

Ideas of 'Europe'

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Cf. *Europe and the Gospel: Influences, Developments and Mission Challenges.*

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What does 'Europe' mean?

European Union?

Brexit means leaving what?

Can Ukraine and Russia become members?

Continent (geographical meaning)?

Does Turkey belong?

Limits defined in 16th-17th centuries

A culture?

Are Muslims in Europe part of 'Europe'?



The idea of 'Europe'

Notion of 'we Europeans' – 'you Europeans'

Benedict XVI: *Europe is a geographical concept only in a way that is entirely secondary. It is not a continent that can be comprehended neatly in geographical terms; rather, it is a cultural and historical concept.*

Paul Valéry: *'Europe' stands for a consciousness that underlies the feeling of belonging to a community, irrespective the differences and the diverging character of the groups that make up this community.*

'Europeans' are people accepting to bear this name and adopting the attitudes that flow forth from it, notably when faced with others', i.e. those who are not considered to be Europeans.

This idea of 'Europe' has a long history. It emerged long before

Ancient Greeks

Europè = Hellas and Crete, the centre of the world.

Occident (West, sunset, Europe) versus Orient (East, sunrise, Asia)



A Myth and its significance



Bishopric of Constantinople

The new centre of the Christianised empire

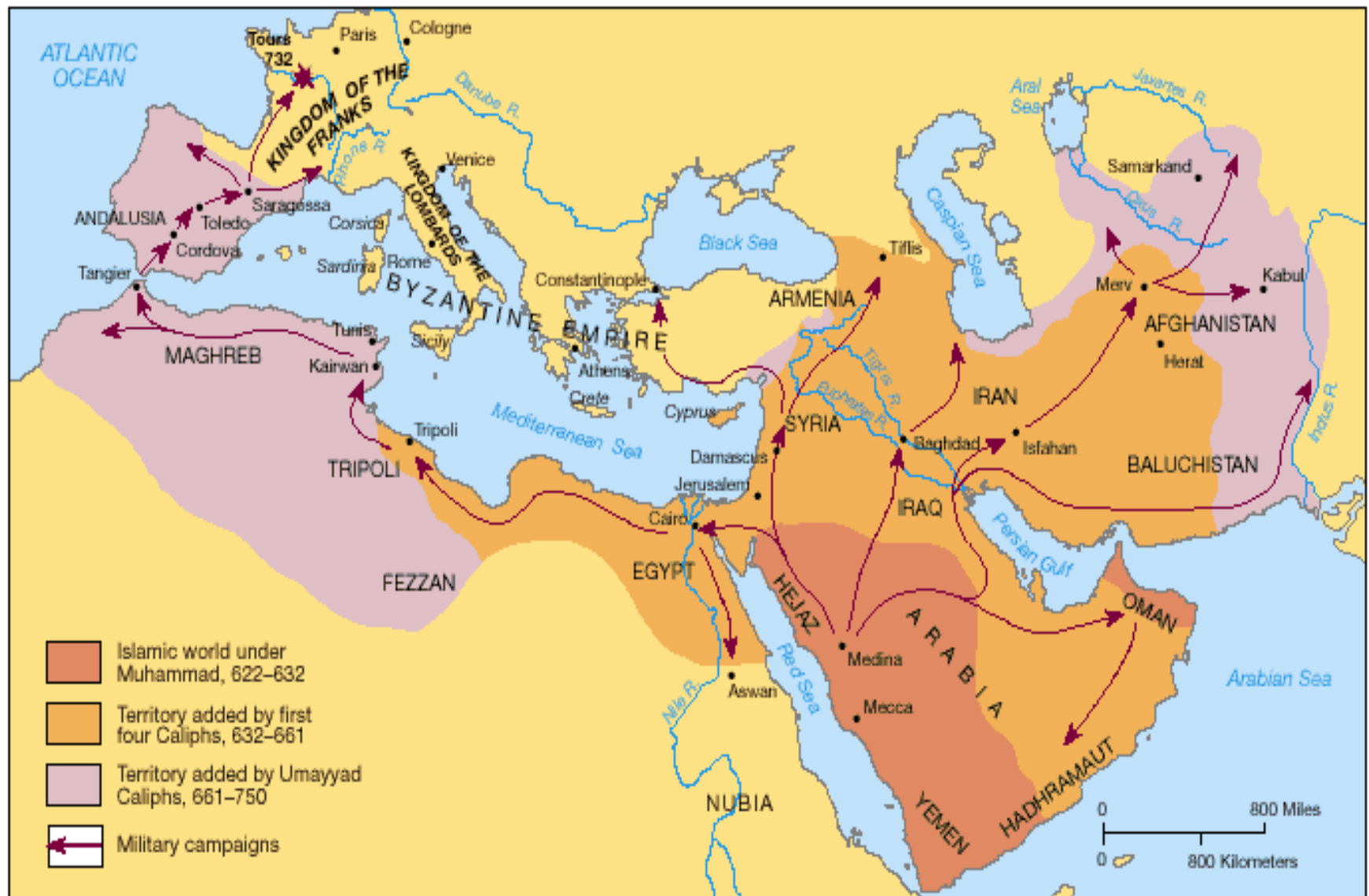



(1) 'Europe' as the Christian realm

Battles of 'we Europeans' against Muslim invaders in Spain and France, Poitiers/Tours 732 and Avignon 741

Here is the beginning of the idea of 'Europe'.

Its first meaning is the Christian realm, Christendom



 *The Spread of Islam. The rapid spread of Islam created within a century a unified cultural and economic zone from India to the Atlantic Ocean within.*

Hispanic Chronicles (752)



Les dillant et
genat roy de
belugne qui
messire charles
de luxembourg estoit nomme
car il estoit filz de l'empereur
henry de luxembourg entendy
par ses gens que la bataille est
commencee lequel combat
qui fust la arme et en grant

auxop sy ne veou il gonde car
il estoit aveugle. Sy demanda
aux cheualiers qui estoient sur el
toient comment l'ordonnance de
leurs gens se portoit et ceulx
sur en dirent la verite en disant
monseigneur ainsi et ainsi en
ra les genevois sont desconfis
et mys en la fuite et a combai
de le roy de france a ces toues

Charlemagne and afterwards

- Crowned in 800 by the pope in Rome, called 'father of the Europeans'
- 'Europe' is the Christian realm, comprising of many ethnic peoples, languages, and cultures
- As Christianity spread, 'Europe' became larger and larger
- Last people group to be Christianised: the Lithuanians in 1346.



EUROPE
at the death of
Charlemagne
814



(1) 'Europe' as the Christian realm

David Levering Lewis:

Looking historically, it is evident that the coordination and collaboration of the bishopric of Rome and the regime of Catholic Franks in the immediate aftermath of Poitiers, led to the creation of Europe as a coherent culture and polity.

Christianity...

- gives unifying worldview and religious practices, the Bible and the Gospel, a common sacred story.
- transmits legacy of Rome and Athens.
- integrates elements from Celtic, Germanic, Slavic cultures.

Christianisation top down, need to evangelise the people

Western Latin (RC) and Eastern Byzantine (Orthodox)

Christian 'Europe' and the 'others'

Outside: Muslim world

- Europe locked in for ages

- Deeply rooted sentiment that Islam is alien to 'Europe'

Inside: Jewish communities

- Only population not to be Christianised

- Spread of anti-Judaism, through a 'catechism of contempt' (Jules Isaac).

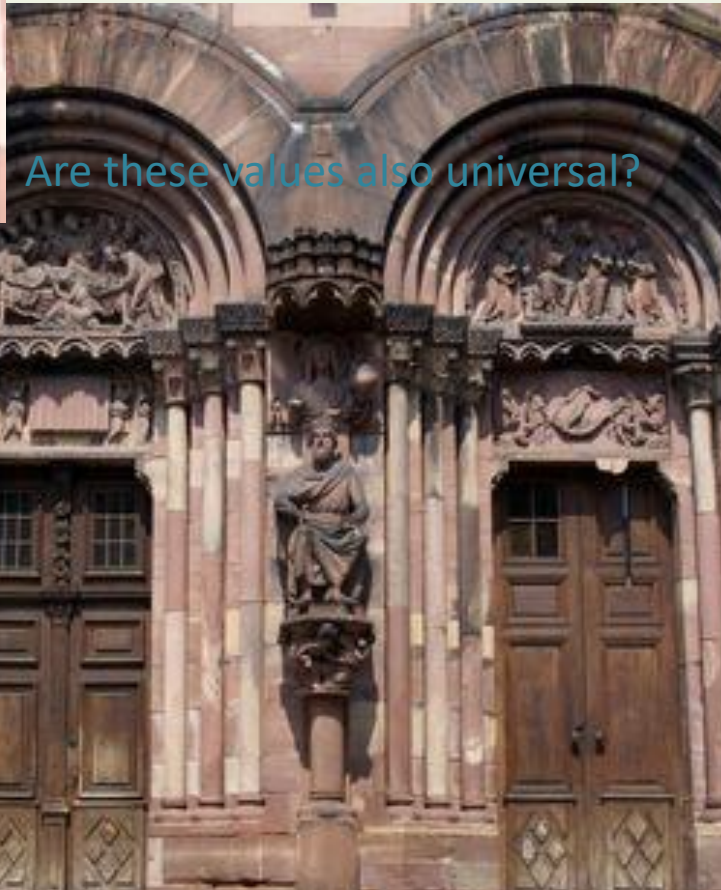
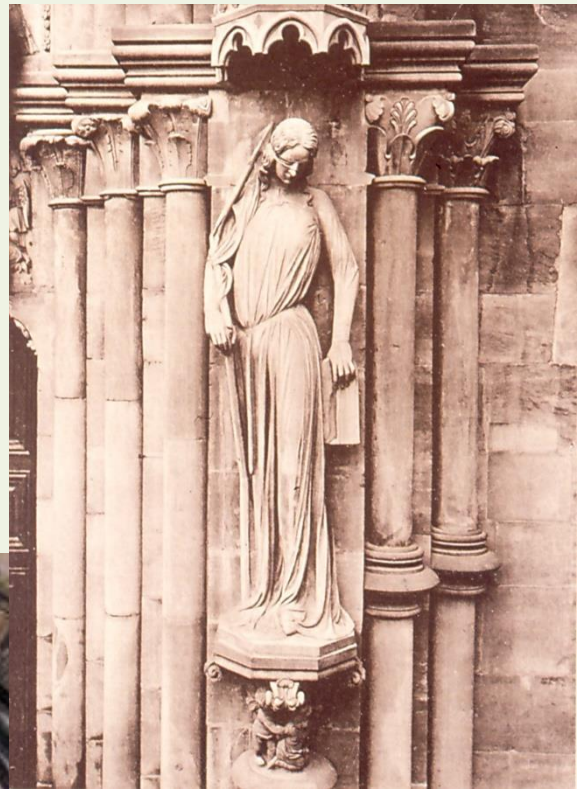
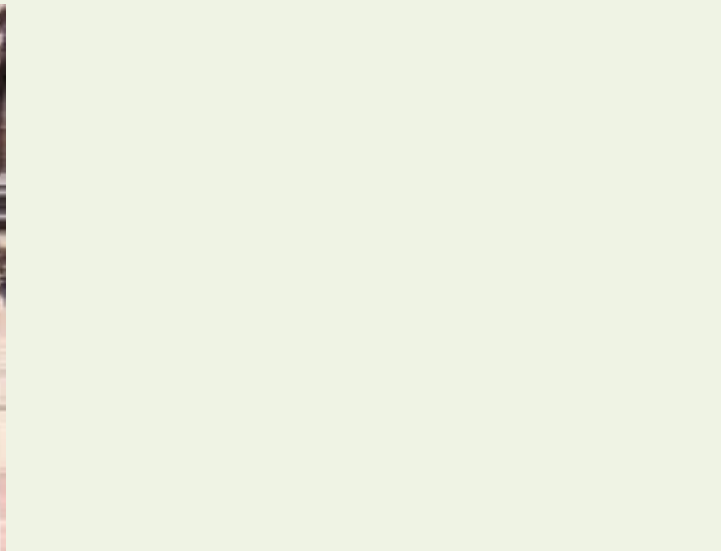
- Fuel for popular and political antisemitism

Lasting effects

- These 'frontiers' have created deep sociocultural frontiers, become part of the European subconsciousness

**Look at the
side entrance**







The Church and the Jews

(2) 'Europe' as Civilisation

Europe starts dominating the world

Encounter with other cultures

Enlightenment Europe, marked by moral values and rational science, secularisation of the state

Anthony Smith: *The intellectual elite developed the idea of European values, which equalled civilised values.... to a large extent rooted in Christian teaching, but now seen as universal instead of religious values.*

Edmund Burke: *Great neighbourhood of cultures*

Scale view of history and idea of progress: 'Europe' most advanced civilisation

Civilisation 'Europe' and the 'others'

Inside: Those who perpetuate the old order,
conservative religionists, absolute monarchs,
traditional communities, people with 'uncivilised'
manners...

Outside: other civilisations, especially the 'primitive'

- Civilisation offensive, within Europe and in the colonies (colonialism justified)
- 'Europe' spreads into the world
- Commerce and collaboration would lead the way to perpetual peace

Immanuel Kant and many others of that period:
European 'enlightened' civilisation leads the way to democracy,
commerce and finally perpetual universal peace



Lasting effects

Influence *From the West to the rest*

(hidden assumption: we are/have the best)

Mission and civilisation.

Western dominance in mission worldwide

Today the same pattern, shifted to Christian and secular
NGO's working for human rights, development aid,
science and technology

(3) Economic and Political 'Europe'

After two World Wars:

- Disillusionment about 'Europe' as Civilisation

- Europe no longer dominates the world

- Iron Curtain

Idea of Europe remains, takes on a new form:

Economic and political collaboration

- Reconciliation between enemies

- Council of Europe (1949)

- ECCS (1951), EEC (1957) – EC – EU (1991)

Purpose: secure peace,

- improve welfare for the whole population

Enlargement of the EU

- 1957: Founding of the EU
- 1973: First enlargement
- 1981: Greece
- 1986: Portugal and Spain
- 1995: Nordic enlargement
- 2004: Eastern enlargement
- 2007: Bulgaria and Romania
- 2013: Croatia
- Candidate countries



Two lines of approach

Wide union – common market, international collaboration,
Europe of the nations

Deep union – political integration, supranational institutions,
federal Europe

New idea of 'Europe': *The countries in this part of the world are bound together by a common history, and therefore destined to cooperate within some overarching uniting structure, an alliance, a treaty or something of that order*

Also called 'the house of Europe'.

‘House of Europe’ and the ‘others’

Inside: Movements opposed to the construction of Europe

Eurosceptics

Where is the border of the ‘house’?

‘From Atlantic to the Ural’ (De Gaulle).

Others exclude Russia

What about Turkey? Morocco?

Outside Europe:

USA, China, Muslim World, migrants

Mediterranean becomes a frontier of ‘fortress Europe’

(4) 'Europe' as a cultural zone

common values and roots

The question of identity

The economic and political integration can (not) succeed without a sense of collective identity

Declaration on European Identity (Copenhagen 1972).

Two approaches

1. 'Europe' has no longer an identity of its own

Alain Finkielkraut: *The particularity of Europe is that it has no particularity*

2. Essentialist views. 'Europe' means something specific

Post-Christianised and secularisation (exceptional Europe)

Cultural zone, family of 'European' cultures

(4) 'Europe' as a cultural zone

François Fôret:

Social research shows that Europe is a community of values distinct from other geographical and cultural regions. For instance, secularization in Europe makes it clearly distinct from the United States.

Even if the reality of countries and social groups is diverse, they all tend to develop in the same direction. Moreover, the others outside Europe see it as Europeans.

However, this does not mean that the Europeans interiorize and claim this identity. In fact, this remains weak and has no political existence. The European vote as national citizens, also in European elections. The majority of Europeans are indifferent toward Europe.

(4) 'Europe' as a cultural zone

Umberto Eco:

It is culture that has made Europeans out of us, who for such a long time have fought fratricidal wars. As we are faced with the debt-crisis in Greece and other EU countries, we should not forget that historically speaking our only bonds are warfare and culture....

We have enjoyed peace for less than 70 years now, but that period was enough to make the idea of a war between Italy and Germany, for instance, seem outrageous. The United States of America have used a civil war to become really united. I hope that for us, culture and a common market will suffice

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Cultural 'Europe', community of values

Key 'European' values. Consensus about:

- Human rights, the most important ones
- Representative parliamentary democracy
- Pluralism, both on the religious and the political level
- Tolerance
- State responsibility for the welfare of the people
- Separation of church and state, principle of neutrality (*laïcité*)
in most countries vestiges of the old Constantinian alliance
between throne and altar.

Based on common roots

Soledad García:

Hellenism, with the search for discipline, rationality, perfection, beauty and justice; Roman law and institutions, which created a model of organised and stable power; and Christianity (with elements of the Judaic tradition), have contributed powerfully to the spiritual, moral and human principles of our societies.

We drink from the wells of

‘Athens’

‘Rome’

‘Jerusalem

Added to that: Christian humanism and Enlightenment

Debate on Christian roots

Preamble of the *Treaty of Lisbon* (2009):

‘We are drawing inspiration from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe’.

Christianity is not mentioned

Draft for European constitution (2005) and debate

Political agendas for mentioning these roots or not

Facts:

- Christianity has transmitted Greco-Roman heritage, while Humanism and Enlightenment are rooted in Christianity

The paradox:

- European Christianity: both an obstruction and a source of freedom of conscience and human rights.

Cultural 'Europe' and the EU

'Europe' is larger and means more than the EU

Brexit: leaving the EU does not imply leaving 'Europe' as a community of values

Inversely, Russia and other countries are not members of EU but do belong to cultural Europe.

‘Others’ and frontiers

Inside:

minorities with other cultural backgrounds, other lifestyles
than the autochthon European population

immigrants and migrant communities

Are Muslims in Europe also part of ‘Europe’?

Outside:

China and other emerging powers vs. our economic interests

Muslim world vs. the European character of our society

New dividing line in the East

Some exclude Russia and the Eurasian culture

Along the old orthodox - roman catholic divide