RedFame

International Journal of Social Science Studies
Vol. 2, No. 1; January 2014
ISSN 2324-8033 E-ISSN 2324-8041
Published by Redfame Publishing
URL: http://ijsss.redfame.com

# The Public Presence of Religion in Western Europe: its social significance among religious constituencies lying between the secular and churchgoing Christians?

Tony Glendinning

Correspondence: Tony Glendinning, Department of Sociology, University of Aberdeen, King's College, Old Aberdeen, AB24 3QY, UK.

Received: July 31, 2013 Accepted: August 19, 2013 Available online: October 21, 2013

doi:10.11114/ijsss.v2i1.241 URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.11114/ijsss.v2i1.241

**Abstract**

The study examines attitudes about public religion in the Netherlands, Britain, France and Denmark using ISSP survey data for 1998 and 2008. The context is de-privatization of religion in secular Western Europe due to Christian cultural defence. The majority of Dutch and British participants hold moderate opinions about mixing religion and politics. The majority of French and Danish participants are against public religion. Comparing 2008 to 1998, anti-public-religion attitudes are more evident in the Netherlands in 2008. It is moderate attitudes that are less likely in Britain and approval is even less likely in France and Denmark in 2008 compared to 1998. Overall, public religion has become more unpopular in all four countries. In terms of differences between religious constituencies within countries, attitudes about public religion have de-coupled from churchgoing in Britain unlike continuing relative approval of churchgoers elsewhere. Non-attendance of services is associated with disapproval in France only. In the Danish case, majorities express anti-public-religion attitudes across all religious constituencies in 2008, including Danish churchgoers. National differences emphasize differing traditions, church-state relations and current conditions. There are two instances of cultural defence in our analysis. The Dutch case represents growth in religious-Christian numbers outside of the churches who are not against public religion. The other instance of religio-ethnic cultural defence is among a growing minority of nominal Christians in Britain, who are neither religious nor churchgoers, but express approval of mixing religion and politics as part of an imagined national identity rather than any basis in Christian faith.

**Keywords:** public religion, politics, Western Europe, cultural defence, Christian identity

## 1. Introduction

The purpose of the study is to compare changing attitudes among the populace in Western Europe about the place of religion in public life, and not only among remaining religiously committed minorities, but also among those religious constituencies that now lie between churchgoing Christian and secular society (Voas 2009). Under processes of modernization the prevailing view had been that religion in Western Europe would inevitably retreat from the public sphere (Bruce 2011) with religion's decline in social significance being the core tenet of the secularization paradigm (Wilson 1982). However, others pointed to countertrends where new forms of public religion had emerged in the modern world to force a reconsideration of the relation between religion and modernity, such as during the 1980s with the growth of the Catholic liberation theology in Latin America or Islamic fundamentalism and the establishment of the post-revolutionary Republic of Iran. Their argument was that around the world religious traditions had re-emerged from the private sphere into public life, causing the de-privatization of religion (Casanova 1994). Inglehart and Norris (2012) also observed that on a global scale religiosity persisted rather than the local decline seen in Western Europe. Even in Western Europe, Kaufmann, Goujon and Vergrad (2012) envisage a future socio-demographic scenario in which immigration and differential fertility would result in conservative Christians and people of other world religions, mostly Islam, representing the major religious constituencies in the long run.

### *1.1 Public Religion and the State in Western Europe*

Religion's compartmentalization and reduced significance in public life in countries such as the Netherlands, Britain, France or Denmark had come about through different historical accommodations between religion and

the state, reached in different ways and following different trajectories (Martin, 1978). However, global trends have meant that Western European societies have become 'immigrant nations' (Scheffer, 2012) with concomitant ethnic and religious diversity. British 'multiculturalism', French 'secularism' and Germanic 'Christian-occidentalism' have all been problematic as responses of the modern state, particularly in the case of Islam, up to the point where liberalism may 'submerge under resurgent nationalism' (Joppke, 2009: 2). Historically, liberalism's home ground in Western Europe had been the containment of religious conflict.

In the Netherlands, for example, multiculturalism has lost favour amid heated public debate in the 1990s about failed integration of minorities and particularly the incompatibility of Islam with Dutch civic state culture and identity. The mainstream Dutch political focus is now 'assimilation' and concern about ethnicity and religion (Vasta 2007). One might have anticipated Dutch conservative Christian reactions to the state's original policy of multiculturalism, as being too accommodating of the demands and sensitivities of other minority religions such as Islam at the expense of established church-state relations in the Netherlands, especially when Dutch Christians had come to represent a minority themselves by the 1990s. Achterberg and colleagues (2009) found that over the period from 1970 to the mid-1990s the populace's attitudes about public religion had become increasingly polarized between secular and Christian religious blocs within Dutch society. Thereafter Islam in the Netherlands was much confused with religious fundamentalism and extremism in the heated public debate about civic society. There were, for example, ~~with~~ death threats issued to politicians following the murder in Amsterdam of the maker of a documentary film about violence towards women in Islamic countries (Brown, 2004).

The British and French cases also emphasize differing religion-state relations and responses to new ethnic and religious diversity. Even if religion and the state are supposed to be separate within French republicanism (*laic*), Christianity and Judaism enjoy certain privileges and corporate status which have only recently, if haltingly, been expanded to Islam. The example of state responses to the Islamic veil is used by Joppke (2009) to hold a mirror up to British and French forms of liberalism, and public debate about reassessments of what it means to be a 'British' or 'French' citizen. He notes that British multiculturalism risks toleration of illiberal religious excess; while French secularism risks repression. Two Muslim women were arrested for publically wearing the *niqab* in a symbolic act by the French state (Schofield, 2011).

British multiculturalism was presented by Tony Blair's government in the late 1990s as the means by which the state could work together in partnership with religious communities for social inclusion. In practical terms, it was used by the government to set the agenda by which it managed issues of ethnic and religious diversity (Beckford, 2012). Religious conservatives claimed that British Christian tradition was being marginalized and Christians persecuted by the state for public expressions of faith (Glendinning and Bruce, 2011). When an opposition coalition government came to power its Prime Minister was quick to brand multiculturalism a failure. As one instance, an English High Court judge had ruled that the custom of saying Christian prayers before meetings of Bideford Town Council in Devon was unlawful. Legal action came about through the objections of a secular member of the council. The government's English Local Government Secretary responded to the decision by fast-tracking legislation to allow local councils to choose whether or not to say traditional Christian prayers at their meetings (LocalGovUK, 2012).

The Danish case of Christian-occidentalism is different again. More than 80 percent of the Danish population belong to the Folk Church by virtue of not opting out of paying the annual Church Tax levied by the state on the national church's behalf, but few Danes are either devout or regular churchgoers. Jenkins (2008) explains how Christian religion persists in everyday life in Denmark through a process of 'believing in belonging' in a paraphrase of Grace Davie's (1994) well-worn characterization of the modern British religious condition as 'believing without belonging.' Jenkins means by his phrase a common Danish identity of which belonging to the Folk Church is an integral part but which need not include any particular belief in Christian doctrines or authority. For most Danes, being Christian requires no commitment other than church membership by default (an opt-out annual Church Tax) and the occasional church attendance for private rites of passage, such as funerals, baptisms, confirmations and weddings. (Bruce, 2000). The Danish Lutheran Church has become a symbol of national and ethnic identity which Danes retain to signal their cultural heritage. Islam in particular has been seen as incompatible with such Danish culture and the religious 'other' has become controversial in Denmark too. As perhaps the most high profile instance, the Copenhagen offices of a national weekly were burned down after it commissioned and published ten cartoons portraying the Prophet explicitly to assert the newspaper's right to a free press (Brown, 2006).

*1.2 Cultural Defence among Different Religious Constituencies*

There are three recurrent themes in our accounts of Dutch, British, French and Danish experiences: first, seeming disruptions to the established accommodations between religion and the state that had contained previous

religious conflict; second, perceived encroachments by a more overtly secularist state on the position of the Christian churches in order to re-accommodate and manage the new public presence of an assertive religious 'other'; and third, perceived threats to Christian religio-ethnic national identities from that new presence. However, Western European societies are even more religiously diverse than that because new religious constituencies also exist outside of traditional Christian, conservative Islamic and other congregations of committed adherents. David Voas' analysis of survey data collected across Europe in 2002/2003 suggests there are also a variety of religious constituencies who are 'neither regular churchgoers nor self-consciously non-religious' (Voas, 2009: 155). He found that many Europeans now occupied a religious space between the churches and the secular, a religious space where people's 'loyalty to tradition' remained 'considerable' in his words, which is where the crossover occurs with Christian religio-ethnic national identities.

Ingrid Strom's analysis of what exactly Voas' space of 'residual' religious involvement comprised suggested that it included constituencies representing nationalist-religious-ethnocentrism and individualist-religious-pluralism (Storm, 2009: 707—8).[i] On the contentious matter of immigration, for example, Storm (2011a) later found that those people who believed it was important to be Christian to be 'Dutch' or 'British' or 'Danish' were more likely to hold negative attitudes about immigrants as 'a serious threat to national identity'.[ii] However, thosenegative attitudes of nominal Christians were quite different from the attitudes of churchgoers. Churchgoing even reduced anti-immigration attitudes in the Netherlands and Denmark, as representing Christian tolerance. Strom found that a negative view of Muslims was a further factor in expressions of national identity as 'Dutch' or 'British' or 'Danish' but differently in each of the three countries: being born in the Netherlands was important among the Dutch; white ethnicity was important among the British; while being a member of the Folk Church was important among the Danes.

Storm's alignment of a Christian identity with other aspects of national identity can be seen as representing a religio-ethnic group outside of the Christian churches that coheres through ethno-cultural solidarity, and also, by reference to the new presence of the 'non-Christian (especially Muslim) other'. In particular, Storm found that thinking it was important to be Christian to be British was associated with ethnic national identity (2011b). Apologists for the secularization paradigm have framed perceived threats to national religio-ethnic identity as 'cultural defence' (Bruce, 2011: 50—2).

### *1.3 Research Question*

Do Western Europeans wish religion to have a new prominence in public life? Our central argument is that if public religion is not popular among the new variety of religious constituencies in the Netherlands, Britain, France and Denmark (which are countries with distinctive histories, church-state relations and current religious conditions)and if public religion became less rather than more popular after 2000 (when religion became more controversial, more confused with extremism and national religio-ethnic identities more threatened) then it seems unlikely that we are witnessing any desire for de-privatization of religion in Western Europe. Certainly we would expect to see national variations — greater or lesser religious-secular divides in attitudes; stronger or weaker effects of religious identities, personal religiosity and churchgoing; and differing expressions of Christian cultural defence — but we also expect our general point about the widespread lack of popularity of public religion to apply to almost all religious constituencies within different forms of Western European liberalism.

## 2. Methods

### *2.1 Secondary Data Source*

The study utilizes International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) cross-sectional national samples from 1998 and 2008. ISSP surveys in those particular years included modules of questions on religion (ISSP 1998; 2008). The approach adopted extends one developed in a previous study of Britain alone (Glendinning and Bruce 2011). As with its predecessor, the study examines attitudes about the public presence of religion but in four Western European liberal democracies.[iii]

### *2.2 Measures*

#### 2.2.1 Attitudes about Public Religion

In the previous study by Glendinning and Bruce a pre-analysis of a block of six relevant ISSP questions identified two particular questions as especially pertinent. The two questions were used to form a reliable measure of attitudes about religion's involvement in politics (2011: 508). The scale combined responses to the agreement statements: 'religious leaders should not try to influence: (a) government decisions; and (b) how people vote in elections.' Results were cross-checked with another question available in 2008 only. In the present study questions (a) and (b) and the associated scale are used to represent anti, moderate and pro-public-religion

attitudes among ISSP participants in the Netherlands, Britain, France and Denmark in 1998 and 2008. We usean ordinal version of the scale to meet various statistical assumptions behind the application of multivariate regression techniques.Further details are provided in Tables 1 and 3.

2.2.2 Religious Factors

As previously, we analyze ISSP participants' self-reports of their frequency of attendance of services and meetings associated with their religion, if any, along with self-reports of religious identity, including 'no religion'. However, the present study includes an additional measure of personal religiosityexpressed in terms of self-assessments of how religious or non-religious ISSP participants' believed themselves to be on a five-point scale. All three questions are handled in a standard format. In the case of Britain only, there are sufficient data to separate out those participants who claim a Christian identity but do not 'belong to any particular religion' from those participants who identify with a particular religious denomination, and others who have 'no religion' at all.Further details are provided in Table 2.

2.2.3 Social Factors

Our study also includes consideration of key social factors. Age is aggregated into three groups to represent 'younger' 18—34 year-olds, 'middle-aged' 35—54 year-olds and 'older' 55 plus years participants. Cohort effects may be derived from year of survey and age-group. Education systems are distinctive in the four countries. For comparisons the two highest educational categories in the ISSP datasets for each country are combined to represent those who possess education beyond high school, as university and college graduates compared to other participants.

*2.3 Plan of Analysis*

In what follows we provide preliminary results in a tabular format, first for changes in the populace's attitudes about religion's involvement in politics in 2008 compared to 1998 (Table 1), then for national changes in levels of religious participation, personal religiosity and religious identification (Table 2) and finally for changes in attitudes about religion's involvement in politics more specifically among different religious constituencies in each of the four countries (Table 3). Once that descriptive groundwork has been laid, our three religious factors are entered into multivariate analyses in order to examine their effects jointly on the populace's attitudes about public religion in the different countries, and also changes in those attitudes within and between different religious blocs in 2008 compared to 1998 (Table 4). Regression analyses control for social factors affecting religion, namelygender, age and education. Regression analyses are run for each country separately.[iv] Further analyses are required for the Netherlands and Britain to elaborate on those two particular cases (Table 5).

One of the benefits of undertaking regression analyses is that we are able, after all, to estimate differences in attitudes about public religion between different religious constituencies in each country, such as: secular participants; religiously indifferent participants; those who 'believe without belonging'; those who 'belong without believing'; and religious-Christians. We can estimate differences between religious constituencies while making allowances for effects which are due to participation or non-participation in organised religion in terms of churchgoing. Logically, there are further categories to consider but numbers in such categories are typically small (Glendinning 2006), except in the particular case of Britain, where in our analysis, we also consider differences for nominal British Christians who do not belong to any particular religious denomination.

## 3. Results

*3.1 Religion's Involvement in Politics*

Table 1 reports preliminary results about attitudes in the Netherlands, Britain, France and Denmark in 2008 and 1998. Results are for questions (a) and (b) by country and year. British and Dutch replies to the same questions at an earlier sweep of the ISSP are for reference only, because France and Denmark did not participate in 1991.

3.1.1 Changing Attitudes about Religion's Influence on Government Decisions

Results of chi-squared tests applied to the data in Table 1(a) suggest that in each country the notion that 'religious leaders should not try to influence government decisions' gained ground in 2008 compared to 1998. The majority in each country agreed they should not be involved; and ISSP participants were more likely to agree in 2008 compared to 1998. For example, 77 percent of Dutch participants disapproved in 2008 compared to 67 percent of their counterparts in 1998 (Chi-sq.(4) = 67.92, $p < .001$). The effect of survey year was weaker in Denmark (Chi-sq.(4) = 12.14, $p = .016$) but most Danes disapproved already (82 percent of the Danish sample in 2008 compared to 78 percent in 1998). Chi-squared tests of cross-national differences indicated that

disapproval was strongest in Denmark, followed by France, then the Netherlands, and finally, Britain (Country differences: Chi-sq.(12) = 501.08, p < .001 in 2008; and Chi-sq.(12) = 400.82, p < .001 in 1998).

Table 1.Changing attitudes about religion's involvement in politics. Source: ISSP.

| Column %-ages | 1991▵ | | 1998 | | 2008 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Netherlands | (a) | (b) | (a)** | (b)** | (a)** | (b)** |
| 1. Strongly agree | 29% | 35% | 36% | 42% | 45% | 49% |
| 2. Agree | 37% | 38% | 31% | 33% | 32% | 33% |
| 3. Neither/nor | 14% | 11% | 15% | 13% | 12% | 10% |
| 4. Disagree | 16% | 12% | 14% | 9% | 7% | 5% |
| 5. Strongly disagree | 4% | 4% | 4% | 3% | 3% | 3% |
| | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| | α = .75, N = 1,513 | | α = .82, N = 1,949 | | α = .86, N = 1,932 | |
| Britain | (a) | (b) | (a)** | (b)** | (a)** | (b)** |
| 1. Strongly agree | 22% | 32% | 32% | 40% | 39% | 45% |
| 2. Agree | 39% | 42% | 32% | 32% | 30% | 31% |
| 3. Neither/nor | 15% | 8% | 14% | 12% | 16% | 12% |
| 4. Disagree | 17% | 11% | 16% | 10% | 10% | 6% |
| 5. Strongly disagree | 7% | 7% | 6% | 6% | 5% | 6% |
| | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| | α = .69, N = 1,186 | | α = .83, N = 779 | | α = .83, N = 1,931 | |
| France | (No ISSP) | | (a)** | $(b)^{NS}$ | (a)** | $(b)^{NS}$ |
| 1. Strongly agree | – | – | 56% | 66% | 57% | 66% |
| 2. Agree | – | – | 17% | 18% | 20% | 18% |
| 3. Neither/nor | – | – | 15% | 9% | 14% | 10% |
| 4. Disagree | – | – | 8% | 4% | 7% | 4% |
| 5. Strongly disagree | – | – | 4% | 2% | 2% | 2% |
| | – | – | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| | | | α = .82, N = 1,119 | | α = .83, N = 2,376 | |
| Denmark | (No ISSP) | | (a)* | (b)** | (a)* | (b)** |
| 1. Strongly agree | – | – | 65% | 72% | 69% | 78% |
| 2. Agree | – | – | 13% | 11% | 13% | 8% |
| 3. Neither/nor | – | – | 9% | 8% | 9% | 7% |
| 4. Disagree | – | – | 8% | 4% | 5% | 4% |
| 5. Strongly disagree | – | – | 5% | 5% | 4% | 3% |
| | – | – | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| | | | α = .86, N = 1,111 | | α = .80, N = 1,977 | |

Notes: Chi-sq. tests of (a) and (b) in 2008 compared to 1998.$^{NS}$not sig.; *p < .05; **p < .01

(a) 'Religious leaders should not try to influence government decisions'

(b) 'Religious leaders should not try to influence how people vote in elections'

Cronbach's alpha for the subscale produced by combining replies to (a) and (b)

3.1.2 Changing Attitudes about Religion's Influence on Voting Behaviour

Those conclusions are replicated in the analysis of ISSP participants' replies to the second question that 'religious leaders should not try to influence how people vote in elections' in Table 1(b)). Involvement in elections seemed to be more unpopular still. Comparing distributions of replies to the two questions, for example among Dutch participants in 2008, the appropriate test statistic confirmed that disapproval in the Netherlands was stronger about the second question compared to the first question (the value of the marginal homogeneity test for paired responses by Dutch respondents in 2008 was 25.16, p < .001). Chi-squared tests show that disapproval of attempts to influence elections was stronger also in 2008 compared to 1998. The only exception was lack of difference in French replies in 1998 and 2008 (Chi-sq.(4) = 5.80, p = .215) but two-thirds of French participants were strongly opposed already (66 percent of the French sample 'strongly agreed' with the statement in both years). Overall, as with the first question about attempts to influence government, disapproval of attempts to influence voting was strongest in Denmark, followed by France, then the Netherlands, and finally, Britain (Country differences: Chi-sq.(12) = 709.50, p < .001 in 2008; and Chi-sq.(12) = 444.41, p < .001 in 1998).

*3.2 Religious Identity, Participation in Organised Religion and Personal Religiosity*

A board overview of religion in the four countries in 2008 compared to 1998 is provided by the data in Table 2. Estimates for Britain and the Netherlands in 1991 are for reference only. More detail is provided along with findings about attitudes when needed.

3.2.1 Changing Participation in Organized Religion

Unlike claims of Christian identity, only modest numbers in any of the national samples reported participating in organised religion on a regular basis monthly basis, or more often, and attendance fell in 2008 compared to 1998 (Table 2(d), Chi-sq. tests). The estimated extent of overall decline in church attendance was of the order of 20 percent in each country or one-fifth of congregations in 2008 compared to 1998.

3.2.2 Changing Personal Religiosity

Separate from any participation in organised religion, self-ratings of personal religiosity fell in Britain, the Netherlands and Denmark also and French estimates of self-professed religiosity stayed at the same low level between the two years (Table 2(e), Chi-sq. tests). However, on a scale from -2 'extremely/very non-religious' through to +2 'extremely/very religious' estimates of religiosity were lowest in France anyway (-0.34 in 2008). Estimates were also negative both in Denmark and Britain in 2008 (-0.31 and -0.18, respectively) and personal religiosity had a positive mean value in the Netherlands only in 2008 (but +0.08 in 2008 compared to +0.22 in 1998, $t = 2.43$, $p = .015$).

3.2.3 Changing Religious Identity

According to the figures in Table 2 the likelihood of claiming a Christian identity remained static in Britain and France at around one half of the ISSP samples in 1998 and 2008 (Table 2(c), chi-sq. tests). Nominal Christianity remained at a much higher level in Denmark. Danish estimates were three percentage points less in 2008 compared to 1998 but still at 84 percent of the total ISSP sample in 2008 (a statistically insignificant change, Chi-sq.(2) = 5.75, $p = .056$). The Netherlands is different. Nominal Christian numbers increased by more than one-third from 37 percent of the Dutch sample in 1998 to 50 percent in 2008 (Chi-sq.(2) = 99.00, $p < .001$). That is an exceptional result. The presence of other religions increased by 3 percentage points in the Dutch sample ($|Z| = 3.8$, $p < .001$) in 2008 compared to 1998 and it increased by 2.5 percentage points in the British sample ($|Z| = 3.0$, $p = .001$) in 2008 compared to 1998. For example, Muslims represent 1.5 percent of Dutch participants and 2.5 percent of British participants in the ISSP samples in 2008. The presence of other religions remained at lower levels in the French and Danish samples with small increases only of the order of one half of one percentage point in 2008 compared to 1998.

Table 2.Changing religious identity, participation in organized religion and personal religiosity. Source: ISSP.

| Total %-ages / means | 1991[Δ] | 1998 | 2008 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Netherlands | | | |
| (c) Christian (%-age)** | 42% | 37% | 50% |
| Other religions (%-age)* | 4% | 5% | 8% |
| (d) Regular attendance (%-age)** | 29% | 24% | 20% |
| (e) Personal religiosity (mean; SD)** | 0.21; 1.35 | 0.22; 1.35 | 0.08; 1.45 |
| Bases, N = | 1,564 | 1,947 | 1,917 |
| Britain | | | |
| (c) Christian[+] (%-age)[NS] | 64% | 52% | 51% |
| Other religions (%-age)* | 3% | 3% | 6% |
| (d) Regular attendance (%-age)** | 22% | 20% | 17% |
| (e) Personal religiosity (mean; SD)** | 0.09; 1.14 | 0.03; 1.16 | -0.18; 1.30 |
| Bases, N = | 1,234 | 789 | 1,948 |
| France | | | |
| (c) Christian (%-age) | – | 52% | 53% |
| Other religions (%-age) [NS] | – | 2% | 2% |
| (d) Regular attendance (%-age)* | – | 16% | 13% |
| (e) Personal religiosity (mean; SD) [NS] | – | -0.32; 1.24 | -0.34; 1.22 |
| Bases, N = | (No ISSP) | 1,124 | 2,374 |
| Denmark | | | |
| (c) Christian (%-age)* | – | 87% | 84% |
| Other religions (%-age) [NS] | – | 2% | 2% |
| (d) Regular attendance (%-age)* | – | 11% | 9% |
| (e) Personal religiosity (mean; SD)** | – | -0.12; 1.11 | -0.31; 1.12 |
| Bases, N = | (No ISSP) | 1,108 | 1,942 |

Notes: Chi-sq. of (c) and (d) and t-tests of (e) in 2008 compared to 1998.[NS]not sig.; *p < .05; **p < .01

(c) Christians including those self-identifying 'Christian' but of no denomination.

(d) Attendance of religious services or meetings on a monthly basis or more often.

(e) Range -2 'extremely/very non-religious' to +2 'extremely/very religious'.

[+]Only in Britain do a substantial number of participants claim a 'Christian' identity but do not report a specific religious denomination. In terms of change, that number is 33 from 414 (8% of Christians) in 1998 and it increases to 187 from 1,017 (18% of Christians) in 2008: Chi sq. = 24.54, df = 1, p < .001

3.2.4 Summary of Religious Change in 2008 Compared to 1998

To summarize conclusions from Table 2, self-reported participation in organised religion fell in all four countries and levels of self-professed religiosity fell too. Thus, we can see evidence for on-going national decline in churchgoing and personal religious faith in each country – à la secularization – but importantly, neither in Christian identity nor in other religious identities. In particular, there appears to have been a reversal of the long decline in claiming a Christian identity in the Netherlands (Achterberg et al. 2009: 696) accompanied by an increase in Dutch self-reports of church attendance on an occasional basis in 2008 compared to 1998 (|Z| = +5.3, p < .001).

*3.3 Attitudes about Public Religion among Different Religious Constituencies*

Table 3 extends the general overview that was provided in Table 1 by separating out the populace's attitudes about religion's involvement in politics into different religious blocs, for example to compare attitudes of Dutch nominal Christians and churchgoers in 2008 and 1998. ISSP participants' replies to the two questions in Table 1 have been combined into a scale[v] and separated out into three groups in Table 3 to represent anti-, 'moderate and pro-public-religion positions.

3.3.1 Changing Attitudes and Religious Identities (Preliminary Results)

The figures and associated chi-squared tests in Table 3(c) suggest that public religion is less popular among Christian participants in 2008 compared to 1998 in each country. For example, estimates of anti-public-religion attitudes among Christians in the Netherlands increased from 25 percent of the Christian sample in 1998 to 40 percent of the corresponding sample in 2008 and pro-public-religion attitudes decreased from 20 percent in 1998 to 12 percent of the corresponding sample in 2008 (Chi-sq.(2) = 45.96, p < .001). Among participants of 'no religion' the same observation about diminishing support for public religion can be made with confidence in the Netherlands only (62 percent of Dutch participants who had no religion expressed negative attitudes in 2008 compared to 53 percent of their irreligious counterparts in 1998; Ch-sq.(2) = 18.29, p < .001). That situation was peculiar to the Netherlands. Changes among participants of 'no religion' were statistically insignificant in the other countries (Table 3(c), Chi-sq. tests).

3.3.2 Changing Attitudes and Religious Participation (Preliminary Results)

In the Dutch case, attitudes about public religion hardened among non-attendees (64 percent of Dutch non-attendees expressed anti-public-religion attitudes in 2008 compared to only 51 percent in 1998; Chi-sq.(2) = 24.48, p < .001). Similarly, in terms of differences among regular churchgoers, statistically speaking, Dutch churchgoers stood out. Estimates of anti-public-religion attitudes among the 1998 and 2008 samples of Dutch churchgoers were up from 19 to 26 percent in 2008 and estimates of pro-public-religion attitudes were down from 27 to 20 percent in 2008 (Chi-sq.(2) = 7.55, p = .023). Dutch participants who went to church on an occasional basis repeat that same pattern of relative increase in negative attitudes and decrease in positive attitudes as observed among non-attendees and churchgoers in the Netherlands (Table 3(d)). In Britain, France and Denmark, attitudes of participants who never went to church were not much different in 2008 compared to 1998 and changes were statistically insignificant among British, French and Danish regular churchgoers too (Tables 3(d), Chi-sq. tests). Occasional churchgoers stood out as exceptional in Denmark only – where occasional church attendance represents the majority practice at more than 60 percent of the Danish population – with negative attitudes were more likely in 2008 compared to 1998 (Chi-sq.(2) = 24.82, p < .001). Indeed, occasional attendees' negative attitudes had come to match those of Danes who never went to church at all by 2008 (76 percent of occasional attendees compared to 77 percent of non-attendees).

Table 3. Attitudes about religion's involvement in politics by religious identity and participation. Source: ISSP.

| Column %-ages | Netherlands | | Britain | | France | | Denmark | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1998 | 2008 | 1998 | 2008 | 1998 | 2008 | 1998 | 2008 |
| (c) Religious identity | | | | | | | | |
| No religion | | | | | | | | |
| -1 Anti-public-religion (1 to 1.5) | 53% | 62% | 44% | 49% | 78% | 79% | 71% | 75% |
| 0 Moderate position (2 to 3) | 41% | 33% | 46% | 43% | 20% | 19% | 19% | 18% |
| +1 Pro-public-religion (3.5 to 5) | 6% | 4% | 10% | 8% | 2% | 2% | 10% | 7% |
| Bases, N = | 1,131 | 801 | 355 | 846 | 515 | 1,044 | 127 | 274 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chi-sq. 2008 v 1998: | p < .01 | | p = .18 | | p = .95 | | p = .40 | |
| Christian identity | | | | | | | | |
| -1 Anti-public-religion (1 to 1.5) | 25% | 40% | 30% | 37% | 46% | 48% | 70% | 74% |
| 0 Moderate position (2 to 3) | 55% | 49% | 50% | 49% | 40% | 43% | 19% | 19% |
| +1 Pro-public-religion (3.5 to 5) | 20% | 12% | 20% | 14% | 14% | 9% | 11% | 7% |
| Bases, N = | 718 | 944 | 403 | 984 | 565 | 1,205 | 960 | 1,609 |
| Chi-sq. 2008 v 1998: | p < .01 | | p < .01 | | p = .01 | | p < .01 | |
| (d) Religious participation | | | | | | | | |
| Never attend | | | | | | | | |
| -1 Anti-public-religion (1 to 1.5) | 51% | 64% | 42% | 46% | 77% | 77% | 78% | 77% |
| 0 Moderate position (2 to 3) | 42% | 31% | 46% | 45% | 20% | 21% | 15% | 16% |
| +1 Pro-public-religion (3.5 to 5) | 7% | 5% | 12% | 9% | 3% | 2% | 7% | 6% |
| Bases, N = | 951 | 719 | 457 | 1,198 | 543 | 1,203 | 311 | 494 |
| Chi-sq. 2008 v 1998: | p < .01 | | p = .07 | | p = .74 | | p = .80 | |
| Attend less often | | | | | | | | |
| -1 Anti-public-religion (1 to 1.5) | 38% | 52% | 35% | 36% | 53% | 55% | 68% | 76% |
| 0 Moderate position (2 to 3) | 52% | 42% | 50% | 51% | 39% | 39% | 21% | 19% |
| +1 Pro-public-religion (3.5 to 5) | 10% | 6% | 15% | 13% | 9% | 6% | 11% | 5% |
| Bases, N = | 549 | 669 | 143 | 356 | 360 | 705 | 659 | 1,223 |
| Chi-sq. 2008 v 1998: | p < .01 | | p = .91 | | p = .36 | | p < .01 | |
| Monthly attendance or more often | | | | | | | | |
| -1 Anti-public-religion (1 to 1.5) | 19% | 26% | 21% | 28% | 26% | 25% | 56% | 56% |
| 0 Moderate position (2 to 3) | 54% | 54% | 52% | 50% | 46% | 57% | 28% | 25% |
| +1 Pro-public-religion (3.5 to 5) | 27% | 20% | 27% | 22% | 28% | 18% | 16% | 19% |
| Bases, N = | 389 | 334 | 155 | 267 | 167 | 292 | 111 | 144 |
| Chi-sq. 2008 v 1998: | p = .02 | | p = .16 | | p = .06 | | p = .62 | |

Notes: Attitude scale [(a) + (b)] ÷ 2: 'anti-' (1 to 1.5); 'Moderate' (2 to 3); and 'pro--' (3.5 to 5) positions.
For details of measures of attitudes (a) & (b), see Table 1; and of religious factors (c) & (d), see Table 2.
^Never or hardly ever attend religious services or meetings.

### *3.4 Multivariate Analysis of Attitudes about Public Religion*

Table 4 reports the results of four separate multinomial regression analyses.[vi] The dependent variable is variation in anti-, moderate and pro-attitudes about religious leaders' involvement in politics (where moderate is set as reference category). The analyses control for gender, age and education. Tests are made for differences by the year of survey, religious identity, participation in organised religion and personal religiosity, considered jointly. Results are expressed as regression coefficients that can be used also to estimate relative differences in the likelihood of participants' holding anti- and pro-public-religion attitudes as odds ratios between the two years of the survey, or different religious blocs. Further tests are made for possible interaction effects involving the year of survey and each of the three religious factors considered. In the event, we did not find any evidence for changes between 1998 and 2008 in the nature of associations between attitudes and religious identity, or levels of participation in organised religion, or personal religiosity, having controlled for social factors. We did find statistically significant main effects of gender, age, education, year of survey, religious identity, self-professed religiosity and religious participation, often differently in each of the four countries.

#### 3.4.1 Effects of Gender, Age-group and Education Level

It seems that women hold less polarized views than men in Britain and the Netherlands (Table 4, the reference group is men, anti-B = 0: British women, anti-B = -.198*; Dutch women, anti-B = -.286**). There is no evidence for gender differences in Denmark, but interestingly, France seems quite different from the other countries. Women are more likely than men to be negative about public religion in France (Ref. group men, anti-B = 0 & pro-B = 0: French women, anti-B = +.261** & French women, pro-B = -.369**). Considering age, younger participants are less likely than middle-aged participants to express negative attitudes in the Netherlands, France and Denmark (Ref. group middle-age, anti-B = 0: Dutch 18—34 year-olds, anti-B = -.288**; French 18—34 year-olds, anti-B = -.240*; Danish 18—34 year-olds, anti-B = -.242*). British age-group effects are different compared to the other countries: younger participants are less likely than middle-aged participants to express positive attitudes in Britain (Ref. group middle-aged, pro-B = 0: British 18—34 year-olds, pro-B = -.716**) while older participants appear split in their attitudes (Ref. group middle-aged, anti-B = 0 & pro-B = 0: British 55+ years, anti-B = +.282** & British 55+ years, pro-B = +.314*). In terms of education, on the whole Danes

strongly disapprove of religious leaders' attempted involvement in politics but Danish graduates are less likely than their compatriots to express negative attitudes (Danish graduates, anti-B = -.393**). In addition, British graduates are more likely than other Britons to express positive attitudes about public religion (British graduates, pro-B = +.296*). Education effects are statistically insignificant in France and the Netherlands.

Table 4. Multinomial logistic regression models of attitudes about religion's involvement in politics. Source: ISSP.

| Attitude | Netherlands | | | | Britain | | | | France | | | | Denmark | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| -1 = Anti- (1 to 1.5) | Anti- | | Pro- | | Anti- | | Pro- | | Anti- | | Pro- | | Anti- | | Pro- | |
| +1 = Pro- (3.5 to 5) | (46%) | | (10%) | | (40%) | | (13%) | | (62%) | | (7%) | | (73%) | | (8%) | |
| Exp(B) = odds ratio | B | p | B | p | B | p | B | p | B | p | B | p | B | p | B | p |
| Women [Men = 0] | -.286 | ** | -.206 | .09 | -.198 | * | -.256 | .06 | .261 | ** | -.369 | ** | -.046 | .64 | -.232 | .15 |
| 18—34 yrs. [35—54 = 0] | -.288 | ** | .109 | .49 | -.084 | .48 | -.716 | ** | -.240 | * | -.348 | .15 | -.242 | * | -.242 | .25 |
| 55+ yrs. [35—54 = 0] | .091 | .30 | -.004 | .98 | .282 | ** | .314 | * | .061 | .54 | .185 | .32 | .046 | .69 | -.071 | .70 |
| Higher educ. [Others = 0] | .116 | .18 | .160 | .26 | .182 | .08 | .296 | * | .043 | .64 | .308 | .06 | -.393 | ** | -.263 | .14 |
| 2008 survey [1998 = 0] | .343 | ** | -.257 | .05 | .053 | .60 | -.326 | * | -.105 | .26 | -.472 | ** | .183 | .08 | -.357 | * |
| Christian [No relig. = 0] | -.014 | .90 | .322 | .08 | -.364 | ** | .192 | .31 | -.409 | ** | .068 | .79 | .075 | .63 | -.309 | .21 |
| Never attend [Less = 0] | .193 | .05 | .127 | .51 | .221 | .09 | .042 | .83 | .391 | ** | -.165 | .49 | .151 | .23 | -.093 | .66 |
| Regularly [Less = 0] | -.565 | ** | .533 | ** | -.074 | .67 | .287 | .18 | -.712 | ** | .527 | ** | -.449 | ** | .508 | * |
| Religiosity [covariate] | -.181 | ** | .253 | ** | -.255 | ** | .024 | .75 | -.387 | ** | .191 | .05 | -.165 | ** | .103 | .22 |
| Sq-religiosity [quadratic] | -.013 | .60 | .138 | ** | .044 | .22 | .165 | ** | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS |
| Religion × Year of survey^ | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS | NS |
| Moderate (ref. category) | (44%) | | | | (47%) | | | | (31%) | | | | (19%) | | | |
| Multicollinearity diag. | Max(VIF) = 2.16 | | | | Max(VIF) = 2.37 | | | | Max(VIF) = 2.28 | | | | Max(VIF) = 1.35 | | | |
| Nagelkerke R-sq. | $R^2$ = .159 | | | | $R^2$ = .091 | | | | $R^2$ = .235 | | | | $R^2$ = .048 | | | |

Notes: Entry of religious and social factors into regression model.[NS]statistically insignificant at $\alpha$ = .05;*p < .05; **p < .01.
^Tests for changing relationships between religious factors and attitudes in 2008 compared to 1998.

3.4.2 Effects of the Year of the Survey

As to attitudes overall in 2008 compared to 1998, there were significant effects of survey year in all four countries. Any change in positive attitudes about public religion was statistically insignificant in the Netherlands. Rather, Dutch participants were more likely to express negative attitudes in 2008 compared to 1998 (Ref. group 1998, anti-B = 0: Netherlands 2008, anti-B = +.343**). Meaning overall, Dutch support did not increase but the Dutch populace's attitudes became more polarized in 2008 compared to 1998 as the likelihood of negative attitudes increased. In the other three countries participants in Britain, France and Denmark were less likely to be positive about public religion in 2008 compared to the reference year 1998 (Table 4, ref. group 1998, pro-B = 0: Britain 2008, pro-B = -.326*; France 2008, pro-B = -.472**; and Denmark 2008, pro-B = -.357*). There were no statistically significant effects of survey year relating to anti-public-religion attitudes in the three countries, meaning overall, support dropped further and attitudes were less polarized among the populace in Britain, France and Denmark in 2008 compared to 1998.

Our regression analyses found no evidence for shifts in the extent of differences in attitudes between religious blocs in 2008 compared to 1998 – for example, the divide in attitudes between Dutch secular and Christian blocs in 2008 compared to the corresponding divide between Dutch secular and Christian blocs in 1998. In the language of statistical modelling, none of the interaction effects tested for entry into the regression models in Table 4 could be generalized with confidence (p > .05). The final regression models indicate that attitudes about public religion were related in the same way in 2008 and 1998 for different religious blocs and for other social factors considered.

3.4.3 Effects of Participation in Organised Religion

The effects of regular church attendance were similar in the Netherlands, France and Denmark (Table 4, ref. group occasional attendees, pro-B = 0 & anti-B = 0: Dutch churchgoers, anti-B = -.565** & pro-B = +.553**; French churchgoers, anti-B = -.712** & pro-B = +.527**; Danish churchgoers, anti-B = -.449** & pro-B = +.508*). The regression models indicate that Dutch, French and Danish churchgoers are less likely than occasional attendees to express anti-public-religion attitudes and churchgoers are more likely than occasional attendees to express pro-public-religion attitudes. Cross-national results are different among participants who never go to church in the Netherlands, France and Denmark, for example, non-attendance is not related to

pro-public-religion attitudes and anti-public religion sentiment is related to non-attendance in France only (Table 4, ref. group occasional attendees, anti-B = 0: French non-attendees, anti-B = +.391**).

The British case stands out as exceptional in terms of participation in organized religion. The regression model in Table 4 suggests that any effects of church attendance on attitudes about public religion are statistically insignificant in Britain once allowance is made for other factors in the analysis such as gender, age, education, religious identity and personal religiosity.

3.4.4 Effects of Personal Religiosity

In the particular case of Denmark, as personal religiosity increases the likelihood of holding anti-public-religion attitudes decreases in a linear fashion (Table 4, ref. group 'religiously indifferent' Danes, anti-B = 0: Danish unit increase in religiosity, anti-B = -.165**). In the case of France, as personal religiosity increases the likelihood of anti-public-religion attitudes decreases linearly too (French unit increase in religiosity, anti-B = -.387**), but in addition, the likelihood of pro-public-religion attitudes increases in a linear fashion at the same time (French unit increase in religiosity, pro-B = +.219**). There is a negative linear relationship between personal religiosity and anti-public-religion attitudes in the Netherlands and Britain (Dutch unit increase in religiosity, anti-B = -.181** and British unit increase in religiosity, anti-B = -.255**), just as found in Denmark and France.

Associations between pro-public-religion attitudes and level of personal religiosity are statistically insignificant in Denmark and France (Table 4, pro-B p > .05). However, the results for pro-public-religion attitudes in the Netherlands and Britain are presented in a separate breakout table, Table 5, because the final regression models for those two countries involve a quadratic term as well as a linear term in the covariate.

Table 5. The relationship between level of personal religiosity and likelihood of holding anti- and pro-positions about public religion in the Netherlands and Britain (based on regression models). Source: ISSP.

| Attitude about public religion<br>-1 = Anti-position (1 to 1.5)<br>+1 = Pro-position (3.5 to 5) | | Personal religiosity (PR)<br>-2 | -1 | 0 | +1 | +2 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Netherlands (N = 3,507) | | | | | | |
| Anti-B = -.181×(PR) | Exp(B) = | 1.44 | 1.20 | 1.00 | .80 | .70 |
| Pro-B = .235×(PR) + .138×$(PR)^2$ | Exp(B) = | .80 | .89 | 1.00 | 1.48 | 2.19 |
| Britain (N = 2,368) | | | | | | |
| Anti=B = -.255×(PR) | Exp(B) = | 1.66 | 1.29 | 1.00 | .77 | .60 |
| Pro-B = .024×(PR) + .165×$(PR)^2$ | Exp(B) = | 1.85 | 1.36 | 1.00 | 1.43 | 2.03 |

Notes: Moderate (ref. category)

Exp(B) is the adjusted relative odds ratio calculated from the models in Table 4.

Model estimates control for other factors. Personal religiosity is a covariate.

3.4.5 The More Complex Effects of Dutch and British Religiosity

The calculations for the Netherlands indicate that the combination of linear and quadratic terms translates in a straightforward way to a stronger positive effect of personal religiosity on pro-public-religion attitudes among more religious Dutch people compared to those who are 'neither non-religious nor religious' (Table 5, ref. group, religiously indifferent, pro-B = 0: odds for 'extremely or very religious' Dutch people, 1.00:2.19 [pro-B = +.784**]). The parallel calculations for Britain produces a similar result for pro-public-religion attitudes among more religious Britons (Table 5, odd for 'extremely or very religious' British people, 1.00:2.03 [pro-B = +.708**]) but a very different result for non-religious Britons. British people who say that they are 'extremely or very non-religious' appear to be polarized in their attitudes about pubic religion. Not only are they more likely to be anti-public-religion (Table 5, odds 1.00:1.66 [anti-B = +.510**]) but also they are more likely to be pro-public-religion (Table 5, odds 1.00:1.84 [pro-B = +.612**]) compared to religiously indifferent Britons. We do not see that distinctive British curvilinear effect in the other countries. Unlike the religiously indifferent in British society who do not have strong views either way some secular Britons may support the idea of religious leaders making pronouncements about politics as part of a general principle of tolerance towards all groups while others in the secular camp dismiss public religion as dangerous intrusion.

3.4.6 Christian Identity

As to the potential effects that claiming a Christian identity has on attitudes about public religion – that is, once one has allowed for the religious institutional component of church attendance, and also, for the individual's personal religiosity, irrespective of whether or not they go to church – we find that nominal Christians in the Netherlands and France are less likely to hold anti-public-religion attitudes compared to Dutch and French

people who have no religion (Table 4, ref. group 'no religion', anti-B = 0: Dutch Christians, anti-B = -.364** and French Christians, anti-B = -.409**). In terms of pro-public-religion attitudes, however, being Christian does not have a statistically significant effect in the Netherlands or France. A Christian identity appears to have has no effects at all in Denmark. The case of the significance of a Christian identity in Britain appears more complex, and so, is re-analyzed.

3.4.7 Christian Identity in Britain

The results in Table 4 show Christian identity matters for attitudes in France and the Netherlands but not Denmark. Britain is different again. To elaborate on that difference, Christians in Britain were separated out into those who identified with a specific religious denomination (N = 1,051) and those who described themsleves as Christians but did not identify with any particular religion (N = 206). The proportion of participants who identified as Christians of no denomination doubled to over nine percent of the British sample in 2008 compared to 1998 (Chi-sq.(1) = 22.16, $p < .001$). Almost all ISSP participants in the other countries preferred to identify with a religious denomination or else to state they had 'no religion'. The British regression analysis was re-run with two dummy variables instead of one for Christian identity, namely: first dummy variable, 'Denominational Christians' compared to 'no religion'; and second, 'Christians of no denomination' compared to 'no religion'. That new procedure caused no technical issues of note in re-running the analysis. The new regression model reproduced the main features of the previous British model except that a Christian identity was now a statistically significant factor but only among nominal Christians of no denomination (Ref. group 'no religion', pro-B = 0: British 'Christians of no denomination', pro-B = +.507*, $p = .049$; and British 'Denominational Christians', pro-B = +.264, $p = .156$). What seemed to be more important in Britain was identifying as a Christian without necessarily belonging to any religion. As previously, unlike the effects of that imagined Christian identity, statistically speaking, churchgoing was not such a factor in the British populace's attitudes about religious leaders' attempts to become involved in politics, while self-professed religiosity had a more positive effect and secular irreligiousness a more complex split effect on attitudes about public religion in Britain.

3.4.8 Religious-Christians outside the Churches

The constituency of 'religious-Christians' outside of the churches (ISSP participants who say they are personally 'religious' and also a 'Christian' but who are not churchgoers) is sizeable in the Netherlands, Britain and France: they represent 18.7 percent (n=665) of the Dutch, 18.6 percent (n=483) of the British and 14.2 percent (n=472) of the French samples in our analysis. Indeed, numbers of Dutch religious-Christians who are not regular churchgoers went up from 16 percent in 1998 to 23 percent in 2008. Religious-Christian numbers outside the churches stayed much the same in Britain and France in 2008 compared to 1998. The distinction does not fit the Danish case of 'belonging without believing'[vii]

Compared to our reference category of the wholly secular (those ISSP participants who say they are not religious, belong to no religion and are not churchgoers) additional calculations based on the regression models in Table 4 give estimates of the relative odds of Dutch, British and French religious-Christians outside the churches holding anti-public-religion attitudes as reduced to less than one-half of the figure for secular people (odds ratio = 1.00:0.45; 1:.00:0.46; 1.00:0.21, respectively) and of them holding pro-public-religion attitudes as more than double the figure for secular people in the Netherlands (odds ratio = 1.00:2.56) and France (odds-ratio = 1.00:2.06) while such differences in pro-public-religion attitudes as are less marked in Britain (odds ratio = 1.00:1.45). Differences between religious-Christians and secular people are statistically insignificant in Denmark. Our data show that the majority of Dutch, British and French religious-Christians outside of the churches are not against public religion, although we also find that only a minority of the constituency hold pro-public-religion attitudes in each of the three countries.

*3.5 A Final Caution*

Glendinning and Bruce (2011: 514) had found that people of 'other' religions were less likely to be sympathetic to public religion in Britain in 2008 compared to 1998. That cautions against readymade assumptions about growing public prominence of religion. To re-emphasize that point, when Muslim ISSP participants were asked what they thought about mixing religion and politics in the present study, the majority view in the Netherlands, Britain, France and Denmark in 2008 was to disapprove of religious leaders' attempts to influence government decision-making. Only 18.5 percent (5 of 27), 25.6 percent (10 of 39), 22.2 percent (4 of 18) and 20.0 percent (2 of 5) of Muslims from the Dutch, British, French and Danish ISSP samples, respectively, supported the idea of religious leaders attempting to influence government decisions in 2008. Desire for de-privatization does not seem strong among Muslim constituencies either.

## 4. Discussion

The idea of mixing religion with politics was popular neither in 1998 nor 2008. In relative terms pro-public-religion attitudes were more prevalent among the Dutch and British ISSP samples, but only insofar as Dutch and British participants held moderate attitudes rather than expressing outright support for public religion. Negative attitudes increased in the Netherlands and positive attitudes declined in Britain in 2008 compared to 1998. There was less support and clear antipathy among the populace in France, and in Denmark especially, and pro-public-religion attitudes were even less likely in France and Denmark in 2008. That all squares with the central tenet of secularization concerning the separation of religion from public affairs (Wilson, 1982) but following different trajectories in different European countries (Martin, 1978).

The study found those national trends in changing attitudes applied equally to all religious blocs in each country. Dutch churchgoers, for example, were more likely to express negative attitudes in 2008 than they had been in 1998. There was no evidence of further growth in the divide between secular and Christian blocs found by Achterberg and colleagues (2009) in their analysis of Dutch attitudes from 1970 to the mid-1990s, but then, the proportion of nominal Christians as opposed to committed churchgoing Christians had increased in the Netherlands between 1998 and 2008. Secular – Christian divides in attitudes about pubic religion were unchanged also in France in 2008 compared to 1998 where proportions of nominal Christians remained stable. Christian identity was not a factor in Denmark, and as our analysis has shown, its effects were more complex in Britain.

Which leaves the study's central issue: which religious constituencies actually support public religion? In terms of majority support the answer is none in any of the countries, including Muslims. We can instead identify those national religious constituencies where majorities were not necessarily against public religion and where in relative terms members were more likely to express pro-public religion attitudes compared to their fellow citizens. In that more moderate sense Dutch and French churchgoing Christians were most likely to be positive about public religion. In the Danish case, even inside the Folk Church, the majority of churchgoers were against pubic religion. Denmark seemed a special case of 'belonging without believing' (Storm, 2009) where membership of the Folk Church was bound up with national pride and lack of pluralism as part of Danish cultural identity (Jenkins, 2008). Nonetheless, the Danish Lutheran tradition clearly sees it as inappropriate for religion to become mixed up in politics.

Churchgoing does not appear to matter much in Britain but personal religiosity and Christian identity seems more important for pro-public-religion attitudes in part reminiscent of Grace Davie's (1994) original view that religion would remain socially significant outside of the churches. The present study identifies two forms. The first form manifests as a distinctive British Christian minority who do not belong to any religious denomination, a form absent in our analysis of survey data for the other countries. That minority seems to express pro-public-religion attitudes as part of an 'imagined Christian community' which coheres around ideas of ethnic-cultural 'Englishness' and nationhood (Anderson, 1991). Membership of that constituency doubled in 2008 compared to 1998. It is a peculiarly British instance of Christian 'cultural defence' (Bruce, 2011).

The second combination of Christian identity and personal religiosity is not restricted to Britain and represents the individual's break from regular collective practice rather than any break from belonging framed as being Christian. There is a requirement that members are 'moderately religious' (Storm, 2009), unlike the first specifically British form of religio-ethnic national identity (Storm, 2011b) Dutch, British and French 'religious-Christians' represent sizeable residual constituencies outside of the churches who may still be prepared to listen to religious leaders' public pronouncements but without any strong desire for de-privatization. Members express relatively positive attitudes about public religion.

Dutch religious-Christian numbers increased in 2008 compared to 1998 along with claims to a Christian identity and self-reports of occasional church attendance, which is our second instance of cultural defence. However, reassertions of Christian identity and traditions did not translate into a stronger desire for de-privatization. The likelihood of anti-public-religion sentiment increased among all Dutch religious constituencies in 2008 compared to 1998, including the constituency of religious-Christians. That is despite the Netherlands being the 'site of Europe's most draconian retreat from multiculturalism' (Joppke, 2009: 1). Perhaps Dutch Christian concerns have been assuaged (Vollaard, 2013).

We cannot know if our two questions about mixing religion and politics were answered by ISSP participants by reference to 'their own', 'other' or 'all' religious leaders and whether disagreement with them refers to participants' approval of religious leaders' involvement in public affairs, or else tolerance of religious leaders expressing their opinions, on principle, as part of a more general liberal position about democratic rights in secular societies. The differences we find between the four countries are congruent with differing forms of

liberalism, religion-state relations and responses to the religious 'other' within those national traditions, but in the end we find only weak support for de-privatization among religious constituencies in Western Europe. We find instances of cultural defence among two constituencies where membership has increased – Dutch religious-Christians outside the churches and British nominal Christians of no religion– but those constituencies follow the national trend in their respective countries of relative increase in Dutch anti-public-religion attitudes and relative decline in British pro-public-religion attitudes.

**Acknowledgements**

The article comes from an invited presentation to the Institute of International Studies, Jilin University, China, September 3 2011. Thanks are also due to Prof. Steve Bruce and four anonymous reviewers for their comments.

**References**

Achterberg, P., Aupers, S., Mascini, P., Houtman, D., De Koster, W., & Van Der Waal, J. (2009). A Christian cancellation of the secularist truce? Waning Christian religiosity and waxing religious de-privatization in the West. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 48*(4), 687-701. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2009.01473.x

Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined communities: reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism (revised ed.).* London and New York: Verso.

Beckford, J. A. (2012). SSSR Presidential Address – Public religions and the post-secular: critical reflections. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 51*(1), 1-19. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2011.01625.x

Brown, A. (2004). Anti-Muslim Dutch politicians in death threats. *Times Online* November 5. Retrieved from: http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/article503307.ece

Brown, A. (2006). Denmark faces international boycott over Muslim cartoons. *Times Online* January 31. Retrieved from: http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article723266.ece

Bruce, S. (2000). The supply-side model of religion: the Nordic and Baltic States. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 39*(1), 32-46. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/0021-8294.00003

Bruce, S. (2011). *Secularization: in defence of an unfashionable theory*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Casanova, J. (1994). *Public religions in the modern world*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Davie, G. (1994). *Religion in Britain since 1945: believing without belonging.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Glendinning, T. (2006). *Conventional Christian religious belief and belonging among ten Western European countries, Canada and the USA*. October 20. Portland, OR: Society for the Scientific Study of Religion Annual Meeting.

Glendinning, T., & Bruce, S. (2011). Privatization or de-privatization: British attitudes about the public presence of religion. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 50*(3), 503-16. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2011.01582.x

Inglehart, R., & Norris, P. (2012). *Sacred and secular: religion and politics worldwide (2nd ed.).* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

ISSP. (1998). *Religion II: ZA3190.* Cologne, Germany: GESIS. http://dx.doi.org/10.4232/1.3190

ISSP. (2008). *Religion III: ZA4950.* Cologne, Germany: GESIS. http://dx.doi.org/10.4232/1.10206

Jenkins, R. (2008). *Being Danish: paradoxes of identity in everyday life.* Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen.

Joppke, C. (2009). *Veil: mirror of identity.* Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Kaufmann, E., Goujon, A., & Skirbekk, V. (2012). The end of secularization in Europe?: a socio-demographic perspective. *Sociology of Religion, 73*(1), 69-91.

LocalGovUK. (2012). Pickles aims to settle prayer row. *Local Government* 20 February. Retrieved from: http://www.localgov.co.uk/index.cfm?method=news.detail&id=104999

Martin, D. (1978). *A general theory of secularization: explorations of interpretative sociology.* Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Scheffer, P. (2011). *Immigrant nations.* Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Schofield, H. (2011). Women in face veils detained as France enforces ban. *BBC News* April 11. Retrieved from: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-13031397

Storm, I. (2009). Halfway to heaven: four types of fuzzy fidelity in Europe. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 48*(4), 702-18. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2009.01474.x

Storm, I. (2011a). 'Christian nations'? Ethnic Christianity and anti-immigration attitudes in four Western European countries. *Nordic Journal of Religion and Society, 24*(1), 75-96.

Storm, I. (2011b). Ethnic nominalism and civic religiosity: Christianity and national identity in Britain. *The Sociological Review, 59*(4), 828-46. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2011.02040.x

Vasta, E. (2007). From ethnic minorities to ethnic majority policy: multiculturalism and the shift to assimilation in the Netherlands. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 30*(5), 713-40. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01419870701491770

Voas, D. (2009). The rise and fall of fuzzy fidelity in Europe. *European Sociological Review, 25*(2), 155–168. http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcn044

Vollaard, H. J. P. (2013). Re-emerging Christianity in West European politics: the Case of the Netherlands. *Politics and Religion, 6*, 74-100. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S1755048312000776

Wilson, B. (1982). *Religion in sociological perspective.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

**Notes**

[i] Ingrid Strom (2009) pursued the point about residual involvement by means of a multivariate analysis using nine dimensions of individual religiosity to differentiate among religious constituencies. Discounting religious and secular people, four sub-types were identified among survey data from the Netherlands, Britain, Denmark and seven other European countries: first, the 'moderately religious' 13 percent of the total sample; second, the 'passively religious' 9 percent; third, those 'belonging without believing' 11 percent; and fourth, those 'believing without belonging' 9 percent. The 'religiously indifferent' represent a further sub-type beyond the wholly secular in our own analysis, theoretically distinct from secular people who are self-consciously irreligious.

[ii] Data were lacking for France.

[iii] There are few repeat questions available from social surveys at different time points which allow us to compare the populace's attitudes about the public presence of religion in different Western European societies.

[iv] In our multivariate analyses we do not include ISSP respondents of 'other religions' (n=495, 3.7%).given the heterogeneous nature of that group, incorporating diverse religions, and with small numbers available for analyses. And note the cautionary concluding paragraph of the findings section.

[v] Table 1 reports on another analysis to check whether or not each participants' replies to the two separate questions (a) and (b) can be combined together to form a more reliable measure of attitudes. Analysis is broken down by country and year. Replies can be combined everywhere (because alpha > .7). The attitude scale has range 1 to 5 and is positively skewed towards negative attitudes, more so in 2008 compared to 1998 (Table 1, skewness 1.32 in 2008 and 1.04 in 1998).

[vi] Checks were made for multicollinearity among explanatory factors (see Table 4, penultimate row).

[vii] Most Danes are 'Lutherans' who 'attend occasionally' but without being 'religious' (Jenkins 2008).