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Religion in Europe in the 21st Century: The Factors to Take into Account*

T H I S   A R T I C L E combines two approaches. In the first instance it introduces the range of material that must be taken into account if the religious situation in modern Europe is to be properly understood. As part of the same enterprise, it will introduce the (primarily) sociological literature that interrogates these data (1). The later sections of the article move in a different direction: they open up at least some of the theoretical issues provoked by the European data. The link between the two approaches can be found in Section 5: that is in the ways in which Europe's secular elites have reacted to the recent upsurge of religion in public debate.

With this in mind, the article is structured as follows. Six very different factors will be considered, each in a different section. These are:

- the legacies of the past, more particularly the role of the historic churches in shaping European culture;

- an awareness that these churches still have a place at particular moments in the lives of modern Europeans, even though they are no longer able to discipline the beliefs and behavior of the great majority of the population;

(1) This should not be thought of as a comprehensive review of the literature; it provides, however, some strategic points of entry to a growing, if uneven body of material on religion in this part of the world. As a start, useful overviews of the place of religion in European societies can be found in RÉMOND (1999), DAVIE (2000), GREELEY (2003), MADELEY and ENYEDI (2003), MCLEOD and USTORF (2003), ROBBERS (2005), BYRNES and KATZENSTEIN (2006). Attention should also be paid to the publications emerging from the European Values Study. These are listed on the frequently updated EVS website (http://www.europeanvalues.nl/index2/htm) and include both analyses of Europe as a whole and publications pertaining to particular societies. The EVS is a useful source of statistics; so too is the International Social Survey Programme (http://www.issp.org/data.htm).

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- an observable change in the church-going constituencies of the continent, which operate increasingly on a model of choice, rather than a model of obligation or duty;

- the arrival in Europe of groups of people from many different parts of the world, notably the global South, with very different religious aspirations from those seen in the host societies;

- the reactions of Europe's secular elites to the increasing salience of religion in public as well as private life; and

- a growing realization that the patterns of religious life in modern Europe should be considered an "exceptional case" in global terms – they are not a global prototype.

In the concluding remarks, an attempt will be made to assess the relative weight of these different influences, both now and in the foreseeable future. What will the religious situation in Europe look like in, say, the mid-21st century? Is it possible to say? More precisely, will Europe continue within the trajectory set by its past or will it become more like the patterns found elsewhere in the world? Will the rest of the world become more like Europe? The questions are straightforward enough; the answers much more complex.

One further preliminary point is important: that is, to take note of the *unexpected* prominence of religion in public debate in Europe in recent decades, notably since 1990. Examples abound. They include, selectively, ongoing controversies concerning the use of religious symbols in the school systems of European societies, the disquiet in some countries in relation to sects and new religious movements, the heated debate about a reference to religion in the Preamble to the European Constitution (2004), and the discussions surrounding the possible accession of Turkey to the European Union. Quite apart from the debates themselves, specific events have led to a noticeable rise in tension since the turn of the millennium. Such events include the murders of Pim Fortuyn and Theo Van Gogh in the Netherlands (in 2002 and 2004 respectively), the London bombings of July 2005, the French car burnings the same autumn, and a few months later explosive reactions to what have become know as the "Danish cartoons". The summer of 2006 prompted further anxieties about acts of terrorism on passenger flights. A common thread can be found in all these illustrations: European societies were ill-prepared for what was happening. Religion, it was widely assumed, had been "dealt with" at an earlier stage in European history and had become essentially a private matter. So why has religion re-appeared both dramatically and publicly in recent decades at a moment when the indices of religious activity in the historic churches continue to fall? That paradox underpins the paragraphs that follow.

I

Cultural Heritage

The starting point is less controversial. It concerns the undisputed role of the historic churches in shaping European culture, bearing in mind that other factors must also be retained. More precisely, O'Connell (1991) identifies three formative factors or themes in the creation of the unity that we call Europe: Judaeo-Christian monotheism, Greek rationalism, and Roman organization. These factors shift and evolve over time, but their combinations can be seen in forming and reforming a way of life that we have come to recognize as European. The religious strand within such combinations is self-evident.

One example will suffice to illustrate this fact: the Christian tradition has had an irreversible effect on the shaping of time and space in this part of the world. Both weeks and years, for instance, follow the Christian cycle, even if the major festivals are beginning to lose their resonance for large sections of the population. Or to put the same point in a different way, we have had heated debates in parts of Europe about whether or not to shop on Sundays. We do not, for the most part, consider Friday an issue in this respect, though this may change. The same is true of space. Wherever you look in Europe, there is a predominance of Christian churches, some of which retain huge symbolic value. This is not to deny that in some parts of Europe (notably the larger cities) the skyline is becoming an indicator of growing religious diversity. Europe is evolving, but the legacies of the past remain deeply embedded in both the physical and cultural environment.

The ambiguity of this situation can be seen in the debates surrounding the Preamble to the ill-fated European Constitution. Should it or should it not contain a specific reference to Christianity? At one level, the answer is simple enough. It all depends on what you think a preamble should be. If a preamble is concerned with historical fact, then the reference must be specific – Christianity, amongst other things, has had a huge and lasting influence in the formation of Europe. It is willful to pretend otherwise. But if a preamble is an inspiration for the future, the answers might well be different – or at least there are different questions to consider. Much of the confusion surrounding this controversial issue lay in the fact that Europeans omitted to consider the precise nature of the preamble that they were trying to write.

Given the failure of the French and Dutch publics to endorse the Constitution, there has been a pause in the political debate. For the social

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scientist, there is no such respite: the underlying issues continue to assert their presence. Two points are crucial in this respect. First the fact that the debate took place at all is as significant as its eventual outcome – the sociological paradigms dominant in the mid post-war decades (notably what has become know as secularization theory) did not anticipate a controversy such as this. Second the "patterns" that have emerged as different countries took different positions on the reference to Christianity in the Preamble demand our close attention – new configurations appeared as the countries that became part of the European Union in May 2004, most notably Poland, began to flex their muscles. "Old Europe" conversely was taken by surprise as the secular assumptions of France in particular were seriously challenged. In this case, the secularists "won", but the sharpness of the opposition came as something a surprise (Schlesinger and Foret 2006).

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II

The Historic Churches

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Physical and cultural presence is one thing: a "hands-on" role in the everyday lives of European people quite another. Commentators of all kinds agree that, with very few exceptions, the latter is no longer a realistic aspiration for the historic churches of Europe. That does not mean, however, that these institutions have entirely lost their significance as markers of religious identity. In my own work, I have explored these continuing ambiguities in two ways: first through the notion of "believing without belonging" (Davie 1994) and, second, through the concept of "vicarious religion" (Davie 2000; 2006).

Believing Without Belonging

One of the most striking features of religious life in contemporary Europe is the evident mismatch between different measurements of religiousness. There exists, first of all, a set of indicators which measure firm commitments to (a) institutional life, and (b) credal statements of religion (in this case Christianity). All of these display a marked reduction in Europe as a whole, but most of all in the Protestant states of Northern Europe – hence the reputation of a country such as Sweden

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as one of the most secular in the world (2). These indicators are, of course, closely related to each other in so far as institutional commitment (in the form of religious membership or regular practice) both reflects and confirms religious belief *in its orthodox forms*. The believing Christian attends church to express his or her belief and to receive affirmation that this is the right thing to do. At the same time, repeated exposure to the institution and its teaching necessarily informs, not to say disciplines, belief.

No observer of the current religious scene disputes these facts – i.e. that these dimensions of European religion are both interrelated and in serious decline. There is, on the other hand, considerable debate about the consequences of this situation. The complex relationship between belief (in a wider sense) and practice is central to this discussion, for it is clear that a manifest reduction in the "hard'' indicators of religious life has not, *in the short term at least*, had a similar effect on rather less rigorous dimensions of religiousness. Indeed, the resultant mismatch in the different indicators is the principal finding of the various enquiries carried out under the auspices of the European Values Study (see note 1); it is supported by almost all empirical investigation of the current religious scene in Northern Europe. It is precisely this state of affairs, moreover, which is captured by the phrase "believing without belonging'' (Davie 1994), the popularity of which in both pastoral as well as sociological accounts of religious life in modern Europe indicates, in itself, its perceived accuracy.

Important questions follow from this, not all of which have been underlined as firmly as they might. The first concerns the status of the churches as voluntary organizations. If it is true that the churches as institutions have declined markedly in the post-war period, the same is true of almost all parallel activities in the secular life of Northern European (and indeed other) societies. The most obvious comparative examples are political parties, trades unions and the wide range of leisure activities which require "gathering'' on a regular basis (3). Situating the churches within this broader economic and social context is crucial for a proper understanding of what is going on. It indicates that the reduction in church activity in this part of Europe should be seen as part of a profound change in the nature of social life; it is not, in contrast, an unequivocal indicator of religious indifference. Or to put the same

(2) A reputation which is not entirely justified (see the section in this chapter on vicarious religion for a fuller discussion of this point).

(3) Such an argument mirrors Putnam's work on the United States (PUTNAM 2000). The situation in Europe is described in more detail in DAVIE (2001).

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point more directly, believing without belonging is a pervasive dimension of modern European societies; it is not confined to the religious lives of European people.

A second point concerns the churches themselves. Understandably enough, significant numbers of those responsible for their maintenance are attracted to the phrase "believing without belonging'' in order to justify their continued existence – in other words things are not as bad as they seem. As it happens, I do think that the churches have a continued existence in Northern Europe, but for reasons that require careful and detailed consideration (see below). In the meantime, it its important that the churches' personnel appreciate that the situation described by this phrase is neither better nor worse than a more straightforwardly (if one may use that term) secular society. It is simply different. Those that minister to a half-believing rather than unbelieving society will find that there are advantages and disadvantages to this situation, as there are in any other. Working out appropriate theological and ministerial strategies for this continually shifting and ill-defined context is the central and very demanding task of the religious professional. A firm and necessary grasp of the sociological realities is but the starting point.

A third question relates to the remark made above concerning the short and long term. It is, moreover, at this point that the sociological debate intensifies. There are those, for example (most notably Steve Bruce) who argue cogently that the mismatch between believing and belonging is simply a temporary phenomena; it is only a matter of time before belief – unsustained by belonging (i.e. by an institution) – diminishes to match the more rigorous indicators of religiousness (see in particular Bruce 2002a; 2002b). In so far as this debate refers to statements of credal religion endorsed by the churches, I would entirely agree with him. I am much less sure, however, about the looser and more heterodox elements of belief. Indeed there are persuasive data emerging from the most recent EVS enquiries, which indicate that the relationship between certain dimensions of belief and belonging may well be inverse rather than direct. Notable here are those aspects of belief which relate to the soul and to life after death (Bréchon 2001; Lambert 2002). These appear to rise markedly in *younger* rather than older generations, and in precisely those countries of Europe (mostly but not exclusively in the North) where the institutional capacities of the churches are most diminished. More specifically Nordic data support these findings (4); they affirm the relative confidence among the young that there is some-

(4) Anders Bäckström, personal communication, based on information taken from GUSTAFSSON and PETTERSSON (2000).

thing (not very specific) after death and that the tendency to believe in an afterlife is increasing rather than decreasing. They also reveal the predilection of the young for an immanent rather than transcendent understanding of God (i.e. a God in me).

Not everyone is convinced that this is so. If there are those who argue that some aspects of the spirituality, if not the religion, of young people shows signs of growth, there are others who emphasize an ever more striking divorce between even the broadest definition of religion and what has become know as "Generation Y" – young people are simply not interested in spiritual matters (Savage *et alii* 2006). The latter view is supported by Voas and Crockett (2005), a more general article that includes a helpful summary of the debate about belief without belonging. Using largely quantitative sources, the authors conclude that the British population neither believes nor belongs. Their findings, however, turn very largely on how the key terms are operationalized. Belief, for example, can be taken to mean belief in a "personal God" or it can be used more broadly. Interpretations differ accordingly. Quite apart from this, Voas and Crockett's argument needs to be set against the findings of the 2001 United Kingdom Census which, somewhat unexpectedly, revealed that just over 70% of the population in England and Wales self-identified as Christian. But what, precisely, were these self-identifying Christians thinking about when they ticked a box labeled "Christian"? Were they claiming to be Christian and not secular, or were they claiming to be Christian and not Muslim? That is not at all clear (5).

What *is* clear, however, is the need to take into account the connections between emergent patterns of belief and the institutional churches themselves, bearing in mind that the latter not only exist but continue to exert an influence on many aspects of individual and collective lives – even in Europe. The notion of "vicarious religion" is central to this discussion.

Vicarious Religion

By vicarious, I mean *the notion of religion performed by an active minority but on behalf of a much larger number, who (implicitly at least) not only understand, but, quite clearly, approve of what the minority is doing*

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(5) A start has been made on this important question in a recent Ph D thesis (see DAY 2006). More general discussions of the religious questions in the 2001 Census can be found in VOAS and BRUCE (2004) and WELLER (2004).

(Davie 2000; 2006) (6). The first half of the definition is relatively straightforward and reflects the everyday meaning of the term – that is, to do something on behalf of someone else (hence the word "vicar''). The second half is more controversial and is best explored by means of examples. Religion, it seems, can operate vicariously in a wide variety of ways: churches and church leaders perform rituals on behalf of others; church leaders and churchgoers believe on behalf of others; church leaders and churchgoers embody moral codes on behalf of others; churches, finally, can offer space for the vicarious debate of unresolved issues in modern societies. Each of these propositions will be taken in turn in order to demonstrate the fruitfulness of looking at European religion from this point of view.

The least controversial of the above list concerns the role of both churches and church leaders in conducting ritual on behalf of a wide variety of individuals and communities at critical points in their lives. The most obvious examples can be found in the continuing requests, even in a moderately secular society, for some sort of religious ritual at the time of a birth, a marriage, and, most of all, a death. In many parts of Europe, though not in all (the regional dimensions are important), the demand for the first two of these diminished sharply in the later decades of the 20th century. The same is not true with respect to churches' services at the time of a death. It is at this point, if no other, that most Europeans come into direct contact with their churches and would be deeply offended if their requests for a funeral were met with a rejection. A refusal to offer either a funeral liturgy or appropriate pastoral care would violate deeply held assumptions.

Exactly the same point can be made the other way round. It is perfectly possible to have a secular ceremony at the time of a death; *de facto*, however, *relatively* few people do this. Much more common is what might be termed a "mixed economy'' funeral – that is, a liturgy in which the religious professional is present and the Christian structure maintained but filled with a variety of extraneous elements, including secular music or readings and, with increasing frequency, a eulogy rather than a homily. Princess Diana's funeral in September 1997 offers an excellent illustration (Davie and Martin 1999) (7). Churches, moreover,

(6) DAVIE (2006) offers a developed discussion of vicarious religion from two perspectives: substantive and methodological. Not only does it extend the list of examples outlined in this article, it suggests ways in which this elusive phenomenon can be grasped by the social scientific observer. It demands innovative forms of sociological method. This discussion is continued in DAVIE (2007).

(7) François Mitterrand offers a more surprising example. Here surely was an individual who "merited'' a secular funeral. The fact that he chose, or appears to have chosen, not one mass, but two, in the most strikingly secular

maintain *vicariously* the rituals from which a larger population can draw when the occasion demands it, and whilst that population clearly anticipates a certain freedom in ritual expression, they also expect the institutional structures to be kept firmly in place. This is the essence of vicarious religion.

But churches and church leaders do more than conduct rituals: they also believe on behalf of others. And the more senior or visible the role of the church leader, the more important it becomes that this is done properly. English bishops, to give but one example, are rebuked (not least by the tabloid press) if they doubt in public; it is, after all, their "job" to believe. The most celebrated, and not entirely justified case of a "doubting bishop" in the Church of England was that of David Jenkins, Bishop of Durham from 1984 to 1994 (8). To a large extent the controversy turned on a frequently misquoted statement concerning the Resurrection. The phrase "*not* just a conjuring trick with bones" quickly turned into the opposite, for which the Bishop was widely pilloried – and in the secular as well as the religious press. Nor was he allowed to forget this mistake. The expectation, in other words, is that bishops believe; when they doubt, cultural as well as theological expectations are violated.

Similar pressures emerge with respect to behavioral codes: religious professionals (both local and national) are expected to uphold certain standards of behavior – notably more rather than less traditional representations of family life and incur criticism when they fail, from outside churches as well as within. It is almost as if people who are not themselves participants in church life want the church's representatives to embody a certain social and moral order, thereby maintaining a way of living that has long since ceased to be the norm in the population as a whole. Failure leads to accusations of hypocrisy but also to expressions of disappointment. (Interestingly royal divorces provoke a similar reaction.) Such expectations become at times unreasonable, particularly in relation to the partners and children of religious personnel; it is hardly surprising that clergy families come under strain. The pressures on the Catholic priest are somewhat different, given the requirement of celibacy, but in their own way they are equally demanding (9).

country in Europe, should not be taken for granted (HERVIEU-LÉGER 1999a).

(8) Shortly after David Jenkins' consecration in York Minster, the building was struck by lightning, an event that was seen by some as a sign of divine displeasure. This episode was given extensive press coverage at the time (July 1984). See also David JENKINS' own account (2002).

(9) It is for this reason that scandals concerning the sexual abuse of children provoke the strongest possible reactions. Priests of all people should not abuse the trust placed in them.

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A final possibility with respect to vicariousness develops this point further, and more provocatively. Could it be that churches offer space for debate regarding particular, and often controversial, topics that are difficult to address elsewhere in society? The current controversy concerning homosexuality in the Church of England offers a possible example, an interpretation encouraged by the intense media attention directed at this issue – and not only in Britain. Is this simply an internal debate about senior clergy appointments in which different lobbies within the church are exerting pressure? Or is this one way in which society as a whole comes to terms with profound shifts in the moral climate? If the latter is *not* true, it is hard to understand why so much attention is being paid to the churches in this respect. If it *is* true, sociological thinking must take this factor into account. Either way, large sections of the European media are, it seems, wanting to have their cake and eat it, pointing the spotlight at controversies within the church whilst maintaining that religious institutions must, by their very nature, be marginal to modern society.

Social science cannot afford a similar mistake. The public attention displayed in the examples set out above demands that we understand how religious institutions matter even to those who are not "participants'' in them (in the conventional sense of the term). That, moreover, is the norm in European societies – a situation rather different from that found in the United States. Indeed, in a decade of lecturing across both Europe and the United States, I have seldom met an audience in the former that does not immediately grasp the notion of vicariousness and its implications for the European scene. This is much less the case in the United States, where the connections between the population and their religious organizations are very differently understood. There are exceptions, but to act vicariously is not on the whole a part of American self-understanding (Davie, 2006).

Herein, moreover, lies an important explanation for the particular nature of European forms of religion. Such forms derive from a history of state-church relationships, out of which grows the notion of a state church (or its successor) as a public utility rather than a private organization. A public utility is available to the population as a whole at the point of need and is funded through the tax system. Precisely that combination remains in place in the Lutheran countries of Europe. Elsewhere both constitutional and financial arrangements have been modified (sometimes radically), but the associated mentalities are more difficult to shift. In the United States in contrast, the notion of a religious market composed of competing religious firms not only exists, but

has generated a different sociological paradigm – the application of rational choice theory to religion (10). Indeed, rational choice theory is to America what secularization theory is to Europe – a discussion beyond the scope of this article, but developed in some detail in Davie (2007).

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III

From Obligation to Consumption

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The contrast with the United States is important, but so too is the *changing* nature of churchgoing in modern Europe – taking care to clarify the constituency. Here are Europe's diminishing, but still significant churchgoers – those who maintain the tradition on behalf of the people described in the previous section. And here an observable, possibly American-style, change is clearly taking place, best summarized as a shift from a culture of obligation or duty to a culture of consumption or choice. What was once simply imposed (with all the negative connotations of this word), or inherited (a rather more positive spin), becomes instead a matter of personal choice: "I go to church (or to another religious organization) because I want to, maybe for a short period or maybe for longer, to fulfill a particular rather than a general need in my life and where I will continue my attachment so long as it provides what I want, but I have no *obligation* either to attend in the first place or to continue if I don't want to''.

Two points are immediately important. The first concerns the nature of these choices. These are not necessarily shallow or self-indulgent. More often than not, they indicate firmly held convictions with public as well as private implications – they must be taken seriously. The second relates the material in this section to the one that preceded it: choice is entirely compatible with vicariousness – more precisely "the churches need to be there in order that I may attend them if I so choose''. The "chemistry'', however, gradually alters, a shift that is discernible in both practice and belief, not to mention the connections between them. There is, for example, an easily documentable change in the patterns of confirmation in the Church of England. The overall number of confirmations has dropped dramatically in the post-war period, evidence once

(10) YOUNG (1996) offers a useful introduction both to the paradigm itself and to the controversies that this has generated. The *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (since the mid 1980s) has become a focus for this particular, and continuing, debate.

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again of institutional decline. In England, though not yet in the Nordic countries, confirmation is no longer a teenage rite of passage, but a relatively rare event undertaken as a matter of personal choice by people of all ages. Indeed, there is a very marked rise in the proportion of adult confirmations among the candidates overall – up to 40% by the mid-1990s (by no means enough, however, to offset the fall among teenagers).

Confirmation becomes, therefore, a very significant event for those individuals who choose this option, an attitude that is bound to affect the rite itself – which now includes the space for a public declaration of faith. Confirmation becomes, in fact, an opportunity to make public what has often been an entirely private activity. It is increasingly common, moreover, to baptize an adult candidate immediately before the confirmation, a gesture which is evidence in itself of the fall in infant baptism some twenty to thirty years earlier. Taken together, these events indicate a marked change in the nature of membership in the historic churches, which become, in some senses, much more like their non-established counterparts. Voluntarism (a market) is beginning to establish itself *de facto,* regardless of the constitutional position of the churches. Or to continue the "chemical" analogy a little further, a whole set of new reactions are set off that in the *longer* term (the stress is important) may have a profound effect on the understanding of vicariousness.

The trends are considerably more visible in some parts of Europe than in others. There is, for instance, a marked parallel between the Anglicans and the Catholic Church in France in this respect: adult baptisms in the Church of England match very closely those in France – indeed, the similarity in the statistics is almost uncanny, given the very different ecclesiologies embodied in the two churches, one Catholic and one Protestant (Davie 2000, pp. 71-2). But it is precisely this shift across very different denominations that encourages the notion that something profound is taking place. Lutheran nations, however – despite their reputation for being the most secular countries in Europe – still adhere to a more traditional pattern as far as confirmation is concerned, though the manner is which they do this is changing. Large numbers of young people now choose the option of a confirmation camp rather than a series of weekly meetings (11). In making this choice, confirmation becomes an "experience" in addition to a rite of passage, implying a better fit with other aspects of youth culture.

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(11) Interestingly, the figures for confirmation remain particularly high in Finland.

The stress on experience is important in other ways as well. It can be seen in the choices that the religiously active appear to be making, at least in the British case. Here, within a constituency that is evidently reduced, two options stand out as disproportionately popular. The first is the conservative evangelical church – the success story of late 20th century church – going, both inside and outside the mainstream. These are churches that draw their members from a relatively wide geographical area and work on a congregational, rather than parish, model. Individuals are invited to opt in rather than opt out, and membership implies commitment to a set of specified beliefs and behavioral codes. For significant numbers of people, these churches offer firm boundaries, clear guidance, and considerable support – effective protection from the vicissitudes of life. Interestingly, however, it is the softer charismatic forms of evangelicalism that are doing particularly well; old-fashioned Biblicism, relatively speaking, is losing its appeal (Heelas and Woodhead 2004).

Very different and less frequently recognized in the writing about religion in modern Britain (as indeed in Europe) is the evident popularity of cathedrals and city-center churches (12). Cathedrals and their equivalents deal with diverse constituencies. Working from the inside out, they are frequented by regular and irregular worshippers, pilgrims, visitors, and tourists, though the lines between these groups frequently blur. The numbers, moreover, are considerable – the more so on special occasions, both civic and religious. Hence, concerns about upkeep and facilities lead to difficult debates about finance. Looked at from the point of view of consumption, however, cathedrals are places that offer a distinctive product: traditional liturgy, top-class music, and excellence in preaching, all of which take place in an historic and often very beautiful building. A visit to a cathedral is an aesthetic experience, sought after by a wide variety of people, including those for whom membership or commitment present difficulties. They are places where there is no obligation to opt in or to participate in communal activities beyond the service itself. In this respect, they become almost the mirror image of the evangelical churches already described.

The relative popularity of cathedrals is closely linked to a further feature of religion in modern Europe: that is the growing numbers of people, of all ages, who are choosing to take part in pilgrimages. The evidence is clear: pilgrimage sites right across Europe report an upturn in interest whether they be medieval in origin (Santiago de Compostela), Marian shrines (such as Lourdes or Medjugurje), or more modern places of gathering (Taizé or Iona). Sociological work proliferates

(12) PLATTEN (2006) is a welcome exception.

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accordingly, as observers try to come to terms with the popularity of these one-off, evidently special occasions alongside the continuing decline in regular attendance (13). The massive gathering of the faithful in Rome for the funeral of John Paul II in April 2005 should be seen in a similar light. If it was clear all along that the death of this remarkable man would be a moment of considerable significance, the scale of the reaction took everyone by surprise. World leaders, including three US Presidents, knew that they had to be present, making this essentially religious event the largest gathering of states people in world history; domestic priorities (including in Britain a royal wedding) were simply set aside.

What then is the common feature in these very different stories? It is, it seems, the experiential or "feel-good" factor, whether this be expressed in charismatic worship, in a special cathedral occasion (a candlelit carol service or a major civic event), or in a gathering of large numbers of people to mark a significant occasion. The point is that we *feel* something; we *experience* the sacred, the set apart. The purely cere-bral is less appealing. Durkheim was entirely correct in this respect: it is the taking part that matters for late modern populations and the feelings so engendered. Such a statement has an important methodological corollary. In order to understand the complexities of these data, we need appropriate sociological tools – notably those that can deal both with the *mobilities* of religious life in modern Europe and with its emergent forms. No longer is it possible simply to place individuals into boxes of those who "practise" and those who do not, given that the great majority of European people lie somewhere between the two. Hence the value of Hervieu-Léger's innovative ideal types, the "convert" and the "pilgrim" (1999b). Both indicate movement: the former is associated with the decision to join a more demanding congregation; the latter with the seeking and searching of the less convinced (14).

(13) HARRIS (1999), COLEMAN and EISNER (1995; 2002), and COLEMAN and EADE (2004) offer interesting, though very different, exam-ples. Harris' work on Lourdes is primarily historical, though her approach is innovative. Coleman and Eisner demonstrate the truly global nature of this phenomenon. Individual, rather more popular, accounts of the pilgri-mage to Santiago de Compostela are now commonplace.

(14) Hervieu-Léger has written a "trilogy" of books on different aspects of religion in modern Europe, paying particular attention to the French case (HERVIEU-LÉGER 1999b, 2001 and 2003). Her thinking is central to this dis-cussion.

IV

New Arrivals

The fourth factor in this complicated mosaic is somewhat different: it concerns the growing number of incomers in almost all European societies. There have been two stages in this process. The first was closely linked to the urgent need for labour in the expanding economies of post-war Europe – notably in Britain, France, Germany, and the Netherlands. Wherever possible, each of these countries looked to its former empire to expand its workforce: Britain to the West Indies and the Indian sub-continent, France to the Mahgreb, Germany (with no empire) to Turkey and the former Yugoslavia, and the Netherlands to its overseas connections (Indonesia and Surinam), but also to Morocco. The second wave of immigration occurred in the 1990s and included, in addition to the places listed above, both the Nordic countries and the countries of Mediterranean Europe (Greece, Italy, Spain, and Portugal) – bearing in mind that the latter, until very recently, have been – countries of emigration rather than immigration. The turnaround in some of these has been truly remarkable, one of the sharpest of all being the transformation in the 1990s of Dublin, Ireland, from a relatively poor city to a thriving, expensive, and increasingly diverse place to live (15).

Different host societies and different countries of provenance have led to a complex picture – generalization is dangerous. Some points, however, are common to most, if not all, cases. First and foremost, those who are arriving in Europe are coming primarily for *economic* reasons – in other words they are coming to work. If the first wave provided labour for expanding industrial economies, the second filled a rather different gap. As the 20th century drew to a close, Europeans were becoming increasingly aware that there were insufficient numbers in employment in Europe to support the rising proportion of dependent people – notably the growing number of the retired. The pull factor in this case is the shifting demographic profile. A second point follows from this: all is well, or relatively well, as long as there is sufficient work for everyone in an economy able to maintain the services necessary for incoming populations. All is less well when there is a downturn in the economy (as happened in the late 1970s and 80s) or when those who work to support

(15) In terms of its religious life, Ireland is in many respects a "Mediterranean" country. It is also very like Poland, in so far as Catholicism has become a marker of national identity.

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dependent Europeans become dependent themselves. Hence the unrest in France in the autumn of 2005: a population excluded both from the economy itself, and from its concomitant benefits, expressed its frustration on the streets.

What, though, are the implications for the religious life of Europe? The short answer is that they vary from place to place depending on both host society and new arrivals. Britain and France offer an instructive comparison. In Britain immigration has been much more varied than in France, both in terms of provenance and in terms of faith communities. West Indians, for example, are Christians – and much more formed in their Christianity than their British equivalents. One result of this is the vibrant Afro-Caribbean churches of Britain's larger cities – some of the most active Christian communities in the country (16). From the sub-continent, moreover, come Sikhs and Hindus as well as a sizeable number of Muslims (1.5 million). Britain is also a country where ethnicity and religion criss-cross each other in a bewildering variety of ways (only Sikhs and Jews claim ethno-religious identities). The situation in France is very different: here immigration has been largely from the Maghreb, as a result of which France has by far the largest Muslim community in Europe (between 5 and 6 million) – an almost entirely Arab population. Rightly or wrongly, Arab and Muslim have become interchangeable terms in popular parlance in France.

Britain and France can be compared in other ways as well – an exercise that provokes some interesting questions, among them the tensions between democracy and tolerance. France, for example, is markedly more democratic than Britain on almost all institutional or constitutional measures. France is a Republic, with a secular state, two elected chambers, and no privileged church (in the sense of connections to the state). There is a correspondingly strong stress on the equality of all citizens whatever their ethnic or religious identity. As a result, France follows a strongly assimilationist policy towards incomers, with the express intention of eradicating difference – individuals who arrive in France are welcome to maintain their religious belief and practices, provided these are relegated to the private sphere. They are actively discouraged from developing any kind of group identity. Exactly the same point can be put as follows: any loyalty (religious or otherwise) that comes between the citizen and the state in France is regarded in negative terms. The result, whether intended or not, is a relative lack of tolerance,

(16) There is a negative side to this story. For a variety of reasons, among them racism, Afro-Caribbeans were largely excluded from mainstream churches when they first arrived in Britain, an episode that the historic churches have come to regret bitterly.

if by tolerance is meant the freedom to promote collective as well as individual expressions of religious identity – that is, those expressions that impact the public as well as the private sphere.

Britain is very different. On a strict measure of democracy, Britain fares less well than France – with no written constitution, a monarchy, a half-reformed and so far unelected House of Lords, and an established church. More positively, Britain has a more developed tradition of accommodating group identities (including religious ones) within the framework of British society, a feature that owes a great deal to the relatively greater degree of religious pluralism that has existed in Britain for centuries rather than decades. Hence a markedly different policy towards newcomers: the goal becomes the accommodation of difference rather than its eradication. Rather more provocative, however, are the conclusions that emerge if you look carefully at who, precisely, in British society is advocating religious as opposed to ethnic toleration. Very frequently it turns out to be those in society who do *not* depend on an electoral mandate: the royal family, significant spokespersons in the House of Lords (where other faith communities are well represented by appointment, not by election), and prominent members of the established Church. The latter, in fact, become the protectors of "faith" in general rather than the protectors of specifically English expressions of Christianity (17).

Beneath these examples, lies however a common factor: the growing presence of other faith communities in general, and of the Muslim population in particular, is challenging some deeply held European assumptions. The notion that faith is a private matter and should, therefore, be proscribed from public life – notably from the state and from the education system – is widespread in Europe (not only in France). Conversely, many of those who are currently arriving in this part of the world have markedly different convictions, and offer – simply by their presence – a challenge to the European way of doing things. Reactions to this challenge vary from place to place, but at the very least, European societies have been obliged to re-open debates about the place of religion in public as well as private life – hence the heated controversies about the Preamble to the Constitution, about wearing the veil in the school system, about the rights or wrongs of publishing material that one faith community in particular finds offensive, and about the location of "non-European" religious buildings. There have been moments, moreover, when a lack of mutual comprehension, together with an

(17) For a more detailed presentation of this argument, including a discussion of the Dutch case, see DAVIE (forthcoming).

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unwillingness to compromise on many of these issues, have led alarmingly fast to dangerous confrontations, both in Europe and beyond. Hence a huge and growing literature, indicative of alarm as well as interest in this field (18).

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v

Europe's Secular Elites

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Such episodes raise a further point which, if developed, could become an article in its own right. That is the extent to which the secular elites of Europe use these events in order to articulate alternatives – ideological, constitutional and institutional – to religion. In the relatively limited space that remains in this paper, this question will be approached in two ways. First by emphasizing that such elites, just like their religious alter-egos, vary markedly from place to place, a discussion that mirrors elements of the previous sections. The second is rather different and draws from the recent, primarily philosophical, analyses of Jürgen Habermas (2006) concerning the place of religion in the public sphere; it is an argument developed in global as well as European terms.

A useful point of departure can be found in the contrast already established between Britain and France. Key in this respect is an awareness that the *process* of secularization has taken place differently in the two countries (Martin 1978). What in Britain, and indeed in most of Northern Europe, occurred gradually (starting with a de-clericalization of the churches from within at the time of Reformation), became in France a delayed and much more ideological clash between a hegemonic, heavily clerical church and a much more militant secular state. Hence "la guerre des deux Frances'' (Poulat 1987) (19), which dominated French political life well into the 20th century. The legacies still remain in the form of a self-consciously secular elite, and a lingering suspicion concerning religion of all kinds – the more so when this threatens the public sphere. The fact that these threats are no longer Catholic but

(18) NIELSEN (2004) contains an extensive and very useful bibliographic essay on Islam in Europe. More recent references include FETZER and SOPER (2004), CESARI (2004), CESARI and MCLOUGHLIN (2005), and KLAUSEN (2005).

(19) "The war of two Frances'' – i.e. one secular and one Catholic, each of which is the mirror image of the other. An interesting question follows from this: as Catholic culture in France gradually collapses, will its secular alter-ego follow suit? Exactly that happened in Italy, only the other way round. When the Communist Party imploded after 1989, Christian Democracy could no longer sustain itself as a viable political force.

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Muslim does not alter the underlying reaction. Hence the policies set out in the previous section, which can be contrasted with the British case. In the latter, something rather different occurs: *overlapping* elites (both religious and secular) work together to encourage mutual respect between different world faiths, a policy admirably illustrated following the bombings in London in July 2005 (20).

Exactly the same issue can be approached from the other side – this time by interrogating the different formulations of the Enlightenment that are found not only in different parts of Europe, but (more radically) in the contrast between Europe and the United States. France, for example, is the European society in which the Enlightenment has been most obviously configured as a *freedom from belief*, an attitude which finds expression in the democratic, though not always very tolerant, arrangements already described and in an attitude in which religion is firmly relegated to the private sphere. The French Enlightenment, moreover, is carried in institutions which are central to the lives of every French citizen: the state and the school system. The state assumes moral as well as organization qualities; the school system both embodies and teaches the quintessentially French notion of *laïcité* (21). In the United States, the Enlightenment became something very different: not a freedom from belief, but a *freedom to believe* – an understanding embedded in the American Revolution which worked through religion rather than against this. Hence a strikingly different outcome on the other side of the Atlantic in which vibrant forms of religion grow alongside a developing democracy, both of which interact positively with economic change. Religion moved easily into the industrial cities of North America.

In Europe rapid urbanization at the time of the industrial revolution undermined the much more static, territorially-based forms of religion, themselves threatened by a more aggressive Enlightenment. But if the erosion of the historic, parish-based churches was common to the continent as a whole, the Enlightenment itself was differently constructed. In much of Northern Europe, Germany and Italy – to take three very different examples – important epistemological shifts were worked out as much through the dominant religious tradition as against this. Scottish Calvinism, German Pietism and Italian Catholicism were

(20) The point was well-covered in the press following this episode. It has also been noted at European level. See the Report of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC 2005). It is equally clear that the renewed anxieties of August 2006 put these partnerships under some strain.

(21) Both the term *laïcité* itself and the idea behind it are difficult to convey in English. *Laïcité* means the absence of religion from the public sphere — notably the state and the school system. This absence is not simply a negative; it is underpinned by a distinctive, coherent and at times confrontational ideology.

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not simply an opposition to progress – they were part and parcel of the changes taking place, attitudes which can be still be seen in modern debate. Himmelfarb (2004), for example, is indicative of a growing, and at times controversial, literature in which the French Enlightenment becomes the exception rather than the rule. The British case is particularly interesting in this respect. It is pulled in one direction by its institutions (notably a state church model of religious organization), and in another by its philosophical ideals. Hence two rather different outcomes: on the one hand, the decline in the historic churches of Britain is entirely in line with its European neighbours; on the other, relatively high levels of religious toleration resonate more with the American case.

Habermas (2006) considers the role of the *secular*, post-Enlightenment citizen from a different point of view, taking as his startting point the increasing significance of religious traditions and communities in much of the modern world (Berger 1999, Jenkins P. 2002). In light of these clearly unexpected changes, Habermas addresses the debate in terms of John Rawls' celebrated concept, the "public use of reason'' (p. 3). The challenge which emerges is provocative: Habermas invites of secular citizens, including Europeans, "a self-reflective transcending of the secularist self-understanding of Modernity'' (p. 15) – an attitude that quite clearly goes beyond "mere tolerance'' in that it necessary engenders feelings of respect for the worldview of the religious person. There is in fact a growing reciprocity in the argument. Historically, religious citizens had to adapt to an increasingly secular environment in order to survive at all. Secular citizens were better placed in that they avoided, almost by definition, "cognitive dissonances'' in the modern secular state. This however may not be the case for much longer as religion and religious issues increasingly pervade the agenda. Hence an additional question. Are these issues simply to be regarded as relics of a pre-modern era, or is it the duty of the more secular citizen to overcome his or her narrowly secularist consciousness in order to engage with religion in terms of "*reasonably expected disagreement*" (p. 15), assuming in other words a degree of rationality on both sides? The latter appears to be the case. Habermas' argument is challenging in every sense of the term and merits very careful reflection; it constitutes an interesting response to a changing *global* environment – one moreover in which the relative secularity of Europe is increasingly seen as an exceptional, rather than prototypical case.

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VI

Europe: an Exceptional Case

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More precisely, in the initial pages of Habermas' article, two closely linked ideas are introduced: on the one had the increasing isolation of Europe from the rest of the world in terms of its religious configurations, and on the other the notion of "multiple modernities". It was exactly this combination that I developed in some detail in *Europe: The Exceptional Case* (Davie 2002). The starting point lies in reversing the "normal" question: instead of asking what Europe *is* in term of its religious existence, it asks what Europe *is not*. It is *not* (yet) a vibrant religious market such as that found in the United States; it is *not* a part of the world where Christianity is growing exponentially, very often in Pentecostal forms, as in the case in the Southern hemisphere (Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Pacific Rim); it is *not* a part of the world dominated by faiths other than Christianity, but is increasingly penetrated by these; and it is *not* for the most part subject to the violence often associated with religion and religious difference in other parts of the globe – the more so if religion becomes entangled in political conflict. Hence the inevitable, if at times disturbing conclusion: that the patterns of religion in modern Europe, notably its relative secularity, might be an exceptional case in global terms (Berger 1999).

Precisely that fact has become a central feature of the debate about multiple modernities, a theoretical construct that draws heavily on the work of Shmuel Eisenstadt (2000). The *negative* aspects of this debate are unequivocally set out in the following paragraph:

> The notion of "multiple modernities" denotes a certain view of the contemporary world – indeed of the history and characteristics of the modern era – that goes against the views long prevalent in scholarly and general discourse. It goes against the view of the "classical" theories of modernization and of the convergence of industrial societies prevalent in the 1950s, and indeed against the classical sociological analyses of Marx, Durkheim, and (to a large extent) even of Weber, at least in one reading of his work. They all assumed, even only implicitly, that the cultural program of modernity as it developed in modern Europe and the basic institutional constellations that emerged there would ultimately take over in all modernizing and modern societies; with the expansion of modernity, they would prevail throughout the world. (Eisenstadt 2000, p. 1)

Right from the start, therefore, Eisenstadt challenges both the assumption that modernizing societies are convergent, and the notion of Europe (or indeed anywhere else) as the lead society in the modernizing process.

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How then does the multiple modernities approach develop from a *positive* point of view? In the introductory essay to the set of comparative cases, Eisenstadt suggests that the best way to understand the modern world (in other words to grasp the history and nature of modernity) is to see this as "a story of continual constitution and reconstitution of a multiplicity of cultural programs" (2000, p. 2). A second point follows from this. These on-going reconstitutions do not drop from the sky; they emerge as the result of endless encounters on the part of both individuals and groups, all of whom engage in the creation (and recreation) of both cultural and institutional formations, but within *different* economic and cultural contexts. Once this way of thinking is firmly in place it becomes easier to appreciate one of the fundamental paradoxes of Eisenstadt's writing: namely that to engage with the Western understanding of modernity, or even to oppose it, is an indisputably modern as to embrace it. It is equally clear that the form of modernity that has emerged in Europe is only one among many; it is not necessarily the global prototype.

Such a statement is crucial with respect to religion. It goes straight to the heart of an urgent and as yet unresolved theoretical discussion nicely captured in the following question: *is secularization intrinsic or extrinsic to the modernization process*? In other words is Europe secular because it is modern (or at least more modern than other parts of the world), or is it secular, because it is European, and has developed along a distinctive pathway unlikely to be repeated elsewhere? Central to this discussion is the notion of a "lead society" and if so, which one – Europe or the United States (or neither)? Equally significant is the fact that the dominant lines of thinking in modern social science – including thinking about religion – emerge from the European, more particularly French, Enlightenment. And if the European case turns out to be exceptional rather than typical, where should we look for conceptual tools to understand better what is happening in the rest of the world? The theoretical implications of these debates are huge and as such lie beyond the scope of this article (22), which – within this considerably enlarged framework (theoretical as well as geographical) – must now re-focus not only on the European case itself, but on its possible futures.

(22) They are developed in DAVIE (2007).

Concluding Remarks

Several things are happening simultaneously in the religious life of Europe. The fact that they are occurring at the same time is partly a coincidence – each, however, encourages the other. The historic churches, despite their continuing presence, are quite clearly losing their capacity to discipline the religious thinking of large sections of the population (especially among the young). Simultaneously, the range of religious choice is widening all the time both inside and outside the historic churches. New forms of religion are coming into Europe from outside, largely as the result of the movement of people. Thirdly, at least some of the people arriving from outside are offering a significant challenge to the widely held assumptions about the place of religion in European societies. What, though, can be said about the future? Is Europe likely to produce a religious market like that found in the United States? The turn from obligation to consumption could be seen in this light. Conversely are the residues of the state church sufficiently strong to resist this – maintaining thereby the notion of religion as a public utility rather than a freely chosen voluntary activity? And where in these complex equations do we place the newly arrived populations, whether Christian or not? The answers to these questions must be tentative, but I will offer three.

There are effectively two religious economies in Europe, which run alongside each other. The first is an incipient market, which is emerging among the churchgoing minorities of most, if not all, European societies, and in which voluntary membership is becoming the norm, *de facto* if not *de jure*. The second economy resists this tendency and continues to work on the idea of a public utility, in which membership is ascribed rather than chosen. In this economy opting out, rather than opting in, remains the norm and is most visible at the time of a death. Interestingly, the two economies are in partial tension, but also depend upon each other – each fills the gaps exposed by the other. Exploring these tensions offers a constructive route into the complexities of European religion in the 21st century. My sense is that vicarious religion will endure at least until the mid-century, but not for much longer. It follows that the actively religious in Europe will increasingly work on a market model, but the fact that their choices will include the historic churches complicates the issue (the alternatives are not as mutually exclusive as they first appear).

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It is equally clear that religion will continue to penetrate the public sphere, a tendency driven primarily by the presence of Islam in different parts of Europe. Paradoxically, this is easier to accept for the active, increasingly voluntarist, Christian minorities to understand than those who remain passively attached to their (public) historic churches. For the former, seriously held belief leads to public implications; for the latter, seriously held belief is seen as a threat rather than an opportunity. Serious held beliefs, however, can also compete with each other, sometimes aggressively – a rather more worrying outcome. Whatever the case, it is clear that Islam is a crucial factor that we ignore at our peril. Not only does it offer an additional religious choice for Europeans, it has become, simply by its existence, a catalyst of change. Islam must adapt to Europe (that it clear), but Europe must also adapt to Islam. The implications of that process are likely to be profound and will, inevitably, provoke resistance.

Finally, the *combination* of all these factors will increase rather than decrease the salience of religion in public, as well as private, debate – a tendency encouraged by the ever more obvious presence of religion in the modern world order. In this respect, the world is more likely to influence the religious life of Europe than the other way round, even if the forms of religious life in Europe remain distinct. How then should the social scientific community react? One point is clear: religion can no longer be ignored in scholarly circles; nor – given the implications for policy – can this be simply a "scientific" discussion. In short, normative questions must be central to debates about the place of religion in European societies, bearing in mind that these are likely to grow rather than diminish in intensity as the 21st century unfolds.

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