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For my Swedish friends
who made it all possible.

First published in 2002 by
Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd
1 Spencer Court
140-142 Wandsworth High Street
London SW18 4JJ

Reprinted 2007

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ISBN 10: 0-232-52425-4
ISBN 13: 978-0-232-52542-3

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Designed by Sandie Boccacci
Phototypeset in 11¼/14pt Bembo
by Intype Libra Ltd, London
Printed and bound in Great Britain
by Intype Libra Ltd, London

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to my husband, who joined me in Uppsala for the second half of the year in Sweden. A time to remember!

GRACE DAVIE
Exeter, December 2001

INTRODUCTION

Above all, the Sarum Theological Lectures have offered me an opportunity to expand my thinking on the nature and development of religious activity in post-war Europe, a statement which needs to be set in the longer term. My concerns with the connections between religion and modernity date from the mid 1980s. The canvas on which I have worked has, however, steadily widened: from an initial engagement with faith in the inner cities of modern Britain (Ahern and Davie 1987), through a more general consideration of the religious life of Britain in the post-war period (Davie 1994), to a concern with the patterns of religion in modern Europe (Davie 2000a). Each book has led to the next: patterns of working-class belief, common since the nineteenth century, have become the norm in Britain as a whole; the same patterns, unchurched and residually Christian religion, are widespread, if not universal, in Western Europe at the start of the twenty-first century. 1)

The next step is to place Europe itself within a global context, but at this point the narrative takes a rather different turn. It is simply not the case that the patterns of religious activity discovered in Western Europe are those of the modern world more generally. Indeed, if anything, the reverse is true. In terms of the parameters of faith of the modern world, the European case is beginning to look increasingly like an exception – a statement that many Europeans find hard to accept in that it flies in the face not only of their own experience, but of deeply embedded assumptions. Europeans are prone to believe that what they do today everyone else will do tomorrow. Or in terms of the subject matter of this series of lectures, Europeans are convinced that the relatively strong empirical connections between 2) 15

European culture always reported in the

modernisation and secularisation that can be observed in Europe's historical evolution will necessarily be repeated elsewhere. Hence their conviction that as the world modernises, it will necessarily secularise.

Quite simply, it hasn't. And one look at the empirical evidence taken from almost every other global region suggests that it won't in the foreseeable future. Even if we restrict the discussion to Christendom, an entirely different combination of factors obtains in, for example, the United States, in Latin America, in sub-Saharan Africa and in a significant number of Eastern societies, notably the Philippines or South Korea. In these parts of the world, there is scant evidence for secularisation, despite in many cases (if not all) convincing indicators of modernisation – most notably in the United States (the most developed society in the world). Add to this already extensive list the parts of the world dominated by other world faiths – the hugely varied Islamic nations (themselves at very different stages of development), the competing religious traditions of the Middle East, the Sikhs and Hindus of the Indian sub-continent and the great diversity of Eastern religions – and Peter Berger's claim that the greater part of the world (both developed and developing) is 'as furiously religious as ever' (Berger 1992) seems well justified.

Where, though, does this leave the question of European as opposed to other forms of religion? They must be seen, surely, as one strand among many which make up what it means to be European. European religion is not a model for export; it is something distinct, peculiar to the European corner of the world and needs to be understood in these terms. Davie (2000a) explores this theme in some detail, examining Europe from the inside (see Chapter One). Two further tasks follow on: that is (a) to look again at those parts of the world which manifest very different patterns of religious activity, asking in each case what are the attributes displayed which are not present in Europe (and why) and (b) to open up the conceptual implications of these findings. These tasks provide the principal aims of this book.

The work will be structured as follows. Chapter One will set out the parameters of faith in modern Europe, noting both the classic and more innovative explanations for these findings. Chapters Two to Five will develop a set of contrasting case studies, all of them drawn from Christendom, but from very different global regions: the United States, Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa and (selectively) the Far East. Each will be used to illustrate a particular point of difference with the European case, asking very precisely what is present in these examples but not in Europe. A final chapter will address the theoretical questions that must follow, not least the implications of these findings for Europe itself. Looked at from the outside we begin to see Europe in a new light and to think differently about the possible futures for religion in this part of the world. It is at least plausible that Europeans are not so much less religious than populations in other parts of the world, but differently so. Such a statement has practical as well as theoretical implications for the churches.

Two further preliminaries are necessary in this introduction. The first is a matter of definition. When speaking of Europe, I will in fact be referring to Western Europe in the sense of Western Christianity. I will not be including the Orthodox parts of Europe, nor the complex marchlands that lie between the two halves of the continent. The reason is a practical one: it is too soon to say whether the Eastern European case will follow the Western one in terms of its religious trajectory or whether a substantially new variant or variants will emerge. It is, therefore, the comparisons with the relatively stable West European situation that form the focus of the following chapters.

The second preliminary concerns my own competence. In no way do I consider myself a specialist on patterns of religion in the modern world outside Europe. I have visited the United States many times and on one occasion moved rather tentatively across the border into Mexico. Beyond this, however, I have relied entirely on secondary sources and conversations with scholars who specialise in the various fields. I am deeply grateful

to the many who have given me their time and their advice in order to make the chapters that follow as accurate and as well informed as possible, but I alone am responsible for the errors that remain. It is important to remember finally that none of these chapters constitutes a comprehensive account of the religious situation in that place. They are highly selective, they are different from each other and each has been written with the intention of illustrating a particular point (or points) of contrast with Europe. There is, however, an underlying theme: that is to expose the 'boundedness' of both the European case itself and the sociological theories that have arisen from this. Such limitations are revealed bit by bit in the course of the case studies; they are brought together in the more theoretical account offered in the final chapter.

Chapter One

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SETTING THE SCENE: THE PARAMETERS OF FAITH IN MODERN EUROPE

The aim of this chapter is to sharpen the reader's awareness of a situation that is so familiar that it tends to be taken for granted. We need to look critically at the parameters of faith in our own corner of the world before we can (a) compare these with other global regions and (b) make sense of the long-term future. In order to do this, the initial part of the chapter will be divided into three sections: the first will announce a theme; the second will present the principal variations on the theme that exist in different parts of Europe; and the third will introduce both the classic and more recent theoretical explanations for these findings. The fourth and final section will introduce the case studies that are to follow, with some justification for their selection and for this way of working. With the exception of a few paragraphs, the discussion in the initial sections will deal with the mainstream traditions (Europe's historic churches), rather than the important religious minorities that form part of most European societies. Despite the growing significance of faiths other than Christian in the European context, it is the dominant trends that need highlighting in the first instance.

THE THEME

1 For a British audience or readership, a preliminary point is crucial: the parameters of faith in modern Britain are very similar to our European partners. Despite marked differences in language, in denomination (there are, for example, very few Anglicans or Methodists in continental Europe), and in the very diverse legal arrangements between Church and State, there is a common thread which binds together almost all European societies in terms of their religious behaviour.

2 How, then, can these patterns of religious activity be discerned? There are two ways of doing this: one historical and the second empirical. The historical perspective stresses the formative factors or themes that come together in the creation and re-creation of the unity that we call Europe: these are Judaeo-Christian monotheism, Greek rationalism and Roman organisation (O'Connell 1991). These factors shift and evolve over time, but their combinations can be seen forming and re-forming a way of life that we have come to recognise as European. The religious strand within such combinations is self-evident, but so too are the relationships between political and religious power that have dominated so much of European history. These shared legacies go back as far as Constantine; they are deeply embedded in the European psyche, though the particular forms that they have taken in later centuries vary very considerably (a point to which we shall return). Some form of church/state connection is, however, historically present in every European society, quite apart from the crucial, if not always harmonious, relationships between pope and emperor in the centuries preceding the emergence of the nation state as the dominant form of political organisation in this part of the world.

Nor can such connections be altered at will in terms of their long-term effects. It is, of course, possible, for individual European societies to disconnect the links between Church and

State at a particular and frequently pivotal point in their history. Many societies already have (some peaceably, some after maximum contention), and no doubt others will – including, quite possibly, our own. The historical legacy is, however, harder to eradicate, not least the cultural assumptions that go with these long-term associations. This, for example, will be one of the sharpest contrasts between Europe and the United States that will emerge in the following chapter. The point to be made in this one is that constitutional connections between Church and State are part of Europe's history, whether they are retained or rejected, applauded or critiqued. Such is not necessarily the case elsewhere.¹

A second source of material concerns empirical data – that is the findings of increasing numbers of statistical enquiries concerning the state of faith both in Europe as a whole and in its constituent nations. One example can be taken as representative: the European Values Study.² It, like so many others of its kind,³ uses sophisticated social science methodology (including careful sampling techniques) to establish patterns and connections between different kinds of variables – in this case to map social and moral values across Europe, relating these to a range of economic and social indicators. It has generated very considerable data and will continue to do so. Any serious commentator on the religious situation in modern Europe must pay close, but at the same time critical, attention to its findings.

The EVS is concerned with two underlying themes: the first concerns the substance of contemporary European values and asks, in particular, to what extent they are homogeneous; the second takes a more dynamic approach, asking to what extent such values are changing. Both themes inevitably involve a religious element, either directly or indirectly. The first of these themes (the substance and the similarity of European value systems) is widely accepted. The empirical data from the EVS confirm the notion that the value systems of modern Europe (including Britain, whatever our misgivings in this respect) have

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a considerable amount in common, a fact most easily explained by a shared religious heritage. No one disputes that the Judaeo-Christian tradition – massively present in all parts of Europe – was a crucial factor in the formation of European values, albeit in connection with a great many other variables.

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system

As soon as the idea of value change is engaged, however, the debate becomes both complex and at times contentious. On the one hand, the authority of both the institutional churches and the creeds that underpin them is systematically decreasing as the decades pass. No one seriously doubts this. On the other, it is difficult to discern what, if anything, is emerging to replace these social and cultural forms. As the EVS writers have themselves pointed out (Barker *et al.*, 1992: 7), the Church has indeed lost its role as the keystone in the arch of European culture, but no identifiable institution is emerging to take its place. Hence a whole series of questions with respect to the future of European religion and its continued influence on the value system. It is these questions that form the substance of the secularisation debate; they and some possible answers will be developed through the course of this chapter. In terms of the book as a whole, however, a further point immediately presents itself: is this situation unique to this part of the world (and if so why) or can it be found elsewhere? Herein lies the *fil conducteur* of the Sarum Theological Lectures.

variables

The first task, however, is to indicate the principal findings of the 1981, 1990 and 1999 EVS surveys for a variety of religious indicators.⁴ Here the material draws very directly on my previous work (especially Davie 2000a: 5–23), to which the reader is directed for a fuller discussion. The central point to grasp, however, lies in the multiplicity of variables that need to be taken into account in any assessment of the religious situation of modern Europe. Five of these can be found within the EVS data: they are denominational allegiance, reported church attendance, attitudes towards the Church, indicators of religious belief and some measurement of subjective religious disposition.

Such data permit, moreover, considerable flexibility, the more so given modern techniques of data analysis: the variables can be correlated both with each other and with a wide range of socio-demographic data. Hence the complexity of the emergent patterns and the need to bear in mind more than one dimension within an individual's (or indeed a nation's) religious life in coming to any conclusions.

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belonging

What emerges in practice, however, is the situation that I have described elsewhere as 'believing without belonging' (Davie 1994) – a phrase that has become popular in pastoral as well as academic circles, and which undoubtedly captures the clustering of two types of variable: on the one hand, those concerned with feelings, experience and the more numinous religious beliefs; on the other, those which measure religious orthodoxy, ritual participation and institutional attachment. A second observation follows from this. It is only the latter (i.e. the more orthodox indicators of religious attachment) which display an undeniable degree of secularisation throughout Western Europe. In contrast, the former (the less institutional indicators) demonstrate considerable persistence (see below). The essentials of this contrasting information are presented in Tables 1.1 and 1.2, reproduced from the EVG data. These tables can be used in two ways: either to indicate the overall picture of the continent or to exemplify some of the marked national differences that can be found within Europe as a whole. In this section the emphasis will lie on the former; the differences form the background to the next.

It is clear, first of all, that the data are complex. With this in mind, I am hesitant about the unqualified use of the term secularisation even in the European context. Indeed it seems to me considerably more accurate to suggest that West Europeans remain, by and large, unchurched populations rather than simply secular. For a marked falling-off in religious attendance (especially in the Protestant North) has not resulted, yet, in a parallel abdication of religious belief – in a broad definition of

Table 1.1 Frequency of church attendance in West Europe 1999/2000 (some examples) %

	<i>Once a week</i>	<i>Once a month</i>	<i>Special occasions</i>	<i>Never</i>
European average	20.5	10.8	38.8	29.5
CATHOLIC COUNTRIES				
Belgium	19.0	9.0	25.3	46.6
France	7.6	4.3	27.8	60.4
Ireland	56.9	10.5	22.8	9.7
Italy	40.5	13.1	32.5	13.9
Portugal	36.4	14.9	33.5	15.2
Spain	25.5	10.5	32.5	31.5
MIXED COUNTRIES				
Great Britain	14.4	4.5	25.3	55.8
Germany	13.6	16.5	41.2	28.8
Netherlands	14.5	11.2	28.1	46.1
Northern Ireland	48.5	14.9	16.9	19.8
LUTHERAN COUNTRIES				
Denmark	2.7	9.2	45.4	42.7
Finland	5.3	8.8	59.8	26.2
Iceland	3.2	8.8	55.6	32.3
Sweden	3.8	5.5	90.5	0.2
ORTHODOX COUNTRIES				
Greece	22.3	20.9	53.9	2.8

Data supplied by the European Values Study, University of Tilburg

Table 1.2 Extent of religious belief in West Europe 1999/2000 (some examples) %

<i>Belief in:</i>	<i>God</i>	<i>Life after death</i>	<i>Heaven</i>	<i>Hell</i>	<i>Sin</i>
European average	77.4	53.3	46.3	33.9	62.1
CATHOLIC COUNTRIES					
Belgium	71.4	45.6	33.5	19.3	44.1
France	61.5	44.7	31.2	19.6	39.8
Ireland	95.5	79.2	85.3	53.4	85.7
Italy	93.5	72.8	58.7	49.0	73.2
Portugal	96.4	47.3	60.0	37.8	71.2
Spain	86.7	49.9	50.8	32.9	51.2
MIXED COUNTRIES					
Great Britain	71.6	58.3	55.8	35.3	66.9
Germany	67.8	38.8	30.9	20.1	41.3
Netherlands	61.1	50.1	37.4	13.8	39.7
Northern Ireland	93.2	75.1	86.6	73.9	90.4
LUTHERAN COUNTRIES					
Denmark	68.9	38.3	18.4	9.5	20.6
Finland	82.5	56.7	61.4	31.4	67.1
Iceland	84.4	78.2	58.7	17.5	64.3
Sweden	53.4	46.0	31.2	9.4	25.7
ORTHODOX COUNTRIES					
Greece	93.8	59.2	59.1	52.6	83.3

Data supplied by European Values Study, University of Tilburg

the term. In short, many Europeans have ceased to connect with their religious institutions in any active sense, but they have not abandoned, so far, either their deep-seated religious aspirations or (in many cases) a latent sense of belonging.

This mismatch between belief and practice raises, in fact, one of the crucial questions of the EVG material. It is, moreover, a topic which divides the commentators (themselves from a variety of disciplines), who have made use of these data. On the one hand, there are those who assume that belief will follow practice downwards, but at a slower rate. In other words, the two variables are directly related and will move in the same direction, albeit at different speeds. On the other, there are commentators (including myself) who consider belief a more independent variable. An evident fall in both religious practice and strictly Christian beliefs in the post-war period does not lead either to a parallel loss in religious sensitivity (indeed the reverse is often true as individuals sense a greater freedom to experiment), or to the widespread adoption of secular alternatives (here the point should be made even more emphatically). Hence a rather different conclusion: religious belief is *inversely* rather than *directly* related to belonging. In other words, as the institutional disciplines decline, belief not only persists, but becomes increasingly personal, detached and heterogeneous and particularly among young people. The data from the most recent European Values Study (1999/2000) strongly reinforce this point.⁵

In the meantime, it is important to note a number of other patterns that emerge from the EVG data. Significant here are the correlations that obtain between religious indices and a range of socio-economic variables, all of which confirm the existence of socio-religious patterning across national boundaries. The most striking of these concern the correlations with both gender and age throughout West Europe. The disproportionate presence of women in almost every kind of religious activity (both belief and practice) can in fact be found throughout the Christian West, a point to which we shall return in some detail

with respect to the Latin American material. The correlation with age, in contrast, prompts one of the most searching questions of the European Values Study: is West Europe experiencing a permanent generational shift with respect to religious behaviour, rather than a manifestation of the normal life-cycle? The EVG findings indicate that this might be so. The precise direction of such changes remains extremely difficult to predict, however – the more so given the conclusions of the previous paragraph.

There are, finally, shifts occurring throughout Western Europe in terms of the changing nature of the religious population. Such data cannot be found in the EVG, or indeed in any comparable survey, given that the sample sizes for each country are too small to provide any meaningful information about religious minorities. They are, none the less, of crucial importance for our understanding of Europe's religious environment. Despite the necessary emphasis in this chapter on the historic churches, it would, I think, be unwise to ignore the minorities completely.

The first of these, the Jews, has been present in Europe for centuries, though not continuously so, a fact in itself indicative of the tragedies of European history, both more and less recent. It also demonstrates the inapplicability of the term Judaeo-Christian to much of Europe's past. The term (more related to American political correctness than historical accuracy) should be used with considerable caution. Estimates of numbers are always difficult, but there are, at present, around one million Jews in West Europe, the largest communities being the French (500,000–600,000) and the British (300,000). French Judaism has been transformed in the post-war period by the immigration of considerable numbers of Sephardim from North Africa;⁶ it forms a notable exception within the overall pattern of declining numbers (Wasserstein 1996: viii).

In terms of more recent immigrations (largely brought about for economic reasons), the Islamic communities are undoubtedly

the most visible, though Britain also houses considerable numbers of Sikhs and Hindus. Islam is, however, the largest other-faith population in Europe, conservative estimates suggesting a figure of six million.⁷ More specifically, Muslims make up approximately 3 per cent of most West European populations (Lewis and Schnapper 1994, Nielsen 1995, Vertovec and Peach 1997). The precise patterns derive very largely from colonial connections. The links between France and North Africa, for example, account for the very sizeable French Muslim community (3-4 million); Britain's equivalent comes from the Indian subcontinent (1.2 million). Germany, on the other hand, has absorbed large numbers of migrant workers from the fringes of South-east Europe, and from Turkey and the former Yugoslavia in particular. In the 1990s, the Muslim population has spread northwards – notably, for example, to Sweden (a country generously hospitable to political refugees from the Middle East). Finding ways to accommodate the growing Muslim presence in this part of the world is, in my view, one of the principal challenges facing twenty-first-century Europeans (and at all levels of institutional existence).

The presence of new religious movements in all European societies should finally be taken into account, not so much for the numbers that are involved (which remain minute), but for the issues that such minorities provoke. New religious movements disturb the European mind – whether this mind be secular, religious or sociological. For secular Europeans, new religious movements challenge assumptions of rationality; for the traditionally religious, they throw up disconcerting alternatives to Christian teaching; and for the sociologically inclined, they offer not only ample material for case studies, but more importantly, insights into the nature of European society itself – notably its capacities to tolerate difference. A glance, for example, at the website established by CESNUR (an Italian centre for the study of new religions⁸) will indicate the degree of controversy that such movements provoke and the difficulties faced by European

governments (most notably the French) in coming to terms with them.

VARIATIONS ON THE THEME

So much for the commonalities of European religion within which the British will, I hope, recognise themselves alongside their European partners. But what of the differences? These can be conceptualised in a variety of ways. There are, first, the broad distinctions between the Protestant North and the Catholic South in Europe, with a variety of mixed types in between (The Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland). By and large the indicators of religious activity have fallen faster in Protestant Europe than in the South, though there are some suggestions (not all of them conclusive) that the Catholics will follow suit a generation or so later. In terms of religious activity, Britain falls squarely within the Protestant North, despite the particular nature of Anglicanism (it is both Catholic and Reformed) and the sizeable Catholic minority in mainland Britain.

It is equally important to remember, however, that certain countries simply fail to fit the pattern: Catholic Ireland, for example, may be part of the North from a geographical point of view, but Irish people are quite clearly very different from their immediate neighbours in terms both of denominational allegiance and of religious behaviour. Indeed the two parts of Ireland should in many respects be considered *sui generis* with respect to their religious identifications. The Republic is, in fact, very similar to Poland – both are cases where religion has become a form of cultural defence against external domination (in Ireland against the British and in Poland against, in turn, Lutheran Swedes, Lutheran Germans and Orthodox – or aggressively secular – Russians). This is the principal reason why the statistical indicators of Ireland and Poland are out of line with the rest of Europe; in both places 'religion' had (until recently) an additional

job to do – it preserved the sense of a nation in face of external aggression, symbolic or real. A similar point will resonate in relation to South Korea (Chapter Five). Northern Ireland is, thankfully, a case apart; it will not form part of the following discussion.

Secondly, there are marked differences between European nations in terms of the variety of church-state relationships which have come into being in different places, mostly for particular historical reasons (Robbers 1996 offers a useful summary). We have already made the point that the common thread within West Europe lies in the existence of constitutional connections per se; the contrasts lie in the specificities of these relationships. Once again there is a broad contrast between Protestant and Catholic in this respect. In the Protestant parts of the continent (including Britain), ecclesiastical arrangements very often take the form of a state Church which embodies, in a benign form, national as well as religious identity. In these nations the indicators of religious activity tend, on the whole, to be low, but there is little evidence of hostility between Church and people, themselves largely of one mind. Indeed very positive relationships towards the state churches continue to exist – for example, in the Nordic countries, where residual membership of such churches remains astonishingly high (at least from the point of view of a British observer), despite the fact that attendance and assent to credal statements are some of the lowest in Europe.

In Catholic Europe, a rather different evolution has taken place. The extreme case is the French one. Here a strong and markedly clerical Church has for more than two centuries been involved in a series of confrontations with its alter ego, an equally developed and at times impatiently secular State, consciously embodying an alternative ideology.⁹ Up to a point the same confrontations can be found in the Iberian peninsula and in Italy, but in both cases a rather different historical evolution has had a noticeable effect on the outcome. Spain and Portugal, for example, experienced dictatorship at a relatively late stage in

Europe's history – a fact which both compromised the Catholic Church, but also permitted a certain distancing in subsequent years. The Church, for instance, played a positive role in the rebuilding of Spanish democracy. The legacy of the past remains difficult to shed, however, and especially for the young who, quite clearly, are not attracted to institutional forms of religion. In Italy the presence of the Holy See appears to have made a difference to the capacities of the Church to maintain its institutional identity (not least, until very recently, as a bulwark against a strong Communist presence in Italian society).

The Greek case, finally, is unique. Greece is the only Orthodox country within the European Union, a fact explicable by the specificities of post-war history. Greek identity, moreover, is virtually indistinguishable from Greek Orthodoxy, rendering the position of religious minorities in Greek society extremely problematic. This is even more the case for Christian or para-Christian groups than for the Muslim minority in Thrace.¹⁰

SOCIOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS

We need, now, to turn to the level of explanation. How is it possible to account for the religious situation that pertains in Europe at the beginning of the twenty-first century? A variety of approaches will be offered. The first is substantially a re-statement of the secularisation thesis in its classic form and is based primarily on the work of Steve Bruce. The second, exemplified by David Martin, includes a much greater emphasis on situational factors – secularisation undoubtedly exists but takes place in different ways in different places (both within Europe and beyond). The final pair of explanations set out two very recent approaches to the situation in modern Europe (they include my own and that of Callum Brown – a social historian rather than a sociologist). In one way or another, all four approaches introduce the notion of 'European exceptionalism',

the guiding theme of these lectures; all four, in addition, are considered with reference to the case studies that follow.

1 Until moderately recently, the secularisation thesis was considered axiomatic. Herein lay the explanation for religious decline not only in Europe but, in the fullness of time, in the rest of the modernised world. Such predictions derive from the central assumptions of the thesis itself: namely that there is a necessary connection between the onset of economic and social modernisation and the decline of religion as a significant feature in public (if not always in private) life. In setting out these connections, secularisation theorists draw both from the sociological classics and from the thinking of American social scientists, notably Talcott Parsons and Peter Berger at least in his early work (Berger 1967). In Britain the principal exponents of the theory have been Bryan Wilson (1982) and Steve Bruce (1996). We can take the latter as a representative case.

In *From Cathedrals to Cults: Religion in the Modern World* (1996), Bruce sets out the elements of the thesis with admirable clarity. The core of the argument lies in the changes that took place in Europe at the time of the Reformation when, for the first time, the authority of the medieval Church was seriously questioned. The challenge came in two ways – from a growing sense of individualism as the individual believer was freed from the mediation of the church in terms of his or her relationship with God, and from increasing rationality as innovative ways of thinking began to penetrate the European mind. For Bruce the two movements are necessarily related; both moreover are corrosive of religion in its traditional forms: '[I]ndividualism threatened the communal basis of religious belief and behaviour, while rationality removed many of the purposes of religion and rendered many of its beliefs implausible' (1996: 230). The first threads were pulled in the sacred canopy, which over time would unravel further and further – to the point, finally, of total disintegration.

Not everything happened at once, however. Indeed for the

following three centuries, religion remained a (if not the) central issue at the heart of European politics as nation fought nation over the right to control souls as well as bodies. Gradually, however, a *modus vivendi* emerged which allowed Europeans of different religious persuasions to live alongside each other, both within and between nations. Following the argument of the secularisation theorists, however, growing toleration simply poses another set of difficulties – both for the religiously committed and for the observing sociologist. These can be summarised as follows. If it is possible to tolerate a variety of religious views within one society, can any of these views be considered an embodiment of truth? In other words, once more than one 'truth' is permitted, all religions necessarily lose their plausibility, not to mention their capacities to discipline the faithful. Or do they? There are marked differences of opinion in this respect. It is these questions, moreover, that lead to one of the central issues in contemporary sociological debate: what precisely is the relationship between increasing religious pluralism (an essential part of modern living) and religious vitality?

Broadly speaking, there are two possible answers: one held by the rational choice theorists (see Chapter Two for a full discussion of this approach) and one by the defenders of secularisation theory, notably Bruce himself (1999). The argument turns on how the causal connections between the two variables are interpreted. Advocates of secularisation maintain that growing religious pluralism (historically associated with greater religious tolerance) necessarily undermines the plausibility of all forms of religious belief – thereby encouraging a greater degree of secularisation, manifested in indifference just as much as hostility. Following this view, religion becomes increasingly a question of options, life-styles and preferences, to the point that it loses much of its *raison d'être*. Rational choice theorists, however, argue precisely the reverse: religious pluralism enables the religious needs of increasingly diverse populations to be more adequately met – thereby encouraging rather than discouraging

greater religious vitality. These questions will resonate repeatedly in the following chapters, notably the next. Quite apart from this, they immediately engage the issue of European exceptionalism, in so far as the outcomes appear to be different (markedly so) in different parts of the modern world.

Before developing this point in more detail, it is important to remember that Bruce is confining his argument to modern Western democracies – he is not including the religious movements sweeping across parts of the Islamic world or the serious disputes on the fault lines of the various faith communities that exist in the Near, Middle and Far East. But even in the modern West, there is surely, not only considerable diversity in the religious situations on offer, but seriously conflicting trajectories in terms of their likely development. Such contrasts lead naturally to the second set of explanatory theories, approaches associated above all with the work of David Martin (1978). In his seminal text *A General Theory of Secularization*, Martin lays considerably greater stress than Wilson or Bruce on the empirically observable differences between a wide variety of comparative cases, and the need to explain how the particular religious situation in each of these came about. It is clear, moreover, that advanced secularisation is more likely to develop in some circumstances than in others. It follows that there is nothing inevitable about the secularisation process – it may or may not take place, at different speeds, in different ways and with different effects. The contrasts between Europe (itself internally diverse) and the United States are central to this discussion. The difference between the two cases lies essentially in two very different religious histories, enabling in the American example a striking combination of economic modernisation and religious vitality, itself associated with a developed religious pluralism (a point discussed in detail in the following chapter).

How, then, did the secularisation theorists (largely of European origin) accommodate the markedly different American case? It is at this point that the notion of exceptionalism begins

to resonate. The argument moves in two stages. The first stage embodies the notion of 'American exceptionalism'. In other words there are particular reasons for the religious vitality of modern America which require careful analysis – a subject that preoccupied scholars from different disciplines for much of the post-war period, Martin among them. Bit by bit, however, the argument has begun to swing in a different direction, encouraged undoubtedly by Martin's recent attention to the Latin American case and the emergence of Pentecostalism as a significant religious movement both here and elsewhere (Chapter Three). Observing the religious developments of the modern world (many of which have caught the sociological community by surprise), Martin – together with Peter Berger (1992) – have become increasingly convinced not only that the modern world (including large sections of the modern West) is 'as furiously religious as ever', but that it is Europe that should be considered the exceptional case rather than the United States. Berger has, in fact, moved full circle, from an advocacy of secularisation theory to a trenchant critique of this position.

Where, though, does this leave the question of European – as opposed to American – forms of religion? They must be seen, surely, as one strand among many which make up what it means to be European. European religion is not a model for export; it is something distinct, peculiar to the European corner of the world. What then has been the nature of this strand in the latter part of the twentieth century and what will it be like in subsequent decades? It is precisely these issues which have underpinned my recent writing on the religious situation in Europe.

Religion in Modern Europe: a Memory Mutates (Davie 2000a) brings together this thinking; it is concerned with the specificities of Europe's religious life and its relationship to European history and culture. In order to make these essentially Durkheimian links, religion is conceptualised as a form of collective memory. Such an idea derives from the work of a leading French

sociologist of religion, Danièle Hervieu-Léger, whose point of departure (Hervieu-Léger 2000) lies in trying to identify and to refine the conceptual tools necessary for the understanding of religion in the modern world. An answer gradually emerges in the definition of religion as a specific mode of believing. The crucial points to grasp in this analysis are (a) the *chain* which makes the individual believer a member of a community – a community which gathers past, present and future members – and (b) the tradition (or collective memory) which becomes the basis of that community's existence. Hervieu-Léger goes further than this: she argues that modern societies (and especially modern European societies) are not less religious because they are increasingly rational but because they are less and less capable of maintaining the memory which lies at the heart of their religious existence. They are, to use her own term, *amnesic societies*. Through what mechanisms, then, can modern European societies overcome their amnesia and stay in touch with the forms of religion that are necessary to sustain their identity? That seems to me the challenge set by Hervieu-Léger's analysis.

Religion in Modern Europe was largely a response to that challenge; the following paragraphs offer a brief summary of the argument. It must start, inevitably, with the churches themselves. Europe's churches have undergone a metamorphosis in the course of the last century.¹¹ No longer do they supply a sacred canopy embracing every citizen within the nation in question (in this respect I entirely agree with Steve Bruce), but nor have they disappeared altogether. They have become *de facto*, if not always *de jure*, influential voluntary organisations, capable of operating in a whole variety of ways – traditional as well as innovative. Placing the churches in the sphere of the voluntary sector or civil society is, in fact, the crucial point. In this sector of society the churches are key players; they are central to the structures of a modern democracy and attract more members than almost all their organisational equivalents. Churches, moreover, imply churchgoers (the social actors who carry and

articulate the memory). Who these people are in modern Europe and how they are placed in the nexus of social relations – an essentially Weberian question – is central to the understanding of both formal and informal patterns of religion in Europe and elsewhere. The data from an earlier section of this chapter provide a partial answer in terms of the European situation: these people are relatively well educated, often professionals, older on average than the population as a whole and disproportionately female.

A crucial concept begins to emerge from these analyses: that of vicarious religion. Could it be that Europeans are not so much less religious than populations in other parts of the world, but – quite simply – differently so? For particular historical reasons (notably the historic connections between Church and State), significant numbers of Europeans are content to let both churches and churchgoers enact a memory on their behalf (the essential meaning of vicarious), more than half aware that they might need to draw on the capital at crucial times in their individual or their collective lives. The almost universal take up of religious ceremonies at the time of a death is the most obvious expression of this tendency; so, too, the prominence of the historic churches in particular at times of national crisis or, more positively, of national celebration. Think, for example, of the significance of European churches and church buildings after the sinking of the Baltic ferry *Estonia*, after the death of Princess Diana or after the terrifying events of 11 September 2001.

This kind of argument works well for the European case, but less so elsewhere – a further argument in favour of exceptionalism. Here the inapplicability of the concept of vicariousness in other parts of the world (and especially to the United States) is the crucial point to grasp, a limitation easily illustrated from my own experience. I have travelled and lectured in almost every country of West Europe, frequently introducing the theme of vicarious religion. Despite the differences in language, it is extremely rare that Europeans fail to grasp what I mean by this