not merely through the memory of terrible continental wars but also in the sense of distinctiveness borne out of the inviolability of Britain itself, an island that has not been invaded for a thousand years. Britain had pragmatic economic grounds, too, for its initial opposition to European integration. Its loyalty to and connection with an empire, already disintegrating but still connected in the 40s and 50s, and “the English speaking peoples”, was an essential element in such limited profound political debate as took place during the 1950s on the whole subject of Europe.

Winston Churchill of course, in his famous speech in the University of Zurich on the 16th September 1946, though extolling the common inheritance of Christian faith and ethics and the prospect of a united Europe, saw Britain standing apart. So the Commonwealth and the United States form part of the backdrop to this but so does simple nationalism. It is not hard to recall George Canning’s remark in 1826, following the collapse of the Congress of Vienna system that, ‘things are getting back to a wholesome state, every nation for itself, and God for us all’. It still has a resonance here even in this era of interdependence.

In the end of the day it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Britain essentially dislikes, in principle, the sharing of sovereignty and, indeed, any interference with the constitutional principle of the supremacy of Parliament. So even the supremacy of European law, established beyond doubt in Britain by the Factotame case in 1989, has been erroneously characterised by many establishment figures as an unwarranted and unjustified intrusion of their basic understanding of what they joined in 1973.

In Britain there has never been sympathy for, or even a comprehension of, the political and indeed moral purpose of the project to pursue “an ever greater Union” of the peoples of Europe. It has had few true advocates in the political world or even academia and the Conservative party in the current government is to the most Euro sceptic in the last twenty years. At every revision of the Treaties since accession Britain has been the most reluctant Member State to move forward and has always pressed for “co-operation by sovereign states” rather than integration. In other words it has pressed for intergovernmentalism rather than supranationalism. This has been a tragedy for many of us who had hoped for constructive leadership in another direction from Britain. It seems tragic because Britain has so much to give to the process. Its tolerance, long-standing democracy and commitment to the rule of law being particularly noteworthy and generally respected.

The real tragedy, however, may be that a debate on the substance of the issues has never truly taken place. In particular the overwhelmingly Christian intellectual foundations for European integration have not been explored in any substantive manner in political circles and academia has not been much better.

The question may be asked whether the issue is relevant following the delayed conclusion of the agonizing debate on the Lisbon Treaty and the general agreement on its adoption that further constitutional change was not on the agenda. Many contributions in recent times have pointed to the fact that there is no appetite for further constitutional change in Europe generally and this is clearly true for the majority for the moment. However, the debate is only in temporary abeyance. For one thing it is increasingly obvious that the dynamics of globalization will demand a more united Europe if we are to play a real role in determining our own destiny. Furthermore the issues surrounding the survival of the Euro following the debt crisis will, in the view of many observers, probably result in a new drive for economic governance at European level. Mrs Merkel has already trenchantly said this and last week linked this issue to the survival of the Union itself. This argument about the future will undoubtedly be essentially about federalism and Britain, though not in the Eurozone will have to be part of it.

The word federal has taken on such pejorative connotations here that it can scarcely be mentioned in public company and this notwithstanding the fact that for many continentals it is at the heart of the process and is inextricably linked to maintaining the admirable vision of its founders.

I intend now to look for a moment at the history of European integration from a moral or ethical point of view. Of course I do not seek to argue that European values and their survival depend upon the survival of the European Union. I merely say that in this context it is important.

Amongst the key figures in the early days were, as I have said, Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer and Alcide de Gasperi. These three were ardent Catholics and came from the borders of their respective countries, Lorraine, Rhineland and Trentino, in which nationalisms are often tempered by the needs and the virtues of living together. All three spoke German: Schuman was born in the German Empire and de Gasperi sat as a parliamentarian in the Austrian Parliament in Vienna witnessing considerable forces laboring to make a multi-ethnic empire function. All three had witnessed a 20th century where God had been declared “dead” leading to the most horrific extinction of the European ideal of tolerance with totalitarianism bringing death and destruction to the continent.

From the beginning the European project was about far more than economic advantage. Indeed the Common Market came late in the day. When Adenauer and Monnet met in 1950, under the auspices of the Geneva Circle, they spoke of a “moral purpose”. In a letter to Schuman on 23 August 1951, Adenauer expressed his thoughts as follows: “I hold for a very favourable and particular sign – even providential – that all the weight of the tasks yet to accomplish rest on the shoulders of men who, like you, and as our common friend President de Gasperi and myself, are penetrated by the will to develop and realise the new construction of Europe on Christian foundations...”

The Catholic Bishops Conference recently identified the core motivation of the Schuman Declaration of the 9th May 1950 that launched the process as being “essentially an appeal for mutual forgiveness and, as such, a profoundly Christian act”. But, however much forgiveness played a central role in motivating the founders in launching the process of integration, the real purpose looked to the future and was to provide a means to protect Christian values from suffering ever again from the destruction wrought upon them by the Godless acts that constantly recurred in European history. It was fundamentally about creating a new attitude to the concept of national sovereignty that was first articulated by Bodin's *De La Republique* of 1583. It constituted a largely Christian normative reflection on the whole concept of the nation state so beloved by many of our politicians and the limits of its power. One cannot but be surprised that such a noble purpose has given rise to such vituperation in Britain.

Ernest Bevan dismissed the seminal Messina Conference that preceded the Treaty of Rome as “an archaeological excavation” and for fear that you may accuse me of similar current irrelevance here, let me point out that the issues surrounding the project then are, in many ways, the same today. They are all about values and a moral purpose at the heart of which was an openly expressed federal project based upon supranational institutions. The arguments for these institutions are as valid now as they were on 8th August 1950, when Monnet wrote to Harold MacMillan making clear that this was the case and that it was the reason that he could not accept his alternative intergovernmentalist proposal. This intergovernmental approach was to be the precursor of a multitude of later initiatives from London along the same lines. But European integrationists are firmly opposed to intergovernmentalism still and they are justified in this for it is where we have had supranational institutions that we have succeeded and where we have relied on intergovernmentalism we have mostly failed.

The federalism of the Founding Fathers was founded upon the belief that national sovereignty, constrained only from within, was not merely dangerous but essentially evil

because it postulated a greater power than man alone can possess. Jacques Maritain, the Catholic philosopher who most influenced the process in its conception wrote “God alone is sovereignthis concept (of sovereignty) is intrinsically wrong” (Maritain 1951:24). In 1940 Maritain published, while in exile in the US, an article denouncing nationalism. Even parliamentary democracy was considered inadequate.

The experiences of the first half of the 20th century had created, and not by any means exclusively within the Christian Democratic party, a number of responses to the issue of national sovereignty. All of these were intended to limit its exercise. One such was the promulgation of Universal Declaration of Human Rights – expressing rights that were superior and antecedent to positive law. Another was the institutional structure of federalism with supranational institutions supported by the application of the concepts of personalism and subsidiarity. Personalism sought to place man in a context of personal relations and connection with society as opposed to the atomising of individualism. It was, in other words, a means to contest the excessive individualism of liberalism and the excessive collectivism of communism. It sought to recognize the dignity of the human person created by God and to present the person as having an obligation to a duty to foster the values associated with his nature including solidarity with others and community involvement (including in trade unions). Subsidiarity completed a pincer movement with supranationalism on national sovereignty by seeking to oblige national governments to structure decision making as close to the people as possible.

All of this thinking contributed to the objective of creating the “social market economy” and indeed to a concept of solidarity both within the State and outside it. Solidarity is, of course, directly linked to the Christian belief that all mankind is one’s neighbour and in the EU context community solidarity has led to the creation of various vehicles for the redistribution of wealth between States rich and poor. The Structural Funds represent a means to transfer resources to the poorest people and countries. Gradually these Funds have seen their resources diminished through arguments of “juste retour” and budgetary restrictions and it is hard to believe that Britain would resist if they were abolished completely because, again, they imply a union that is more than a Common Market.

How have these original concepts and ideas fared? Well, the original ideas of the philosophers who influenced the Founding Fathers have remained relevant. Jacques Delors – who with Walter Hallstein (another Christian) was one of the two great Presidents of the European Commission – maintains that the greatest influences on him was that of the Christian Socialist Emanuel Mounier. (Charles Grant’s biography). In 1992 Delors as the president of the European Commission called for “a soul for Europe,” arguing that if Brussels

was not able to inject a spiritual dimension into the EU, it would fail to command the allegiance of its citizens: "If in the next ten years we haven't managed to give a Soul to Europe, to give it spirituality and meaning, the game will be up." (Speech to the churches, Brussels, 4/2/1992).

The Christian Democrats too remain the largest party in the European Parliament and are still openly committed to the Federalist idea. In its position at the Convention that preceded the Lisbon Treaty the Party made the following statements "the Peoples joined the integration process based on their free decision to declare their intention to create a close and federal European Union... already the States have individually lost their ability to secure peace, external or internal security, prosperity and growth in a globalised world by acting alone. Sovereignty can only be exercised on a larger scale". Here the Christian Democrats assert indirectly that if European values are to inform and influence international debate, for example in relation to climate change, poverty, world peace and so on, federalism is the only way to do it. At a European level too, the old ideas still drive policy. For example in 2001 the Peoples Party (the Christian Democrats) submission on the CAP and the WTO made explicit reference to the implications of personalism, subsidiarity and solidarity on this policy.

For these reasons I believe that the European integration process remains inextricably linked to promoting values that Christians hold dear and that it is far more than a commercial exercise or an intergovernmental mechanism to simply advance national interests. However, it is a long way from an effective federal union. The most that can be said is that it is sui generis and partly federal. That the Conservative Party has withdrawn from the Christian Democratic group in the European Parliament may be inconvenient for both but surely it is hard for the Conservatives to be part of a party whose core policies are federalist in intention? The Conservative party in particular is resolutely opposed to them.

Let me turn to another point, whether one sees Europe as a potentially federal entity or not – and I concede that we are still on a journey to an undefined destination – we live on a continent where many believe that although we do share values they come to us from the Enlightenment and not from Religion. Secularism has a number of definitions. Generally it means that religion and its institutions are to be separated from political authority. Bernard Lewis in "What Went Wrong?" (Phoenix History ch. 5) makes the point that the very idea of secularism and the separation of Church and State is in fact "in a profound sense, Christian". He goes on to explain this drawing on the authoritative Christian text of Matthew 22.21 in which Christ is quoted as saying "render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's". Lewis then traces the history of this Christian position back to Rome and draws significant distinctions with the history of Islam.

Christians generally had a parallel institution in the Church to the political power whereas Muslims did not. However, some liberal secularists in Europe and elsewhere believe not merely “that the State should not enforce, institutionalize or formally endorse a religion. It should not be guided by religious considerations in its policies and treatment of citizens and should in general retain an attitude of strict indifference to religion” but that political debate should be conducted in terms of secular reasons alone. (Rethinking Multiculturalism. Palgrave Macmillan p. 322 – Biktur Parekh).

In national parliaments and the European parliament the differences on secularism and religion in politics are manifested regularly. One such debate took place in regard to excluding references to God in the European Constitution.

The core liberal position is that in some way politicians should leave their religious convictions at the door of parliament and agree that they will be influenced solely by reason. As Charles Taylor puts it, their view is that the public world should “be emptied of God” (A Secular Age). This extreme secularist case makes no sense and the value system that we generally have in Europe makes the point clearly because Christians have in fact influenced it. It is not mere calculation that ultimately determines right or wrong or the fundamental concepts of the Dignity of Man or the Equality of Man but the basic doctrines of Christianity which, however much abused by Christians paradoxically, have endured in Europe because of Christianity. (Indeed they influenced profoundly the Enlightenment which brought a necessary reflection and reform to Christianity itself). The Christian input has remained influential.

One way or the other, the peoples of Europe, collectively and separately, have in fact come to the same place in regard to values because of their shared cultural heritage, experience and religion. This is evident in their general agreement on the type of societies in which they want to live. All are supportive of the welfare state and the broad responsibilities of society for the weak and needy. We are all believers in multilateralism and the international treaties provide a rule based international society. We are distinguished from the United States not merely in both these respects but in our attitudes to a diverse range of issues from the death penalty to the length of terms of imprisonment, to gun controls and to individualism generally. Even on the Iraq war, where our governments split, our peoples did not and, everywhere, they opposed the war.

I believe Christian thinking influenced these positions but, notwithstanding a shared Christian heritage, a distinction can be drawn between Europe and the United States. Even the definitions on either side of the Atlantic of a ‘liberal’ are radically different. In Continental

Europe a liberal is defined in terms of the freedom of the individual. A continental European liberal is therefore a believer in individual freedom and, for example, in low taxation and the minimum regulation of the market. On the other hand in the United States a liberal is one who is broadly of the left who supports redistributive policies and greater regulation. In fact the individualism of the United States against the personalism of Europe is a defining difference between the two. Whether this is due to the enduring effects of the pioneer spirit, or even the attitude to political authority of the Pilgrim Fathers or other reasons, is in a sense irrelevant. Europe basically has its position and it is shared by most Europeans. It is a position that accepts the separation of Church and politics and is broadly concerned with the creation of a fair society. The United States would claim a similar position but it clearly believes in different ways to achieve a fair society to those generally approved by Europeans.

Let me say a word here about rights which are in a way a justiceable embodiment of values. Looking to the World War II development of fundamental human rights it is striking how some of the same Christian actors who pressed for European integration, played an important role. In particular Jacques Maritain did. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was significantly the creation of the Human Rights Commission chaired for that purpose by Eleanor Roosevelt. Whilst it contained, as Professor Chris Brown has written “representatives from many cultures and dutifully tried to draw on as many sources as possible the resulting document is clearly inspired by the political thought of the West” (Practical Judgement in International Political Theory, Routledge). He also points out that many of these rights and those in subsequent covenants and conventions are claimed by “cosmopolitan liberals” as the product of liberalism. But many of us would claim this original provenance as Judeo – Christian. The Jewish French legal scholar and later Nobel Laureate, René Cassin was one of the Human Rights Commission charged in 1945 with drafting the Universal Declaration. He later wrote that the first article of the Declaration, by proclaiming that all human beings “should act towards each other in a spirit of brotherhood” corresponded to the injunction in Leviticus to “love thy neighbour as thyself”. He also noted that “thou shalt not kill” and “thou shalt not steal” in the Commandments are merely a different way of expressing the right to life and the right to property. Furthermore it seems to me that the very concept of fundamental laws antecedent and superior to positive law demands an acceptance of a concept of Natural Law. This in turn leads inevitably to God. The Fundamental Human Rights have been given additional substance in Europe through the European Convention of Human Rights and this most recently has been formally made part of EU law by the Lisbon Treaty.

Both the interpretation of human rights and the fact that Europe in general accepts the separation of the State from religion leads to some necessary reflection on the 20m or so Muslims who live in Europe and there is a deep need to reassess how we apply our obligation for tolerance in the light of the rise of racism, aggravated by unemployment and economic dislocation, in these recessionary times. There is also a need for clarity in our thinking in regard to what is appropriate to demand from migrants of a different religious background in terms of the protection of Europe's shared values.

Many Muslims coming to Europe have no experience of the separation of Church and State. Bernard Lewis in "What Went Wrong?" explains that "only in Christendom did God and Caesar coexist in the State, albeit with considerable development, variety and sometimes conflict in the relations between them". The essential point is that there is "no human legislative power". Another aspect of the Islamic religion that is different is the fact that identity is linked inextricably to religion and, while there is some sense of national identity, the Nation State does not generally have the same meaning in North Africa or parts of Asia as in Europe.

Recognising these differences and addressing the issues of multiculturalism, on the 7 February 2008 at the Royal Courts of Justice, Dr Rowan Williams made the point that through time the Muslim generally has assumed something of a dual identity "as citizen and as believer within the community of the faithful". Therefore there is an acceptance of plurality and the existence of State laws but some find this more difficult than others. He then argues that our laws should take account of a religious rationale for behaviours and suggests the examination of the provision of a supplementary jurisdiction but that could not in any way impair "the rights given to other citizens or to punish its members for claiming those rights". Even allowing for this qualification it seems to me that the idea of a "supplementary jurisdiction", which permits of its recognition in areas of communal religious discipline, is not a good one. It is fraught with the danger of exacerbating difference or tension between those who come from the embedded culture of Europe and particularly Muslim migrants.

Surely what we must do in our laws is to provide the maximum freedom for people to express themselves whether in speech, dress or otherwise in a manner consistent with our core values. These values in justiceable areas are generally embodied in the European Convention of Human Rights and their interpretation must be in the context of European perceptions. More fundamentally they emanate from our belief in the Dignity of Man and the Equality of Man. Equality of the sexes for example must be assured. On the other hand in my opinion the banning of a head scarf that does not cover the face is not justified as some

extension of this equality between sexes either. Nor should the wearing of a cross or crescent cause offence. We must not pragmatically seek to force conformity with our society's practices except where that conformity is a necessary expression of our fundamental beliefs.

Just as Christianity has stood up for freedom rather better than civic or political institutionism the past (for example in Nazi Germany), it is now obliged to stand up for the freedom of other religions against an increasingly intolerant tendency. The claim that Christianity continues to have a legitimate voice in the continuing construction of Europe is not an assertion that Christianity should be treated more favourably than other religions in terms of its observance or practices. Religions are protected equally under the treaties.

Let me summarise my case. Europe has given a great deal to the world just as it has permitted historically injustice and heinous acts such as the holocaust. Christianity however remains the key repository of our values and it has largely inspired the most noble political initiative that we have known. This is the process of integrating the peoples of Europe in peace and harmony which is a process that attacks nationalism. Nationalism is a relatively recent phenomenon. It was a European invention only some two hundred years ago and has been sustained more by myth than history and has led to untold suffering. It may be a futile exercise to seek to remove nationalistic feelings but we can mitigate their worst effects. Apart from this political initiative, with its moral and religious undertones, European countries collectively and separately all adhere to the same set of values that I believe these to be largely inspired by Christianity whether this is recognised or not. We have created instruments and institutions to foster what we believe in and Christians should be inspired by them and participate in them more actively as Christians.

The process of integration probably now faces an existential moment. It is challenged to integrate further or to disintegrate. There is no middle course or minimalist solution that I can find and there will be no place for fudging the issue. This will require statesmanship and vision. Although semi detached by being outside the Eurozone, Britain should play a positive role in this because, ultimately, what is at stake is the future of our continent and the values it proclaims.

Let me conclude with the following: John Paul II on the fourth Sunday of Easter on 2 May 2004 welcomed the enlargement of the EU to Central-Eastern Europe as follows:

“In these days, Europe is reaching another important landmark in its history: 10 new countries are entering the European Union. Ten nations, which by culture and tradition were and felt European, now to belong to this Union of States. However, if the unity of the

European peoples is to endure, it cannot be merely economic and political. As I had the opportunity to recall during my pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in November 1982, if the soul of Europe is still united today, the reason is that it refers to common human and Christian values..... Only a Europe that does not eliminate but rediscovers its Christian roots, will be able to take up the challenges of the third millennium: peace, intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, the safeguarding of creation. All believers in Christ of the European West and East are required to make their own contribution through open and sincere ecumenical cooperation". So, Europe must have more than a market it must have a soul.

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