

Blum, Alice

**Working Paper**

## Young, Christian, far-right? The Identitarian movement and its relationship to Christianity

IU Discussion Papers - Sozialwissenschaften, No. 4 (Juli 2024)

**Provided in Cooperation with:**

IU International University of Applied Sciences

*Suggested Citation:* Blum, Alice (2024) : Young, Christian, far-right? The Identitarian movement and its relationship to Christianity, IU Discussion Papers - Sozialwissenschaften, No. 4 (Juli 2024), IU Internationale Hochschule, Erfurt

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/301161>

**Standard-Nutzungsbedingungen:**

Die Dokumente auf EconStor dürfen zu eigenen wissenschaftlichen Zwecken und zum Privatgebrauch gespeichert und kopiert werden.

Sie dürfen die Dokumente nicht für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, öffentlich zugänglich machen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Sofern die Verfasser die Dokumente unter Open-Content-Lizenzen (insbesondere CC-Lizenzen) zur Verfügung gestellt haben sollten, gelten abweichend von diesen Nutzungsbedingungen die in der dort genannten Lizenz gewährten Nutzungsrechte.

**Terms of use:**

*Documents in EconStor may be saved and copied for your personal and scholarly purposes.*

*You are not to copy documents for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the documents publicly, to make them publicly available on the internet, or to distribute or otherwise use the documents in public.*

*If the documents have been made available under an Open Content Licence (especially Creative Commons Licences), you may exercise further usage rights as specified in the indicated licence.*

[www.iu.de](http://www.iu.de)

# IU DISCUSSION

## PAPERS

**Sozialwissenschaften**

### **YOUNG, CHRISTIAN, FAR-RIGHT?**

The Identitarian Movement and its Relationship to  
Christianity

**ALICE BLUM**

**IU Internationale Hochschule**

Main Campus: Frankfurt

Juri-Gagarin-Ring 152

99084 Erfurt

Telefon: +49 421.166985.23

Fax: +49 2224.9605.115

Kontakt/Contact: kerstin.janson@iu.org

Autorenkontakt/Contact to the author(s):

Prof. Dr. Alice Blum

ORCID-ID: 0000-0001-7118-7878

Email: alice.blum@iu.org

Standort/Campus z.B. IU Internationale Hochschule - Campus Düsseldorf

Darmstädter Landstraße 110

60598 Frankfurt a.M.

Email: alice.blum@iu.org

**IU Discussion Papers, Reihe: Sozialwissenschaften, Vol. 4, No. 4 (JUL 2024)**

ISSN-Nummer: 2750-0675

Website: <https://www.iu.de/forschung/publikationen/>

## **YOUNG, CHRISTIAN, FAR-RIGHT?**

### The Identitarian Movement and its Relationship to Christianity

**Alice Blum**

#### **ABSTRACT:**

This article looks at Germany's so-called "new right" and its interpretation of religion, using the example of the "Identitarian movement" in Germany. For this purpose, it will collate previous research findings and supplement them with material from my ethnographic research on Identitarians in Germany. It will examine how, due to the demarcation from Islam, an identity-oriented "self"-image with regard to Christianity is negotiated by members within the movement. Using the example of people I have encountered in my research I investigate the extent to which Christianity is referred to and which ways of dealing with it can be classified.

#### **KEYWORDS:**

*Identitarian Movement, New Right, Far Right, Religion Christianity, Ethnography*

#### **AUTORIN:**



*Alice Blum is Professor of Social Work at the International University of Applied Sciences, Germany. Her focus is on anti-discrimination work and research on the extreme right in Germany. She pays particular attention to gender perspectives and the New Right, especially using qualitative methods that involve interaction.*

## Introduction

*“If it all got too secularized, then figuratively speaking, the jackknife would go off in his pocket. If the Christmas story, then became a ‘Refugees Welcome’ story, that would be too much.”*

The quote comes from a transcript (from memory) from my ethnographic research on the Identitarian movement in Germany. Here, a member of the Identitarians comments on one of the current practices of the church and their criticism of it. Christianity is an important point of reference, especially for newer manifestations of the extreme right, but as the quote makes clear, it is not without controversy. Religions and other kinds of worldview are important for the extreme right worldwide. They serve to distinguish followers of far-right ideologies from other (political) groups, they constitute their own extreme right-wing identity, they act as a bridge that spans spectrums of opinion, and they help to paint images of “the enemy”. The various forms this takes depend on the milieu and the people who inhabit it.

This article looks at Germany’s so-called “new right” and its interpretation of religion, using the example of the “Identitarian movement” in Germany. For this purpose, it will collate previous research findings and supplement them with material from my ethnographic research on Identitarians in Germany. It will examine how, due to the demarcation from Islam, an identity-oriented “self”-image with regard to Christianity is negotiated by members within the movement. Using the example of people I have encountered in my research, I investigate the extent to which Christianity is referred to and which ways of dealing with it can be classified. No uniform picture can be identified, but religious references within the new right are discussed – to a greater or lesser extent depending on the context – and these can be characterized by their plurality (Diefenbach, 2021). The article is thus intended as a first attempt to outline various positions in order to encourage further investigation of these aspects.

## The extreme right in Germany and its relationship to religion(s)

In Germany, the extreme right’s relationships with religion can be described as diffuse. The spectrum ranges from neo-pagan religiosity to occultism and Germanic mythology to attachment to the Christian faith. In German research on right-wing extremism, the debate has often focused mainly on the former aspects rather than the latter one. It is only in recent years, with the rise of new-right and identitarian groups, that the focus has increasingly shifted to their references to Christianity (for example see: Salzborn, 2014; Yendell & Sammet, 2021). Nevertheless, the state of research on the relationship between the extreme right and religion can still be viewed as deficient (Wiedemann 2016). Wiedemann outlines three foundations on which a study of the extreme right’s relationship to religion could be based: first, “the religious character of the extreme right itself”<sup>1</sup>, then “the relationship of the extreme right to existing religions or religious movements”, and finally “the relationship of existing religions or religious movements to the extreme right” (Wiedemann, 2016, 511). This paper will focus on the second foundation. For the German context, Wiedemann identifies Judaism, Islam, and Christianity as the most important references. In relation to Judaism, he attests to the extreme right’s anti-Christian anti-semitism in particular. This is “a religion-related form of hostility toward Jews, which is directed against

<sup>1</sup> All original quotes have been translated by the author of this paper

the Christian religion as a supposedly mere continuation of Judaism itself and targets the Jewish foundations of Christianity” (Wiedemann, 2016, 519). In terms of the relationship to Islam, Wiedemann points out that in recent times Islam has increasingly become seen as the enemy of the extreme right. However, it is unclear whether one is dealing with “genuinely religious or religion-related forms of argumentation, or whether one interprets the corresponding campaigns against an ‘Islamization’ rather as an expression of a culturally argued racism” (Wiedemann, 2016, 522). With regard to Christianity, the relationship of the extreme right to it is by no means uniform but is characterized by historical changes and by differences of viewpoint within various far-right movements. While some on the extreme right reject Christianity on the basis of an anti-Christian anti-semitism and view it as a “desert religion”, ideologies about a “Christian West” have evolved into “a central point of reference and [...] as a kind of identifying substitute object for the nation” (Wiedemann, 2016, 520), especially by nationalist and right-wing conservatives. The Identitarian movement in Germany has in large part grown out of these conservative ideologies.

## The Identitarian movement in Germany – conceptual frameworks

Before discussing Identitarians’ interpretation of religion, we will first briefly introduce the organization. In international discourse as well as in the German context, conceptual imprecisions make the topic diffuse and hard to grasp. For example, depending on the context, the terms “Identitarian movement” or “Identitarians” refer to different phenomena that are related but which need to be distinguished from each other. Zúquete and Marchi, for example, refer to a global “Identitarian movement” that disseminates new-right ideologies worldwide. They subsume a number of far-right and conservative actors linked by ideological elements like the “great replacement theory” (Zúquete & Marchi, 2023). Although it refers to itself as the “German Identitarian Movement” or *Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland* (IBD), this interpretation is not prevalent in other German-speaking countries. In Germany, *Identitäre Bewegung* refers to an organization founded in 2012 with evident structures, hierarchies, and goals. It is an association (registered in Paderborn) with formal features such as an association chairperson and board. Other features have developed in the organization, such as a federal leadership or regional leaderships. There are also people responsible for various “departments”, such as strategy, activism, media, and technology. “According to § 2 of the association’s statutes, the IBD pursues, among other things, the goal of preserving and promoting the identity of the German people as an independent one among the identities of the other peoples of the world.” According to its program, it stands in opposition to “globalization” and a supposed “displacement of German identity from more and more areas of public and private life” (Identitäre Bewegung e.V. cited by Landesregierung Nordrhein-Westphalen, 2015, 2). Members set out their goals on the movement’s website, where they advocate the preservation of an “ethnocultural identity” as well as “defense of one’s own”, “genuine freedom of expression”, “remigration”, “local aid”, and “secure borders” (Identitäre Bewegung e.V., 2023).

One model for the German organization is France’s *Génération Identitaire* (GI), which emerged from the *Bloc Identitaire* founded in 2003. In October 2012, members of this group occupied the roof of a mosque in Poitiers. Their protest was directed against “Islamization” and “mass immigration” in Europe. Instead of a “multicultural Europe”, they argued that people should return to their “national” identities.

The place and date of the action were no coincidence, intended to commemorate a battle that took place in 732 CE, when Charles Martel drove “the Moors” out of the Iberian peninsula, and which is viewed by some as a victory of “Europeans” over Muslims. This date also appears in the propaganda of the German grouping *Identitäre Bewegung* (appearing on stickers and posters, for instance). Taking their inspiration from such historical events, the supporters of GI saw themselves as fighting against immigration and Islam in Europe and “stage[d] themselves [...] as a legitimate, historically secured defense against Muslims and thus equated today’s Muslim immigrants with Moorish soldiers from whom one had to protect oneself” (Bruns et al., 2014, 15). From this action we can identify the German Identitarian movement’s earliest references to religion, discussed in detail below.

## The others and us

The notion of a threat posed by Islam currently characterizes many narratives of extreme right-wing groups (Pfahl-Traughber, 2019). As well as references to peoples and nations, Islamophobia constitutes a unifying ideological element between right-wingers of all stripes. The narrative of the “great replacement”, a racist dystopia Germans are gradually being “replaced” by migrants (Camus 2016), and with it the fear of creeping Islamization, is an identitarian trope. It is comparable with various racist notions like the plurality of ethnicities. Balibar and Wallerstein refer to such culture-oriented thinking as “racism without races” (Balibar & Wallerstein, 1990, 180). Hund argues that these conceptions are designed to “undermine the discrediting of the concept of race by replacing it with notions of culture” (Hund, 2007, 11). As Zúquete points out for global Identitarianism, it also encourages in Identitarians the notion that Islam is antithetical to their values (Zúquete, 2018). Pfahl-Traughber argues that, for Identitarians, “one’s own identity can rarely be positively defined by relevant values. In contrast, the predominant position against migrants, i.e. a negative position, is clearer. Only from their rejection do ‘identitarians’ derive the identity that is so important” (Pfahl-Traughber, 2019, 172). This interpretation seemed to apply especially in the early days of the Identitarian movement, with members united by the rejection of others and an activist stance designed to foster this tendency. But what is one’s “own” is constructed and interpreted in relation to the “other”. The slogan “homeland, freedom and tradition” has often characterized identitarian ideology. However, these terms have only partially been defined and are not subject to a uniform interpretation within the grouping. As the organization’s structure became more established, debates arose within the members about their own positioning, which were disseminated at the organization’s regular internal forums and “training” sessions or appeared on Identitarian websites. Many of these posts strive to present themselves as non-racist, non-right-wing extremist or non-nationalist, and focus on “not being” or the “negative position”, in Pfahl-Traughber’s words. It is hard to find more detailed positions on what Identitarians are now, as opposed to claims of not being anything. One hint can be found in an article entitled “Critique of Islam Criticism”, published on another blog in 2013: “It’s not about Islam, it’s not about Israel, it’s not about the ‘West’, the ‘Enlightenment’, religious freedom, the pork schnitzel in the cafeteria, and the bare-breasted, unveiled pinups in the daily paper. It’s about reclaiming our historical, ethnic, and cultural identity” (Identitäre Bewegung, 2017). The significance of religion for the formation of this identity for Identitarians will be examined in more detail below.

For the “new right”, Salzborn argues that religion is not only significant in that “others”, such as Muslims, are devalued and rejected, but also ascribes to it “dispositions of identity and alterity” (Salzborn, 2017, 79). In this context, “religion is understood not only as an external, but also as an internal component of one’s own worldview” (Salzborn 2017, 79). According to Diefenbach, research on the relationship between new-right actors and Christianity characterizes it as one of “belonging without believing” (Diefenbach, 2021, 417). In her study, for which she invited three new-right Germany-based groupings (Alternative für Deutschland, PEGIDA, and Identitäre Bewegung) to take part in group discussions, she described a more differentiated relationship: “The meanings and functions of Christianity for specific groups vary considerably, so that it is at one time constitutive for a group-specific political identity, at another irrelevant, and at another ambivalent” (Diefenbach, 2021, 439). In this context, “some make Christianity a social problem, while others regard it as a central resource for addressing societal challenges” (Diefenbach, 2021, 440). This illustrates internal diversity in the extreme right and thus also suggests the potential for conflict when members of these groupings strive to act as if these constitute a “closed” collective (Diefenbach, 2021, 440). The Identitarian movement also has an ambivalent relationship with religion. In addition, the author identifies a kind of “ambivalent nostalgia for an imagined lost time in which Catholic knowledge was still an unquestionable part of personal and social life” (Diefenbach, 2021, 438 f.). This ambivalence, however, poses challenges for the organization, as it contradicts members’ assertions about the apparently unique characteristics of different people, including whether they are believers in a specific religion. One writer proclaims on the group’s website: “Human identity is formed from a complex web of diverse historical, biographical, cultural, religious and social contexts. [...] A collective characteristic of our identity is the ethnocultural aspect [...]. We believe that each people of this earth are characterized by its particular diversity and is something unique in its way of life, values, culture, origin, religion and social practices” (Identitäre Bewegung 2023).

As a result, Identitarians would at least need a clear plotline for their own religious narrative. This is a challenge, considering that members of identitarian groupings in Germany come from a variety of backgrounds. While many members come from the alt-right milieu, where their religious orientation tends to be attracted to pagan tropes, others come from the conservative spectrum and ascribe themselves as Christian. Others come from environments where religion had little or no significance. With the attempt to define a separate – putatively “ethnic” or “cultural” identity – some researchers have argued that we also need to examine what are supposed to be “common European values” in order to fully assess the assumptions underlying the “grand narratives” (Schellhöf et al., 2018) of these types of groups.

## On the relevance of Christianity for Identitarians

In my ethnographic research, I spoke with a number of members of the Identitarian movement in Germany. When I asked a former IBD member about the organization’s interpretation of religion, they told me: “Religion was not an issue in my time. I can’t imagine that anything has changed much. Of course there were currents and opinions, like everywhere. At internal meetings, for example, the subject wasn’t addressed. But there was no official line” (Messenger communication). This statement is vague, on the one hand, with regard to the positioning of the Identitarian movement in Germany and, on the



other, in terms of the organization being tightly knit, but the theme of religion is also not clearly set out. In conversations with other members, however, it became clear that Christianity was the main point of reference for an interpretation of religion in the IBD. I identify three aspects whereby Christianity has connotations for members: as a historical reference for a cultural tradition that is also lived as an everyday practice, but without a deeper attachment to faith; as a way to represent their (purportedly political) stance; and as a complement to right-wing debate and a desire among some members for spirituality and faith.

What they all had in common, however, was a critique of contemporary church practices, which they accused of sabotaging its own precepts. The common narrative here was that the contemporary church authorities, regardless of denomination, was making itself a scapegoat for migration policy and, with an excess of charity in the sense of a misunderstood love of one's neighbor, was working toward the destruction of German (or European) identity. This is exemplified by a statement in a blog entry on the Identitarians' website: "The ethnomasochistic substitute religion of those so moved by the fate of the 'refugees' is precisely not Christianity, but merely a postmodern distortion of its cultural legacy" (Identitäre Bewegung, 2018). Christianity is hereby rejected and deemed incorrect. In contrast, Identitarians present a defensible Christianity, which refers to what used to be called "the Middle Ages", when Christianity was the dominant ideology, also in combination with power-political interests. Müller, a former identitarian activist who comes from the alt-right camp, wrote the book "Contracultural" (counterculture), in which more than 300 keywords are outlined that are supposed to present the image of Identitarians. He also refers to Christianity and the "good" and "bad" versions of it. Thus, he tells the reader: "Moreover, Christianity was for a long time the unifying element of the European peoples when it came to defense against external enemies, in the Spanish Reconquista as well as in the Crusades or in the Turkish Wars" (Müller, 2017, 150). Catholicism, however, was later plunged into a deep crisis in which "Christian love of neighbor was all too often reinterpreted as universal love of foreigners, which gave the word to mass immigration and Islamization in a suicidal manner" (Müller, 2017, 150). Pittl refers to this approach to religion as "identitarian Christianity" (Pittl, 2018), which he has elaborated using the example of the "new right". This ideology ties in "with the militant elements of the Christian tradition, such as the Crusades and the alleged 'defensive struggles' of Christian rulers against Islamic expansionist efforts. The invocation of a defensible Christian Occident is thereby combined with criticism of an overextension of Christian mercy, which is branded as naïve and self-destructive" (Pittl, 2018, 407). Moreover, the ideas of militant Christianity play an important role for members in reconciling their own actions with religious worldviews. Because their activism, among other goals, aims to exclude "others", this goal needs to be compatible with their ideas of "faith". This orientation can be identified in other postings, which illuminate activists' diverse interpretations of Christianity, often used to refer to a cultural tradition lived as an everyday practice but without a deeper connection to faith.

One variant is that the traditions and practices of Christianity play a role in the everyday lives of some members. However, this seems to be less about spiritual engagement with God or with the Bible than about an interpretation that offers itself as a content-related backdrop for an identitarian self-image. The following exchange took place with an activist: "Frank says he is a Catholic. I ask if he goes to church regularly. He answers in the affirmative. Except when there are actions and when everything becomes too secularized, then the jackknife in his pocket would go off in a figurative sense. If the Christmas story,

then became a ‘Refugees Welcome’ story, that would be too much. To make it all so new and adapted all the time. To no longer refer to a German identity, something like landscapes, food, music, etc. Just because a migrant eats white sausage and wears lederhosen, they wouldn’t be integrated, they would have no connection to German history. Even if it would be nice if they ate sausage now” (p. 10/p. 9/lines 22-32).

The activist comes from a conservative family from the eastern part of Germany. For them, going to church represents a tradition that can also be embedded in an identitarian political narrative of a “German identity”, as long as the content is appropriate. The activist mentioned the identity-related characteristic of religious affiliation without prompting. They said they regularly attend church events, but at the same time make clear that belonging to the Identitarian movement is more important to them than belonging to the faith community, preferring political activism. Despite their expressed Catholic faith, they are critical of the current interpretation of its teachings. Reference to a supposedly biological component of an “ethnopluralistic” worldview also becomes clear: “Germans” are only those who can refer to a corresponding family biography. In their interpretation of what “being German” means, they refer to a biology-oriented hypothesis of descent, which they try to connect with Christianity. Müller writes, in his “Movement Handbook”: “One can hardly overestimate the cultural value of Catholicism for the Occident [...]” (Müller, 2017, 150). He sees in this a great deal of scope for interpretation, which for Identitarians can convey the original culture and its continuation and thus function as a marker of identity. This is not a matter of particular religious debates but of identifying traditions and practices suitable for identitarian self-presentation and transmission of a supposed cultural heritage. These have been termed “belonging without believing” by Marzouki and McDonnell in 2016.

### *Christian artifacts and their role in self-presentation*

Another way in which Christianity has sometimes been made a theme among Identitarians relates to how artifacts with Christian symbolism are used for self-presentation. Some Identitarians refer to a Christianity that needs to be defended, which justifies their actions and connects their ideology to the outside world.

For example, one activist had a picture on their Facebook page that showed an image of Saint Augustine with the following quote: “Hope has beautiful daughters; their names are Anger and Courage. Anger at the ways things are, and Courage to see that they do not remain as they are.” Before right-wingers referred to it, left-wing currents already took up this quote to point out the changeability of social conditions. The activist quotes in this context a so-called “church Father” who was authoritative for the “old church”. Augustine postulated the idea of “just war”. Unlike other church Fathers, he did not reject warlike actions and considered warlike confrontation justified even among pagan or unjust rulers (Looney 2017). He justified this on the basis of a “fall from grace”. So those who had acted wrongly deserved to be led back onto the right path by warlike means (Looney, 2017, 233). These views paved the way for Christians to resist prevailing policies and the appropriation of their ideals. The reference to Saint Augustine in the context of the Identitarians can be read as an annexing of various ideological aspects, whereby a history of religious strife is exploited for their identity construction. Identitarians see themselves as morally correct revolutionaries in a society that is going to ruin – as Saint Augustines

of today. Despite their professed love of their country, this legitimizes their actions against their own state. This recourse to religious figures serves in their eyes to maintain moral correctness as well as to make clear that they are historically equal to a supposed cultural heritage. But Identitarians not only refer to tradition-bound Christian events or figures, they also reinterpret the faith itself so that it can be used for their own identity construction. Ideas of a “defensible Jesus” play a role; as one activist told me: “He points to his necklace. It was an imprint of a box fitting that he and a friend had had embossed. For him, it epitomized another era of Christianity. It would be a motif of a defensible Jesus, not one who still turns the other cheek. I ask if I could take a closer look at the necklace. He takes it off and gives it to me. It is heavy, is silver and represents a kind of cross with a skull” (p. 2/pp. 2-3/lines 35-36). Though the history of the symbol is interesting, for Identitarians the narrative derived from it is the key aspect. The motif of the defensible Jesus is based on a few passages from the New Testament. While Christ has usually been portrayed as the pacifist humanitarian and brother, verse 34 in chapter 10 of The Gospel of St. Matthew can also be interpreted alternatively: “Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace, but the sword!”, Jesus says. For Identitarians, this is proof that they do not have to endure everything but can also defend themselves through their Christian faith. It is interesting that these two activists are proud to present their artifacts to others. Be it in social media, such as Facebook, or as a real artefact that is visible to others. The public should see which form of Christianity they find attractive. Neither of them, however, are religious beyond that or practice religious customs. Christianity thus becomes merely a way to express their stances and to present a self-identity to the world. Christianity is thus referred to without a ritual practice or references to a spiritual engagement with faith. The artifacts with religious symbolism serve as an identifying sign within the organization. Through artifacts, members express and practice demarcation (Blum, 2022).

## Christianity as a complement to right-wing intellectual debate and a yearning for spirituality and faith

References to Christianity or supposedly “Germanic” mythology also pose challenges for some members. Not all of them, for example, were raised religiously and must therefore interpret this and find their own perspective. One strategy is to engage on a theoretical level, as one activist told me in an e-mail: “I’m reading Lichtmesz’s ‘Can Only One God Save Us?’ You may know the author’s name from the Secession, and Kubitschek has also published the book. Lichtmesz has mostly only written smaller essays so far, to my knowledge this is his first more comprehensive book. I have not started it to be better able to cope with the Bible resistance of ‘Waldorf pedagogues’ in the future ;-), no the topic interests me already, especially since Lichtmesz as an author takes the perspective of the religious newcomer, which can be well adopted by the reader. By me, anyway. Already from the 5th chapter, however, he also already draws political topics that promise to let the evening end again gloomily. In the end, however, I hope for something more enlightening than depressing from the topic of religion. It is, for example, a topic that both left and right have in common. How do we deal with frustration and poor prospects? The more closely you look at a social, human, political issue, the worse the findings. How do you preserve what is worth protecting? In one case, justice between the sexes, tolerance, an open society; in the other, a European culture and rules of coexistence” (e-mail). Christian faith is used here as a way of participating in discussions in the organization on the one hand, while it also offers

conceptual tools for interpreting political issues. The argument is not so much based on a religiously founded interpretation of faith, but rather Christianity is emphasized as a point of reference for the question of identity. In this context, religious affiliation also creates a common ground that generates a supposedly “European” identity by referring to a shared interpretation of faith that apparently has a historical foundation. Religion thus becomes the pivotal point of an “us/them” construction with a focus on demarcation from others and self-reference, which is seen as worth defending and protecting. In the course of my investigation, this activist was trying to deepen their engagement with religion, telling me: “I myself was also distracted researching over the summer months. Inspired by the Demo for All, my interest had been drawn to the Christian scene. And I admit, me you and your research as secret example taken, times in strange waters to fish and me into these God-fearing circles, apart from the national churches, to tread. Highly interesting. My Sunday mornings have been completely taken up with various church services. I’m still doing some more work on this, but the results so far will reassure you, the groups discovered so far are quite apolitical, they live very much in their own world. Although often also dissatisfied with the conditions, the remedy is actually sought in prayer. On top of that, my subjective impression, which I base on habitus, clothing and manner of expression, was that the conservative Christian or evangelical scene is running behind the trend of the national churches and is rather in the process of slowly changing to the left than vice versa” (e-mail). This example makes it clear that this correspondent desired a comprehensive identity that combines the political and spiritual and which is also expressed in affiliations and practices. Unlike the first variant, this is not about the ritualizing of certain practices, like going to church, but in this case, there is a longing for a deeper engagement with the Christian faith. It becomes clear that this idea of “faith” and the faith community should not be oriented towards a “modern” church, but that adherents should work to resolve disagreements instead of merely immersing themselves in spirituality.

## Conclusion

Like Diefenbach (2021), I was able to identify an ambivalence in dealing with Christianity. Nevertheless, it becomes clear that it has a relevance in the presentation of some people’s self-image as members of the Identitarian movement. Christianity is used to justify their assumptions in contrast to other cultures and to set them apart. By practicing religious customs, a pattern of action is also attributed to this identity. However, this is not a spiritual confrontation, but merely a means of making members’ actions congruent. In addition, artifacts with Christian symbolism are used to present a specific identity to the world. When spirituality plays a role, however, this relates to political positioning. Christianity and being somehow “correct” must thus be reconciled. Current humanistic faith communities are not suitable for this. Instead, a phase of Christianity is taken up in which militancy and the idea of “just war” were posited. However, the Identitarian movement does not have a uniform interpretation of religion, which points to the plurality of its members and the challenge of finding a consensus on this issue. Thus, even for Identitarians, the crucial question “How do you feel about religion?” remains an individual one and not one to which we can truthfully give a single answer.

## Bibliography:

- Balibar, É. & Wallerstein, I. (1990). *Rasse, Klasse, Nation. Ambivalente Identitäten*. Argument Verlag.
- Blum, A. (2022). *Die Identitäre Bewegung in Deutschland. Eine ethnographische Untersuchung*. (Dissertation, Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen). <http://dx.doi.org/10.22029/jlupub-763>
- Bruns, J., Glösel, K. & Strobl, N. (2014). *Die Identitären. Handbuch zur Jugendbewegung der Neuen Rechten in Europa*. Unrast-Verlag.
- Diefenbach, A. (2021). Zwischen Lebenssinn, Spott und Nostalgie. Wie das Christentum neurechte Anhänger vereint und trennt. In *Zeitschrift für Religion, Gesellschaft und Politik*, no. 5, (P. 415 – 443). doi.org/10.1007/s41682-021-00089-7
- Hund, W.D. (2007). *Rassismus*. Transcript Verlag.
- José Pedro Zúquete, J. P. & Marchi, R. (2023). *Global Identitarianism*. Routledge.
- Looney, A. (2017). Die Lehre vom gerechten Krieg im frühen Christentum: Augustinus. In I. Werkner and K. Ebeling (eds.), *Handbuch Friedensethik* (P. 225 – 237). Springer VS. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-14686-3\\_19](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-14686-3_19)
- Marzouki, N. & McDonnell, D. (2016). Introduction: populism and religion. In N. Marzouki, D. McDonnell & O. Roy (eds.), *Saving the people: how populists hijack religion* (P. 1 – 11). Hurst & Company.
- Pfahl-Traughber, A. (2019). *Rechtsextremismus in Deutschland Eine kritische Bestandsaufnahme*. Springer VS.
- Pittl, S. (2018). Die politische Theologie der Neuen Rechten. In: *Lebendige Seelsorge*, no. 6/69, ( P. 404 – 409). Echter Verlag.
- Salzborn, S. (2014). Religionsverständnisse im Rechtsextremismus. Eine Analyse am Beispiel des neurechten Theorieorgans "Sezession". In *Jahrbuch für öffentliche Sicherheit*. (P. 285 – 301).Verlag für Polizeiwissenschaft.
- Salzborn, S. (2017). *Angriff der Antidemokraten. Die völkische Rebellion der Neuen Rechten*. Beltz-Juventa.
- Schellhöh, J., Reichertz, J., Heins, V. M. & Flender, A. (2018). *Groß Erzählungen des Extremen. Neue Rechte, Populismus, Islamismus, War on Terror*. Transcript Verlag.

- Wiedemann, F. (2016). Das Verhältnis der extremen Rechten zur Religion. In F. Virchow, M. Langebach & A. Häusler (eds.) *Handbuch Rechtsextremismus* (P 511 – 532). Springer VS. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-19085-3\\_16](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-19085-3_16)
- Yendell, A. & Sammet, K. (2021). Religion und Rechtsextremismus. In *Zeitschrift für Religion und Rechtsextremismus*, no. 5. (P. 411 – 414). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41682-021-00097-7>
- Zúquete, J. P. (2018). *The Identitarians. The Movement Against Globalism and Islam in Europe*. Notre Dame.

## Sources:

- Camus, R. (2016). *Die Revolte gegen den großen Austausch*. Antaios.
- Identitäre Bewegung (2017): Kritik der Islamkritik. <https://www.identitaere-bewegung.de/blog/kritik-der-islamkritik/>
- Identitäre Bewegung (2018): Der Flüchtling als Heiliger. <https://www.identitaere-bewegung.de/blog/theorie/der-fluechtling-als-neuer-heiliger/>
- Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland e.V. (2023). Forderungen, 2023, <https://www.identitaere-bewegung.de/forderungen/>
- Landesregierung Nordrhein-Westfalen (2015.) Vereinsatzung der Identitären (n.a.), cited in *Landesregierung Nordrhein-Westfalen 2015: 2*.
- Müller, M. A. (2017). *Kontrakultur*. Antaios.