How does the Christian Faith Enter Politics – and What Does it Do There?
"Faith-based politics" after the Separation between Politics and Religion

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The separation between politics and religion, like its institutional substrate, the separation of Church(es) and State, is a constitutive foundation for democratic societies. This is a conviction that democrats, but also theories of democratic societies, regard as self-evident. "Faith-based politics", i.e., political activities that the actors in question carry out as an expression and aspect of their faith, therefore stands under the basic suspicion of undermining the separation of politics and religion, thereby violating a precondition of democratic societies and being "fundamentalist", at least in the sense that, for the political sphere, religion advocates untenable and even destructive religious truths. Seen in this way, not only certain forms, but every form of politically engaged religion creates problems for democratic societies, even if such societies may be robust enough to "endure" at least the softer variants of this problem and only "suffer" from its hard variants.

By theologically reconstructing "faith-based politics" and by reconceptualizing the separation between politics and religion that is constitutive of democratic societies, this paper aims to reject this *fundamental* suspicion of *every* "faith-based politics" – with the explicit knowledge that political debates in democratic societies are indeed burdened by fundamentalist religions and the religious truths they advocate with a claim to absolute truth. First, the separation between politics and religion is grasped as the result of a symbolically mediated practice of boundary-drawing carried out "from the inside", in order to avoid a substantialist understanding of both politics and religion (1). On this foundation, "faith-based politics" is theologically shown to be the practice by which the faithful person masters the situational challenges of his or her faith through political engagement, i.e., by "doing" politics to confirm and actualize himself or herself in it as a faithful person (2). Considering that politics is essentially a public event and thus consists primarily of public communications, two essential pragmatic goals are reconstructed from "faith-based politics" and its

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secular realization (3). The faithful can realize these two goals only to the degree that their religious convictions and attitudes have a prior secular meaning and are religiously meaningful convictions and attitudes only on this basis (4).

1. The Separation between Politics and Religion

In ancient Greece, with the term "politics", the idea of the political was also "invented", the idea namely that citizens of a community deal with their communal interests and thereby also with the order of their community together, though conflictually (Meier 1995). The citizens of the Greek city-states did not separate politics from religion, whereby they had no concept of this religion and while religious matters, as understood today, probably were not all that important in their politics. Politics arose from and consisted in the citizens' engaging in it together – and permitting other citizens, though not women, children, or slaves, to engage in their communal political activity. As a concept, "religion" arose in another context; namely, in the Roman Empire, it meant the conscientious fulfillment of ritual duties – and was thereby an integral component of the Roman social and legal order (Wlosok 1970). After Christianity was raised to the state religion of the Roman Empire, the claim was derived from Christianity that it was the sole true religion. But only in early modern times did Christianity, including in its self-description, become a religion (Feil 1986). At the same time it was denied, from out of the Christian religion, that Christianity was a religion and thus merely "a work of man". At the time of their "discovery", at any rate, the two forms of practice, politics and religion, did not stand opposite each other and were not separated, and each probably "possessed" aspects of the other form of practice that was discovered elsewhere.

That these two forms of practice have moved apart is usually presented in the separation of Christian Church and State, often using the term "secularization". Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde's pertinent and often noted essay was not the first to reconstruct the "Entstehung des Staates" (rise of the state) as a "Vorgang der Säkularisation" (process of secularization, Böckenförde 1991). But the idea that the profane state is the end result of a long-lasting process of secularization does not correspond very well with the events and developments discussed in the essay (Dreier 2001, 6ff.) – and specifically not with those in Germany, either: the emerging nation-state that is neutral toward religion (or denominations and Churches) was

based for a very long time on the system in which the ruler picked the State Church, a fusion of state rule and religious or Church leadership that was especially intense by historical comparison. The image of a religion that wrests itself free of the state and that had to withdraw from the matters integral to the state is not very plausible, considering that the matters that we, at least today, grasp under the terms "religion" and "Church" only emerged in the separation of Church and State – and thus religion or Church and State are simultaneous achievements of historical development.

Even if we can thus doubt that the concept of secularization is a good key to understanding the separation of Church and State, we will not therefore deny this development, at least not for the countries shaped by Christianity. Won in France against the Roman Catholic Church, enforced in the United States of America with and for the religious communities, and developed in Germany out of confessional splits and struggles, over the centuries at the latest, in these countries states developed that monopolize sovereignty and thereby make and can enforce societal decisions – and at the end of this development are not only under the rule of law, but are also democratically constituted (cf. Cavuldak 2015). To this end, state rule – and the medium of implementing rule, the law – were "profaned", i.e., "freed" of religious matters both in their language and in their legitimation; at the same time, the states made themselves neutral toward religions, religious communities, and Churches respectively present in them. The legitimation and orientation of state rule were stripped from the particular religions and confessions; additionally, the states placed themselves at a distance from the communities and Churches representing these religions and confessions, suppressed at least their direct influence, and instead submitted them to the states' law and the rule mediated by that law.

Not least through that, religions became a part of the societies ruled by states. With their particular symbolic systems and cognitive specificities, with the convictions and attitudes mediated in them and their systematized doctrines, and with their particular forms of practice, denominationally fragmented Christianity and with it also other religions have "withdrawn" to become a particular part of society – and thereby *became* religions. At least in its dominant form, the Christian religion – especially in Germany – was represented and shaped by the Christian Churches. In the various countries shaped by Christianity, various relations of delimitation and cooperation emerged between the state, on the one hand, and the Church(es), on the other. In distinction especially from the *laïcité* typical of France, for Germany since the Weimar constitution, we speak of a "lagging separa-

tion" – seeking to grasp with this substantively and semantically unsuitable term the religion-friendly policy of the German state, which awards to the Churches and, because these, also to other, if only a few other religious and ideological communities a high degree of self-administration and state privileges, above all the legal status of statutory bodies under public law.

The separation between religion or Churches and State, however, does not (yet) show that politics and religion simultaneously stepped apart as two different spheres. In order for states to develop on a democratic foundation, first the ancient idea of politics, which had been buried for centuries, had to be taken up again. Though this form of practice did not tally with the nation-states of the various countries, it nonetheless had its essential focus in the state. For only in the state do modern societies have an adequately efficacious instrument with which communal interests and the order of the respective social relations can be enforced. Since politics is therefore related to the state (though not exclusively) and because in politics an increasing plurality of interests and forms of life, but also of the "ultimate truths", the powerful convictions and values, must be mastered and at the same time the claims of deliberative rationality must be served, this particular form of practice was profaned through the mutual expectations of the actors driving it – and the "ultimate truths" were thereby driven out of it in such a way that such "ultimate truths" cannot drive politics, at least not successfully. Thus, while the air became thin for "ultimate truths" in contexts of political practice, they find outstanding conditions in the sphere of religion; and religious communities and especially by the Christian Churches took them up, organized them, dogmatized them, and – finally – demanded them from the faithful. By setting mutual boundaries that they, together, can regard as meaningful, actors separated them step-by-step and, over a long period, grasped them as two different spheres of their symbolically mediated practice or – to use the terminology of Pierre Bourdieu – as two different social fields (Bourdieu/Wacquant 1996). Because they are socialized under the conditions of this separation, actors are shaped by the attributions of meaning embedded in politics and religion, by what they perceive, and by how they interpret these. By implementing these meanings in their practice, they make use of and reproduce the boundary-drawing between politics and religion. Actors know when they engage in politics and when they implement their religiosity – and know how to operate competently, and that means differently, in the two fields of politics and religion.

This separation between politics and religion thereby remains below the level of differentiation that is usually addressed in theories of differentiation. Both politics and religion have their own symbolic systems, their own doctrines, and definitely their specific forms of practice. The two symbolic systems are not so alien to each other that they can't be connected, mediated, and mutually translated. On the contrary, the language of politics flows into the field of religion, as one can see in the central concepts precisely of Christian theology, for example the concept of justice. But vice versa, as well, actors in the sphere of politics cannot do without religious symbols – and this not only when (for example with the term "cult of personality") they want to problematize dislocations in this sphere. For example, the term "Creation" has a fixed position in environmental debates, even though it obviously cannot be used without alluding to God as the Creator. Despite their separation, politics and religion are permeable to each other.

2. "Faith-based politics"

Ernst Michel (1689-1964) used the term "faith-based politics" (German: "Politik aus dem Glauben") to designate political engagement that the actors in question understand as an expression of their Christian faith – in such a way that their Christian faith is "preserved" (Michel 1926, 20) in these politics. Conceptually, he distanced this engagement from a Catholically organized politics – and thereby opened the theological access to political practice of faith through the forms of expression that it had found in German social Catholicism. In the following, when the focus is on the presence of the faithful in politics and on theologically reconstructing this presence under the conditions of the separation of politics and religion, Michel's term will be taken up gladly. The Christian religion in particular has a necessarily communitarian dimension, and precisely this communitarian dimension is implemented in the form of practice that is captured in "religion" and the sphere delimited as religion. Nonetheless, this approach would inappropriately focus theological attention on "only one" of various forms of political practice that are intentionally tied to the Christian faith. So, in the coming theological reconstruction, it is important to take as broad an approach as possible, and that means working from the faith of the actors who embody the religion and precisely not from the sphere of religion that they jointly "populate". That is what the term "faith-based politics" will stand for in the following.

Adherents have both the cognitive and the habitual aspects of faith, i.e., specific convictions, certainties, attitudes, and stances (this is the pragmatic premise of the following considerations) as an aspect of their action. These aspects do not lie outside of their action – and therefore are also not to be understood as something temporally or causally preceding their action. The matters designated by the noun "faith" thus exist only as aspects of the action designated by the verb "be faithful". If this verb refers to a specific action, one will ascribe it to actors who understand themselves as the faithful – and that means who understand themselves as being in a relationship to God and who, through this self-understanding, determine who they "are", including in front of others. Based on this self-understanding, these actors will interpret their action as faith, and others will interpret their action in the same way because of a known or announced self-understanding. To the degree that the faithful usually don't "invent" their God, but "find Him" in the traditions of Christianity and appropriate ideas about and attitudes toward God that are transmitted in those traditions, they understand themselves not only in relation to this God, but also – even if not unbrokenly – in relation to Christianity, for whose traditions they "can thank" God.

Understanding oneself in relation to God has a holistic aspect, at least if one has gotten to know this God in Christian contexts. The faithful accordingly know themselves to be "entirely" and "always" addressed by this God, even if they do not (and cannot) remain aware of this "entirely" and "always" either always or as an "entire" person. The holism of the relationship to God typical of Christianity, however, is not transposed to the action that the faithful term "faith". That God always and entirely addresses them does not mean that they are faithful always and in all their actions – including when they always and unceasingly act as accountable actors.

With the aid of the "quasi-dialogical" model of action suggested by Dietrich Böhler (Böhler 1977), the action termed "faith" can be extracted from the stream of the faithful's action and specified more precisely: actions are characterized not only through observable operations and the goals attributed to them, but also through the situations in which the operations are observed and interpreted as situations for the attributed goals. Both in self-interpretation and in interpretation by others, the relationship between situation and actors is thereby two-sided: action situations *are relevant to* actors, whereby it is the actors who perceive, from the perspective of possible action, which of the circumstances and events surrounding them are relevant to them and in this sense "select" the occasions of their action. On the other hand, individuals *act* in situations and thereby react to

these situations or to certain aspects of situations that are relevant to them. Colloquially, we say that one "ends up in" a situation, that it "happens" to or "befalls" us, and that we are "confronted" with it. We thereby express that the situation is something that precedes our action (or inaction), but that challenges us because it "concerns", "interests", or "is relevant to" us (Böhler 1985, 252). In their action, actors "answer" situations that they first interpret as "questions" and that, in precisely this way, they have constituted as situations of their action. Only by interpreting external conditions or events as "questions" are they provoked to give practical "answers". "If that is correct, then it may be asserted that both the possible genesis and the necessary function of an action, namely to alter, shape, or master situations, has a quasi-dialogical structure" (ibid. 257).

Based on this theory of action, it is possible to gain a specific understanding of the faithful's actions described as "faith": their action situation can make actors see themselves as challenged in their relationship to God and thus in their self-understanding as faithful. Based on their self-understanding, they interpret experiences of their action situations as a "question". Their action can be termed faith if they seek to "answer" such "questions" in such a way that in these action situations they live up to to their relationship to God and thus realize themselves as faithful. Faith is thus the "answer" to such action situations, which the faithful interpret as inquiries into their self-understanding as faithful. This concept of faith does not address every action of the faithful as faith, because although the faithful are always the faithful, they are not always challenged in precisely this self-understanding and consequently need not always confirm themselves as the faithful in their action. Only such action is addressed as "faith" through which the faithful seek to master action situations that challenge them as the faithful and therein in their relationship to God – and seek to master them in such a way as to confirm their relationship to God and through it themselves as faithful (cf. Möhring-Hesse 1997, 83-206).

Because faith is tied to a corresponding interpretation of action situations, others cannot simply interpret the action of the faithful as faith on the basis of a known self-understanding. It is not possible to see from the outside whether their action is faith, i.e., a practical implementation of their relationship to God. Others may have good reasons to arrive at corresponding interpretations of the situation and then to interpret the action of the faithful as faith. But ultimately, they depend on receiving corresponding information from the faithful themselves that their action situations

address their relationship to God as challenges – and that they themselves interpret their action as faith and thereby make it identifiable for others.

In what religion concretely is for the faithful, they find an outstanding site where they are challenged as the faithful in such a way that they must confirm themselves in their relationship to God and thus as the faithful. It is downright paradigmatic that, in religious services, the faithful urge each other to profess their faith and at the same time "accept" this profession. But this site does not completely encompass their faith, which is in principle possible in all sites of differentiated societies and also outside of religion. In principle, the faithful can be challenged everywhere in their relationship to God and thus as faithful ones, so that in this situation they must confirm themselves as the faithful and only in this way thereby master the challenge of precisely these situations – and this even when they are unable to put this challenge into words for the respective others and therefore cannot communicate it (Möhring-Hesse 2008; on this, cf. Telser 2013 and Kreutzer 2016).

Contexts of political practice can become this kind of situations, and political engagement can become a form for mastering the challenges resulting from them. Then the faithful carry out their political engagement as the faithful – and carry out "faith-based politics". They exert influence on the shaping of their social circumstances and "negotiate" these circumstances with others – precisely therein confirming themselves in their relationship to God and realizing themselves as those who have faith in this God and who live in hope of Him. As much as this engagement is politics, it is equally also faith. This faith is in principle partial, to the degree that not all situations of the political engagement of the faithful (must) become challenges to their faith and to the degree that their politics need not always "serve" the implementation of their faith. Politics then serves to secure interests "beyond" the identity as faithful, though even then it is possible that, on a deeper level of self-interpretation or more fundamental attitudes, this political engagement, too, is understood as an expression of their own faith and is correspondingly intended. If "faith-based politics" is theologically reconstrued in this way, this does not affect the noted separation between politics and religion, to the degree that "faith-based politics" is political engagement in the social field of politics and faith is therefor "outside" the field of religion, even if is not independent of this field.

At least if one imagines the God hoped for in Christianity as one present in human history and pressing for human salvation and if one cannot imagine this God except as the salvation intended for all people, one will suspect that political contexts not only *can* become challenges for the

faithful and that politics not only *can* serve to master these challenges. Rather, one will assume that, for the faithful, politics is very probably a matter of faith: those of the faithful who understand themselves not only as addressees, but also as independent subjects of a salvation for all humankind that God brings into human history, will ineluctably "come" into situations in which they must engage in politics in order to realize themselves as the faithful in their relationship to the God who is beneficial for all people. In this sense, Edward Schillebeeckx is not the only one who rightly speaks of a "political dimension of the Christian faith in God" (Schillebeeckx 1987, 92).[1]

3. The Pragmatics of Public Faith: Convictions and Becoming Understandable

After politics and religion separated into two different spheres of symbolically mediated forms of practice, "faith-based politics" is situated in a special way, namely "placed" in a sphere of politics separated from religion. In this sphere, actors expect each other to engage in politics, i.e., to seek to shape their common social circumstances and to use power to that end, thereby mustering at least a certain orientation toward the common welfare, willingness to compromise, and other things; but they do *not* expect from each other that they intentionally tie their political engagement to their faith, and they do *not* expect that one of them engages in politics in order to thereby confirm himself or herself in his or her relationship to God and as a faithful person. Unlike the sphere of religion, the actors in the sphere of politics do not have joint access to the attitudes and convictions needed to give such a connection between faith and politics meaning; nor do they have a common language to create such a meaning. If the sphere of politics becomes the situation of Christian faith, then the faithful see themselves called upon there to master the challenges of the situation and to engage in politics to this end, but that means to fulfill the expectations and counter-expectations that constitute this sphere. "Faith-based

1   When Schillebeecksx and other theologians speak with great generality of the "political dimension" of the Christian faith and identify politics not only as a highly probable, but beyond that as a necessary form of carrying out Christian faith, then this results from his concept of politics, which is as comprehensive as conceivable: politics as the "intense form of societal engagement [...], an engagement possible to everyone" (Schillebeeckx 1987, 99).

politics" is not excluded from the sphere of politics because of the separation between politics and religion; but this sphere with all its particularities becomes the precondition for "faith-based politics" and limits the possibilities to successfully confirm and realize oneself as one of the faithful through politics.

First, "faith-based politics" can be successful only if the faithful "find" ends and means with which they can master the problems and dislocations that they experience as challenges to their faith. If they see themselves challenged as the faithful by, for example, discrimination, hostilities, or curtailments by people in the narrower or broader surroundings, for example because of the "option for the poor" inherent in their faith, and if they arrive at the conviction that the only suitable way to answer this challenge is to change their social circumstances, then they must "find" the politics with which they can strive for this change; and they must also explore the respective political field and establish themselves as political actors in this field – in the best case, together with others who have the same or similar convictions. In the political engagement thus "found", they master the situational challenge and thereby *successfully* confirm themselves as the faithful – and this, whether or not their engagement is also politically successful and they are able to enforce the projected changes together with others and against yet again others. However, the change intended with "faith-based politics" depends on precisely this political success, for which reason this success, too, lies in the intention of "faith-based politics". With the exception of situations of extreme injustice, in which political resistance can become a question of one's own authenticity, political success also lies in the intention of "faith-based politics" – and, along with the successful confirmation of the faithful as the faithful, it is thereby their second, as if outward-directed criterion of success.

Since its invention in Greek Antiquity, politics has been a decisive communicative enterprise: one engages in politics through the public "exchange" of opinions and their justifications. In this way, political actors persuade others; they collectivize their interest situations and their representation or they come to compromise agreements with others and thus bring themselves into accord. One way or another, they gain power and thereby increase their chance to prevail with their own interests over others. All attempts to generalize particular interests through general rights and thereby to identify intended changes as just are dependent on public communication. The faithful (too) will successfully engage only to the degree that they are successful in the communicative processes that consti-

tute politics. Two types of communication intentions can be distinguished that pragmatically determine "faith-based politics".

If the intention of the faithful is to realize themselves as the independent subject of the salvation irrupting into human history from God, for example by redressing discrimination, limitations, and dislocations and by arranging their social circumstances differently, then they must convince the respective other actors in the respective political field that the projected changes are in the general interest of all and in this sense are just or that they lie in the common interest at least in some sense. The precondition for their being able to convince this or that other person is that they are understood with their expressions and justifications of their political opinions. The others must therefore be able to deduce the meanings of the expressed opinions and reasons, i.e., they must also, for example, know what interests they have, if the claimed generality or at least the claimed commonality of interests is true. Only on the basis of such understanding is it possible for others to be convinced by reasons, to agree through insight to the politically pursued changes, and, convinced in this way, to engage in politics in the same direction. And only on the basis of mutual understanding is it conceivable that political actors spur each other on with opinions and reasons and "negotiate" a common politics. Consequently, "faith-based politics" is pragmatic only when and to the degree that it can, first, make itself, its intended changes, and their justification understandable for other actors in the political field in order to be able then to convince the respective others.

The requirement to make themselves understandable already makes it necessary, in political communication, for believers to use a language that abstains from the particularities of their faith and to transcend attitudes and convictions that can be plausible only in the context of their faith. To the degree that they thus cannot use the language that, after the separation between religion and politics, is "given" only in the sphere of religion, and to the degree that they must transcend precisely those convictions and attitudes that "have" meanings at least there, the faithful engage in the secular communication that constitutes the sphere of politics.

A second intention typical of the faithful in the public communication they conduct in the sphere of politics is less ambitious: they can want to make their "faith-based politics" so understandable that other political actors understand why these politics are an expression of their faith and thereby "essential to faith". Here, their intention is not to convince others of their politics. Rather, others are to be familiarized with the intentionality of their political engagement and with the "seriousness" and "urgency"

inherent in it. To this end, they must not only make it understandable to their addressees what changes they seek to have prevail and for what reasons; beyond that, they must make it understandable that, with these politics, they are answering matters that challenge them in their faith and that with these politics they seek to master these challenges and precisely thereby to confirm themselves in their faith. They do not need to speak completely and comprehensively about their faith, but they do need to speak enough about it that others can understand what it means to believe something and to be challenged in this faith by the respectively discussed matters in the world that are "outside" of the religion – and this, even if the others do not share this faith and cannot even understand why believers "have" this faith. The faithful will not be able to do this entirely without borrowing from the language of their faith and entirely without referring to the convictions and attitudes that are part of their faith. But they must put all of this into a secular language understandable to those who do not know this language of faith and who do not share these attitudes and convictions – and who are able, from what they can also understand, to fill with meanings the "islands" of what they don't understand. A prominent example of this kind of communication is the social encyclical "Laudato si′" (2015), in which Pope Francis not only makes the case for an ecological-social transformation and offers a secular environmental ethics, but at the same time also wants to make known a religious, unsecularizable ethics of Creation and spirituality from which the faithful view the lasting concern about the shared planet Earth as a matter of their faith and consequently "take" corresponding engagement as the practice of their faith.

To make oneself understandable in these two ways is not a precondition for being permitted to engage in secular discourse in the field of politics, as it was treated, starting with John Rawls and Robert Audi, in the Anglo-American debate about the secular justification of religious citizens (on this, cf. Schmidt 2001). It is simply a pragmatic condition of their participation in political discourses and the communicative representation of their "faith-based politics". To make oneself understandable is an imposed "constraint" only in that it is the precondition for successfully taking part in public negotiating processes in the sphere of politics. To make oneself understandable in the public representation of "faith-based politics", however, is also a question of competence, as Jürgen Habermas discussed in his essay "Religion in the Public Sphere". If they propound their "faith-based politics" in the sphere of politics, believers must be able to make themselves understandable with their opinions and reasons and additionally to "step outside" the language specialized for their faith but available

only in the sphere of religion. Habermas' implication that religious actors do not start out with this competence and that secular citizens are more skillful at least in public justification is rather improbable in the federal German context. The common and in this sense secular language in which political citizens can make themselves understood is namely not predefined by the separation between politics and religion. It does not result until there are processes of public negotiation in which actors not only "exchange" their opinions and reasons, but must also jointly "find" the language in which this exchange succeeds. That unreligious and in this sense secular citizens can be presumed to have it easier in this cannot be recognized, especially since they face similar "identitarian" and thus similarly structured challenges as religious citizens do to make themselves understandable with their politics. In addition, not only the unreligious, but also religious actors have carried out and still carry out the separation between politics and religion through symbolically mediated practice, so that this separation and consequently also the "rules of the game" of politics are as familiar (or unfamiliar) to the one group as to the other. Because the faithful are socialized politically and religiously under the same conditions of the separation between politics and religion, one should assume that believers can propound also their "faith-based politics" competently, and that means in a generally understandable way and in this sense secularly.

4. The Priority of Secular over Religious Meaning

Matters that the faithful experience "beyond" their religion as challenges to their faith are shaped by their historical context, and, precisely in this shaping, become challenges to the faithful that they "must" master through the particular form of practice of politics. What the faithful experience as challenges is thus already previously charged with meanings and becomes challenges to their faith with precisely these prior meanings – and beyond that, becomes religiously significant. In this case, too, what Edward Schillebeeckx (1914-2009) identified as fundamental for religious meaning and thereby also for revelation holds true: namely, that every "religious meaning of a worldly process [...] presupposes a human meaning" (Schillebeeckx 1990, 29). If historical matters, for example discrimination of, hostilities toward, or the limitations placed on people, are interpreted as challenges to one's own faith, then these matters are attributed a religious meaning and they are "asserted" to be relevant for the relationship between God and the people He considers with benevolence. This religious

interpretation of historical matters presupposes that these were previously interpreted as important matters "without direct relationship to God – 'etsi Deus non daretur'" (ibid.) – and in this sense as secular. Without prior secular meaning, however, the asserted religious meaning of the practice of "faith-based politics", namely the challenge to faith and the mastery of this challenge through political engagement, is invalid; but then "faith-based politics" is senseless secularly as well as religiously.

Historical matters prove to be secularly important under the conditions of their respective context of meaning – and thereby, in political questions in public communication, in the sphere of politics. That people are discriminated against, are subjected to hostility, and are curtailed in relation to others, that they are denied comparable rights and full inclusion in their social contexts, and that this is injustice against them – this and other things emerge if the corresponding assertions and their justifications can hold up in public communications. In political contexts, therefore, the "human meaning" (which is the precondition for religious meaning) emerges in public communication, or fails there. Thus, the picture usually drawn is veritably reversed: only in political debates do secular meanings develop which then become a challenge to the faith of believers and in this sense can become religiously meaningful. Because matters in the sphere of politics become ("are made") meaningful, they can also become meaningful for believers, also in a special way for their faith, i.e. religiously meaningful. So religion is not the first thing, which is then laboriously translated into the second, politics; rather, politics is the first thing that, for believers, becomes a problem in their faith and thereby religiously meaningful. Thus, "faith-based politics" does not initially format itself politically in religion, but in politics – and thus in precisely the opposite way from how it is drawn in the aforementioned debate about the secular justification of religious citizens, as well as by Habermas in his reconstruction of the public presence of the religious.

For the faithful, the priority of secular over religious meaning need neither always, nor necessarily manifest itself in a corresponding temporal sequence. Temporally, believers can thus definitely experience politically relevant matters as challenges for their faith and then "choose" political engagement to master them – and only "tread" the sphere of politics through this engagement and "participate" in the meaning jointly found there. But in these cases, as well, they must reproduce the priority of secular meaning – and, in the sphere of politics, they must ensure that the challenges to their faith and that the "faith-based politics" chosen to master these challenges have corresponding secular meanings. To put a fine point

on it: believers ensure the justice of "faith-based politics" in political discourses, i.e., in the sphere of politics and not in the sphere of religion – and this justice is the precondition that enables their politics to be valid as the practice of their faith and thereby as "faith-based politics", also in the sphere of religion and in relation to their brothers and sisters in faith in the religious language available to them in common.

Social-ethical literature often finds it interesting (as does Habermas, as well, in his essay "Religion in the Public Sphere") that, via the political engagement of the faithful, religious orientations inspiringly enter politics, open new perspectives or alternatives to well-trodden paths there, or enable previously blocked agreements. Orientations that are available only in religious language and that are interwoven with the attitudes and convictions characteristic of religions flow, via "faith-based politics", into politics – and have beneficial effects there. This "direction of flow" of meanings need not be excluded because of the priority of secular over religious meaning. Even if the religious meaning of politically relevant matters cannot be had without their secular meaning, these two different attributions of meaning will have mutual influence, so that not only will secular meaning shape religious meaning, but also vice versa: religious meaning will shape secular meaning. But even if, through "faith-based politics", religious orientations exert influence on the meanings discovered in politics of politically relevant matters, their religious meaning is decided by their ability to flow into the politically found meanings – and thereby in this context their ability to "gain" a secular meaning. But regarding this as a process of secularization does not grasp it well: if religious orientations gain a secular meaning, they are precisely not subsumed in this secular meaning. On the contrary: in relation to the secular meaning discovered in politics, there is a "surplus" of meaning in "faith-based politics" that the politically significant matters "have" for believers in their relationship to God.

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