Introduction

Losing Heaven

When European travellers returned home from newly discovered continents during the age of European expansion, they often wrote accounts of their impressions for posterity. Alongside the search for gold and other riches, it was the inhabitants of far-off countries and their cultures that chiefly captured their attention. The spirit of discovery and a greed for profit were often fused with a desire to spread Christianity, so the religion of the indigenous population was a particular source of fascination, with Christian Europe exporting its religion to the 'heathen' world while absorbing accounts of the traditional lifeways of indigenous peoples. This has left us with fascinating observations on religious rituals and customs from Asia, Africa and the Americas.

Today this configuration is going into reverse. While a rich religious life is flourishing on four out of five continents, it is chiefly the societies of Western Europe in which the opposite applies. Here religion, usually Christianity, is declining in importance, a fact strikingly evident in the small number of European missionaries who now head off to work in foreign countries. The Catholic Church in particular is trying to compensate for a lack of priests by importing clergy from Africa and Asia. Europe, once the centre of Christianity, has long since become an object of mission itself. This transformation of our point of departure invites us to reverse the historical relationship described above. How would the current religious situation in Germany look to a non-European? If such an anthropologically inclined stranger were to attempt to answer this question, she would not have to go very far to gain a plethora of contrasting impressions.

If her flying visit were to take her to one of the towns or villages of Germany, then from some way off she would notice how religion and religious communities shape urban architecture. Churches, cathedrals, domes and chapels remain significant points of elevation within the urban silhouette. Now and then, alongside crosses on church spires, she can make out a mosque's crescent. While high-rise buildings may obscure her view of the ensemble of religious buildings in large cities, in many small and medium-sized towns, but above all in villages, the church's central place is strikingly apparent, dominating the

community's social geography. The religious sphere is an important aspect and axis of the city, but this is even more true in many villages, and in both cases religion has become permanently embedded in their architecture.

This initial impression is rapidly dispelled the moment our outsider gets a sense of how these buildings are used. While few former churches have been redesignated as residential or business premises, it soon emerges that religious buildings – as places of worship and assembly – now play a rather modest role. Church services tend to attract older people, more women than men, few families and very few young people. As they gather against a backdrop of empty pews and high ceilings, these small groups merely underline how empty their churches are. Outside hours of worship, churches are either closed or serve as tourist attractions. Visitors come to view and admire the achievements of European civilization: pictorial work, windows, sculptures, altars and pulpits – features of art historical value or that sightseers perceive as colourful, out of the ordinary and 'exotic'.

If our outsider proceeds to look for other, non-Christian places of worship and prayer she will find only a few scattered examples. Synagogues, Hindu and Buddhist temples and other places of worship are thin on the ground. A single mosque, located some distance from the town centre and with no lack of Muslim attendees, provides a counterpoint to the generally deserted Christian churches. Amid the bustle of the town centre shopping precincts, for the most part it is only Muslim women in their headscarves and a few rather forlorn-looking Jehovah's Witnesses, proffering the *Watchtower* to those hurrying past, who can be identified as believers.

If our outsider now asks not just the few churchgoers but also the passers-by she encounters about their attitude towards religion she will soon make a new discovery: if she is in the former GDR, just one in three are members of one of the major Churches. In what used to be East Germany, 67 per cent of the population do not belong to a religious community, and there is a firmly established culture of religious non-affiliation extending across three generations. Things are different in the larger, western part of Germany, where four out of five people are members of a religious community, with 18 per cent unaffiliated. Whether this is merely a matter of paper membership is not immediately apparent to our outside observer. But, she is told, the number of churchgoers is small in both confessions and in sharp decline. Only one in twenty nominal members, as a Protestant pastor complains, finds his way to a Sunday service.[1] If our outsider speaks to his or her Catholic counterpart, he would inform her that in 2010

barely 13 per cent of Catholics regularly attended Mass.[2] And even these church attendees have a very limited knowledge of their own religion. On central matters of faith, such as eternal life, the Trinity or how to live a life pleasing to God, very few can tell you anything at all. On their own assessment, only a minority of this shrinking group of Church members are concerned 'to lead a meaningful life with the help of religion' or to 'fulfil God's will [on earth] in order to achieve eternal salvation'.[3] Instead, the small number of passers-by who are willing to talk about their religious attitudes describe to our outsider a potpourri of religious ideas that they either believe or have heard about. Christian beliefs are mixed with Asian meditation techniques and elements of applied psychology. Bach flower remedies, pendulums and Ouija boards: one in three individuals has come into contact with such things. She hears other phrases as well: pilgrimages along the Camino de Santiago (or Way of St. James), feng shui, New Age and now and then the worship of angels. And did someone say something about the 'religion of football'?

Deflated by her limited success in finding examples of religion in Germany, our outsider may look for help in interpreting her observations. If she heads for an ordinary bookshop she will make another observation. It may come as no surprise that theological and sociology-of-religion books are only available on order, but our outsider's expectations are confounded by the promoted items section. Here she finds not just the predictable literature, but also a new book by the Pope. Alongside it are writings by the Dalai Lama, head of the Tibetan religious community. Books large and small by other religious virtuosi such as Margot Käßmann, abbot primate Notker Wolf and Anselm Grün mingle with publications on wellness, esoteric topics and self-help. Going by the titles, 'spirituality' has much appeal whenever it provides people with advice of relevance to their own lives: 'everyday spirituality', 'spirituality from below', 'your middle years' and 'the art of leading people' are common topics in this broad field. A blend of spiritual guidance, individual self-management and general wisdom is on offer and in great demand.

Should our outsider leaf through the daily papers, she will quickly ascertain that religious organizations and individuals occupy a far from marginal position. Pre-implantation diagnostics, nuclear power, the German army's deployment abroad – the advice of senior figures from the major Christian confessions is valued within the political arena. Joachim Gauck, a Protestant minister and theologian whose religious views have done much to mould his character, was elected federal president in 2012. Evidently, then, religion is still particularly

well-suited to reminding society of its (supposedly) widely shared normative foundations. We might also mention religious events such as papal visits, World Youth Days and ecumenical or confessionally specific Church holidays, which are major annual events without having much impact on individuals' everyday, lived religion. And any anthropologically interested traveller would quickly be struck by the fact that people also perceive religion as a threat. In Germany religion is frequently associated with the Other. Far-off lands are home to Islamic fundamentalists, perceived as pars pro toto of an unenlightened religious fanaticism since the attacks of 11 September 2001.

What would our imagined outsider write if she wanted to inform the people back home about religious life in Germany? She would presumably have as much trouble neatly summing up her diverse findings as does Germany's own copious sociological, historical and theological literature on the topic. It is impossible to narrate the history of religion in Germany in one key: the developments that have occurred during the postwar decades are far too multifaceted for that. Nonetheless, the present book's basic thesis is that this array of different trends culminates in one key observation. For the greater part of human history, social life was pervaded by religion and in many communities and social spaces across the world this remains the case. In Western and Central Europe – for more than one and a half millennia – Christianity was the religious system that played this role, occupying a profoundly important position within society. It has now lost this importance and has in many respects been pushed to the margins of society, but – crucially – it has not declined to the point of total insignificance. Despite the massive shift away from the Churches, Christianity remains the most important provider of religious interpretation and practice in the united Germany. But it operates within a religious field that is shrinking overall and that is becoming highly plural in character. The relational matrix of religion, Church and society has been transformed. It is this transformation that the book's title metaphor seeks to convey: heaven has not disappeared, but it has been lost to an increasing number of individuals and within an ever-expanding range of social contexts. We are very unlikely to see any 'rediscovery' of religion in the short or even medium term.

Within the religious landscape of Christianity, this profound shift is most apparent with respect to individual Church membership and the practice of piety. As Michael Ebertz puts it, both the Protestant and Catholic Churches have long since found themselves 'swimming against the tide': individual religious practice, as manifested for centuries in preordained forms, is on the wane. Both major confessions, the Protestant

regional Churches as well as the Catholic Church, find themselves facing a breach with tradition unprecedented within the religious field. Churches are emptying, the number of baptisms is constantly declining, and ever fewer men and women wish to become priests or ministers or join a spiritual community. One explanation for this decline can be ruled out right away. It is not 'competition' that has triggered and fostered this development. Apart from a small number of recent exceptions, there has been no missionizing Islam in Germany. West Germany has been devoid of any new Church or faith, or state-promoted secularism, that might have repressed or even replaced Christianity. So far, the trajectory of this downward trend and demographic developments indicate that this process will become even more radical, making the internal and external labelling of the Christian confessions as popular *Volkskirchen* or People's Churches increasingly obsolete.

In much the same way, though not in tandem with these statistically identifiable developments, the position of the Christian Churches within public life has also changed. This applies both to their self-evaluation and external perceptions. After 1945, large sections of the elite initially worked on the assumption that German society would be comprehensively 're-Christianized'. As 'victors amid the rubble', the Churches attained the status of guarantors of postwar reconstruction.[4] It is apparent with hindsight that this was a wishful illusion, but the views expressed by contemporaries bring out the significance once ascribed to the Churches. Many of the structures of the early Federal Republic were moulded by this valorization and retain their institutional form to this day. This is evident in Church representatives' participation in many sociopolitical institutions such as broadcasting councils and political committees, and in the system of Church taxes raised by the state, which privilege the major German Churches in a globally unique way. Into the 1980s, references to the Christian foundations of German society were a fixed topos of conservative politics. Only in later years did such terminology crop up less and less often as a widely accepted way for Germans to reassure themselves about the nature of their society, and was instead subject to heated debate.

A third way of describing the transformation of the religious field shifts our focus beyond the Christian Churches. While they have lost their pre-eminence, new forms of religiosity have sprung up or moved to the fore. Initially, Islam in Germany was the faith of immigrants, but it has now become firmly established and is one of the most agile actors within the religious field. But in contrast to the United States, for example, beyond this the religious market has expanded very little. New religious movements such as Bhagwan, and a variety of

charismatic movements within the Christian world, have remained marginal phenomena. Nonetheless, the popular religious practices associated with them have gained in importance. Asian mysticism and the meditation techniques associated with it have become important ways in which individuals satisfy their religious needs, both outside and within the Christian Churches.

This book, which begins with a sense of astonishment at this tumultuous picture, is an investigation of the religious field in Germany and its development over the past six decades. To ask how and why religion in Germany has been so fundamentally transformed is not to pursue a specialist history of religious communities. Quite the reverse: as already reflected in Thomas Nipperdey's history of religion in the nineteenth century, the phenomenon of religion provides a comprehensive perspective on general history. Religion was and always is a 'part of the interpretive culture that constitutes the entire reality of the lifeworld, that moulds people's behaviour, the horizon of their lives and their interpretations of life, along with social structures and processes and, of course, politics'.[5] For individuals growing up in the early twenty-first century it is almost impossible to imagine this, but in the early Federal Republic the everyday lives of broad swathes of the population were intertwined with religious practice – one centrally moulded and guided by the major Christian Churches – in a self-evident and unquestioned way. Family, male and female role models, sexuality, child-rearing and education – in the broadest range of fields the Churches laid down standards of behaviour and morality, even if these had long since become detached from their original Christian contexts. This connecting link between broad swathes of society and a religious conviction that served to guide their actions and everyday lives has been lost entirely, and this has happened within an amazingly short period of time. As a rule the history of mentalities observes changes over vast stretches of time. Yet when it comes to the religious landscape, the law of the *longue durée* seems not to apply. The Christianization of the areas now known as Germany extended across centuries, while the dechurching process has taken just a few decades. When it comes to Christian worldviews and Church affiliation, and the moral ideas shaped by both, Germany seems to disprove the idea that mental structures are inevitably long-lasting – and this makes analysis of this process all the more fascinating.

How this transformation came about, its underlying causes and its consequences past and present: these are the basic issues explored in the following chapters. I seek to provide a narrative that illuminates both the breach with tradition within the religious field and the

concomitant contemporary challenges from a historical perspective.[6] If historical researchers aspire to make an objectifying contribution to contemporary debates on the integration of religion, they will have to depart from the familiar one-way roads of Church and confessional history. Religious history must be understood as a 'divided history'[7] of different religious communities within a shared social environment. In what follows I will therefore be looking at all forms of religiosity and its organization in as much as they have made a significant impact on society. My analysis extends from the immediate postwar period up to the present, while in spatial terms it is the old Federal Republic and subsequently reunified Germany that stand centre stage.

A sense of astonishment at this comparatively rapid transformation can be productive if we demand more than the explanations and answers that have been provided so far. From the 1970s onwards, the magic key to explaining religious change was secularization. Many social scientists had long considered religiosity a relic that would necessarily and 'naturally' decline before ultimately disappearing. This theory – or at least its more simplistic variant – has been refuted, and not only by developments in four-fifths of the world. It has also proved incapable of describing the complex situation of religion in Germany and Western Europe as a whole. Secularization in the sense of a progressive shift away from the Churches is a fact, a basic characteristic of Germany's religious landscape. But the more far-reaching premises and conclusions of secularization theory have turned out to be crudely inaccurate. One phenomenon in particular has escaped notice: secularization generates new religiosity even if this takes a different form and exists to a different extent. At the same time, those who speak of a renaissance of religion or even the 'return of the gods' in view of the new media interest in religion are undoubtedly getting carried away. It is fair to say that religious phenomena have become more visible, but this is not often associated with a new individual practice of piety. What is returning is not identical with what has disappeared. To deploy our title metaphor once again: it is not the traditional heaven that is being rediscovered. In Germany it is only too apparent that religious life today is far from congruent with the faith of the previous generation. For the most part, even in cases where the confessional label has remained the same, the religious content and practices associated with it have changed fundamentally.

Recent research in the history of religion is united in its distance from grand theories of all kinds. Like the thesis of secularization, the purely quantitative approaches of an older social history have also proved unconvincing. Nowadays, if we want to get to grips with the

presence and potency of the religious sphere in the recent past, we need to do more than just count the members of a confession or of Church associations, determine the number of communicants or describe the pastoral relations between priests and the faithful. According to Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, the diverse array of 'private Christianities' that have come into being in recent years – not to mention the numerous hybrid religious forms found in present-day societies – can no longer be described in clear-cut, either-or categories. Instead what we need are models featuring a number of variables that allow us to analyse religiosity beyond formal membership of religious organizations. We require a methodological approach that takes account both of faith outside of religious organizations ('believing without belonging') and the many Church members who are acting out of habit rather than pursuing a personal faith ('belonging without believing', to quote Grace Davie). At the same time, the concept of religion should not unravel to the point of including anything and everything. If, for example, we go for a purely functional definition of religion, then the field will inevitably become an incomprehensible spiritual fog that even incorporates the fans of a pop group or football club, along with 'Weight Watchers'.[8] Rather than deploying a schematic definition of the subject, in this book the focus will be on what contemporaries have referred to as religious and what – conversely – they considered profane.

So how we approach our topic is crucial, and this is reflected in the present book. What exactly do we understand by the term religion? How can we define our object in such a way that we take account of the relationship between religion and society as well as its transformation?

In what follows I develop an understanding of religion anchored in theories of communication and conflict, making particular use of historical-anthropological methods and the tools of discursive history: religion's key characteristic is its reference to a difference between heaven and earth, between God and world, between transcendence and immanence. Religious communities stand out from the surrounding society in their belief that they remind us of something sacrosanct. Christians understand this something as 'God', while other world religions find other words for it, but a good general term for this dimension is 'transcendence'. This definition may be abstract, but already entails an important decision. It means placing emphasis on contemporaries' understanding; so to reiterate, in this book we are crucially concerned with what they themselves define as religion. To explain a religion merely by pointing to the fulfilment of certain social functions such as providing comfort, alleviating suffering and so on is just as unconvincing as relying on typical religious narratives. Political

ideologies, social movements and modern lifestyles have often taken religion-like forms, but without qualifying as religion as this book understands it.[9]

But religion never remains abstract. It finds social expression in its capacity to communicate and render productive the difference between world and God. In the language of Christianity this is called preaching, which aspires not just to communicate the 'good news' to the world but, ideally, to organize the world in line with its precepts. To this end religious communities deploy highly specific ways of speaking, symbols and practices that we refer to as the 'religious code'.[10] As a rule, communities and institutions emerge in which the difference between this world and the world beyond is rendered as rules for living and transmitted from one generation to the next. A striking example of this is the development of a Catholic milieu in the German Empire, which helped its members respond to the pressures of modernization. On the basis of shared religious and everyday convictions, a way of life emerged in which – 'from cradle to grave' – most of the issues arising in a person's life could be dealt with within Catholic reference groups. Milieus create meaning, regulate behaviour through a shared worldview and thus crystallize a way of life that moulds everyday existence. The belief system lived within the community takes on social form in the Churches, with all their institutional branches, hierarchies, congregations and groups, but also beyond the Churches (in a narrow sense) in entire societies, in their political concepts and how they view themselves, in rituals and buildings, texts and images, power and money, war and violence, in brief: in the whole ambivalent sphere of everyday life.

But social circumstances have also shaped the traditional religions. Concepts of and ways of speaking about God, symbols of the sacred and members' everyday practices adapt to society's forms of differentiation and patterns of inclusion. The Catholic milieu, to return to the above example, generated a political wing in the shape of the Centre Party, founded in 1870. This party intervened actively in the political affairs of the Empire and Weimar Republic and, naturally, adapted to prevailing norms such as majority decisions and the need to form coalitions. In this as in other cases, religion is profoundly 'enculturated'; in other words, adapted to the forms and functions dominant within society. This applies without exception to the large people's religions. It is only the charismatic and fundamentalist movements that have emerged since the 1980s that act in a decultured, 'rootless' way and present themselves as alternatives to the surrounding environment.[11] This enculturation even shapes a given Church's creed. While religious communities

themselves may assume a fixed, unchangeable basis for their existence, and fundamentalist Christians cement this with a literal understanding of the Bible, the forms of religious communication and symbols vary greatly. Notions of God, which differ among Christians throughout the world, provide a vivid example. God may be understood as a king or tribal chief, as a strict, punitive ruler or as a loving father. Generally imagined in Europe as a white man, in other parts of the world 'he' is thought of as black or female. Religious aspirations can be realized 'on earth' only if they are realized within societies. But at the same time, however necessary enculturation may be, religious communities must strive to ensure that their religion maintains and embodies the tension between transcendence and immanence. Religion must make an offer that interfaces with the world while also pointing beyond it. A purely worldly religion is just as inconceivable as a purely religious society.

In describing changes in the connection between religion and society in Germany – which were fundamentally entwined in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – one development stands out. Not only did they move apart during the postwar decades, but many formerly close ties have been severed entirely. Christianity was profoundly embedded in German culture and society, and until the end of the Empire there was a political alliance between throne and altar into which Protestantism was thoroughly integrated. In terms of cultural history, the middle-class ideal of the nineteenth century and the 'standard morality' of the twentieth century drew heavily on the norms of the Protestant and Catholic Churches: notions of social order and nation, male and female role models, issues of sexuality, family and upbringing. Extending far into non-Christian circles, religious and social norms were in alignment, even if they were justified in different ways. In its approach to adultery, the Code Napoléon, a product of secular France, assumed the Christian character of marriage. Helping the poor, loving one's neighbour, seeking justice and preserving Creation – the roots of these sentiments do not lie solely in Christianity, but they are closely linked with it. With respect to the Protestant Church, theologians mocked the 'sitting-room Christianity' through which, towards the end of the nineteenth century, Protestant piety entered into an often covert alliance with bourgeois life. Meanwhile, Walter Dirks – a prominent critic within the Church who also achieved a broad public impact – assailed the Catholic 'restorative character' of the Adenauer era.

Fifty years later, in the early twenty-first century, this alliance had dissolved, and this looks likely to be a permanent state of affairs. 'Christian Germany' no longer exists. Just as the framework of belief provided by the major confessions increasingly lost its role in supporting

and sustaining the social structure, the socially shared ethics and morals that rested upon this framework also began to wane.[12] This holds true regardless of the Christian confessions' ongoing role as the leading providers of a religious interpretation of the world and of religious practice. As the press office of one Protestant regional Church declared in 2009, there were still more people going to church on Sundays than watching Bundesliga football matches. What was no doubt intended as a powerful, attention-grabbing statement unwittingly demonstrates just how marginalized the Churches have become. An entity that once pervaded the whole of Sunday, the 'day of the Lord', is now regarded – even by its own adherents – as one competitor among many, seeking to court favour with the weekend public. Christianity has become one of many providers of meaning, one of many sources to which people turn to organize their Sundays. Christianity's status as a choice is not limited to how people spend their free time. Quite the opposite. How people live their partnerships and families, how the political realm should operate, the correct relationship to the hereafter – the Christian tradition offers guidance on all these issues. But it is for an ever-smaller number of individuals and, most strikingly, with an ever-diminishing impact on society as a whole, that Christianity provides a solid framework encompassing all of life. For some the answers provided by Christianity continue to be significant; others combine them with other sources of meaning, while yet others reject them entirely.

We now have a basic picture of the transformation of religion in Germany, a picture the following chapters will be fleshing out with empirical substance and subjecting to in-depth analysis. Of particular interest are the shifting boundaries and conflicts through which a variety of social forces have struggled over the character of the religious field, contesting what rightly belongs within it and what ought to be considered 'profane'. Where within the religious field were traditional certainties called into question, new definitions introduced, new practices implemented? Where did conflicts arise? How were competences and thus spheres of influence redistributed? It is these points of fracture that throw religious transformation and its effects into particularly sharp relief.

In each section I take a three-step approach to sketching out the web of relations between religion, society and Church. How was religion experienced and lived on the individual level? Which forms of personal piety emerged or disappeared? Contemporary surveys and findings provide initial purchase on the quantitative dimension of religiosity. But there is much more to religious practice than this: the individual acquisition of religion, as value-orienting behaviour, is generally a

syncretic process. So rather than religious dogmas as set out by various hierarchies, it is the history of the God people actually believe in that takes centre stage. Through their religious practice individuals seek to satisfy their need for transcendence. In Germany they have often been guided by the teachings of the major Christian Churches without adhering to them in a 'pure' form: going to church on Sunday does not exclude a belief in reincarnation or the use of tarot cards to divine the future. How have individuals and groups appropriated notions of transcendence? What were the effects of this? In traditional societies religious systems provide crucial tools for interpreting the world. They explain what is right and wrong, why some people are rich and others poor, why some suffer and others do not and why there is injustice, tyranny and war, but they also explain the rule of the state and more besides. The answers that religions provide to these questions change as rapidly as their acceptance within society. And we must ask what exactly was at stake from the perspective of the religious community and that of the believer: eternal life, salvation in the hereafter? Or personal well-being and forms of self-realization? Such questions indicate that on this level religion has much to do with self-knowledge, self-construction and determining one's identity. What is regarded as a successful life? Is religion necessary to achieving this, and if it is, to what extent and to what end? Analysis of this individual religious orientation also helps us gain a better overall understanding of how society was structured in the recent past. Such a history of religion can help us understand the pluralization of lifestyles; the weakening of rigid sociocultural milieus; the transformation of ways of life and forms of privacy; changes in patterns of primary communitization within the family, among friends and those of like mind; the erosion and transformation of what were once widely accepted principles and values of modern and late modern society – all those processes that sociology, now and in the past, has managed to describe in at best formulaic terms.

Many of the developments captured by this approach are echoed in the relationship between religion and society, a topic I will be examining in my second step. How was religion defined within society?[13] If we consistently historicize the concept of religion and examine what contemporaries defined as religion, we discover a striking shift in postwar German society. Initially it was the Christian Churches alone that were considered religion. It was not until the 1970s that this gave way to an increasingly plural attitude. But beyond this general question, a whole range of topics have been debated in the postwar era, such as the model Christian family, the Church's influence on education, child-rearing and politics, and, in a remarkable narrowing of Church

concerns, questions of sexuality, particularly birth control and abortion. How much religious influence was necessary or, to reverse perspective, permissible? Pastoral letters from Catholic bishops recommending a vote for the CDU were common in the Adenauer era, but fifteen years later they were regarded as scandalous. This indicates just how much people's perception of the legitimacy of religious views changed within secular culture. What was still considered a moral lodestar in the 1950s was just one view among many two decades later.

The religious communities of Germany have by no means been merely the passive objects of these transformations. They themselves have also undergone remarkable development. This is evident in changed forms of religious organization, theological contributions, practices of intergenerational transmission and the Churches' own reflections on the changes that have taken place. In the nineteenth century, across Europe, the Churches still sought to assert themselves as a Christian alternative to secular society, but from the First World War onwards they began to turn, hesitantly, towards society. Subsequently, during the second half of the twentieth century, both major Christian Churches increasingly abandoned their exclusionary approach and started to open up. What strategies, theological concepts and practical forms of action did the Churches embrace to set this transformation in motion and respond to social changes? Christianity in particular is a community of remembrance centred on the shared memory of the death and resurrection of Christ. Many other Christian traditions and stocks of knowledge have developed in addition to this core. What should be passed on to the next generation? How should one respond to the increasing gap in the chain of remembrance? Comprehensive debates on the Churches' self-understanding took place within their pastoral divisions as well as within Catholic and Protestant theology. Such self-observation must be explored if we are to reconstruct the perception of crisis and the alternative concepts that were put forward. It is also crucial to grasp that the Churches themselves became an ever more frequent object of public debate: they were discovered by the media. The small number of academic theologians now faced competition from popular authors as a debate once limited to the Church fanned out into society. There is much evidence to suggest that religious pluralization was greatly reinforced by these debates.[14]

In my analysis I will be linking these three factors – practised religiosity, the relationship between religion and society and change within the Church – because it is only by illuminating their interrelations and mutual entanglement that we can truly grasp the comprehensive transformation of the religious field in postwar Germany.

Notes

1. Kirchenmitgliedschaftsuntersuchung der EKD 2002, quoted in Pollack, *Rückkehr des Religiösen?*, 190.
2. See 'Mitgliederschwund bei den Katholiken', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 29 July 2011.
3. Ebertz, *Kirche im Gegenwind*, 56.
4. Damian van Melis et al., *Siegerin in Trümmern*.
5. Nipperdey, *Religion im Umbruch*, 7.
6. See Hockerts, 'Zeitgeschichte in Deutschland'.
7. Graf, *Die Wiederkehr der Götter*, 30–50; Graf and Große Kracht, 'Einleitung'.
8. For the debate on this problem, see Pickel, *Religionssoziologie*, 16–19; Ziemann, *Sozialgeschichte der Religion*, 26–30.
9. My approach differs in this respect from, for example, that taken in Knoblauch, *Populäre Religion*.
10. On operationalizing Luhmann's concept of religion, see Ziemann, 'Codierung von Transzendenz'.
11. See Roy, *Holy Ignorance*.
12. With French Catholicism in mind, Danièle Hervieu-Léger has referred to this as exculturation.
13. See Riesebrodt, *Cultus und Heilsversprechen*, 17–42.
14. See Hannig, *Die Religion der Öffentlichkeit*.