

'Faith's Comeback?: The Demographic Revival of Religion in Europe'

It is fitting that we meet here today in Rome, the home of Catholicism, and the source of one pole of the creative tension between religion and secularism that helped to propel western Europe ahead of other parts of the world from the 15th century onward. The Pope was never able to establish his political grip on Europe in the same way as the Chinese emperors or Arab, Persian and Turkish sultans did. In Europe, the realms of God and Caesar remained in tension, and political fragmentation was the rule. In the realm of ideas as in politics, the secular blossomed alongside the religious, and the two often fed into each other, as in the work of Augustine. More recently, secular institutions have successfully crowded out much of the territory that was once commanded by religious authorities, while many individuals have fallen away from the sway of religious authority.

What I wish to consider today, however, is the possibility that we - at the turn of the third millennium - stand at a distinctive juncture in world history. In Europe, secularism is not yielding to a renewed religious enthusiasm, yet secular movements appear exhausted at precisely the moment of the secular population's demographic implosion. The two are not entirely disconnected: in an age of negligible mortality, fertility strongly determines differences in natural increase. Fertility is increasingly a choice, and the religious consistently choose to have more children, regardless of education, income, nation, denomination or generation. Most immigrants to Europe also tend to be younger and more religious than their host populations. In this article, I try and explore some of the implications of this confluence of secular exhaustion and demographically-driven religious growth in western Europe.

Secularism can refer either to the *public* separation of church and state, or the *private* realm of attendance, affiliation and belief. Though the two are distinct forms, there is an important link between public politics and private ideas. I will return to this connection later, but for now, I wish to consider more conventional explanations for the success of private secularism. Here we must begin with modern social theory. Its three 'founding fathers' - Marx, Weber and Durkheim - cast a narrative of modernisation in which religion was an inevitable casualty of advancing rationality. For Marx, under the pressure of industrial capitalism and science, 'solid' religious certainties would 'melt into air', profaning the sacred public sphere. (Marx 1973: 70-71) Max Weber spoke of the advance of 'disenchantment' as the acids of scientific modernity and bureaucratisation shrink the scope for religious explanations and supernatural beliefs. (Weber 1948: 155) Finally, Emile Durkheim, drawing on classical and Spencerian thought, proposed a theory of structural differentiation and moral evolution whereby the role of religious expertise is confined to an ever shrinking sphere. Increasingly, as in France after the Revolution, society worships itself rather than a supernatural deity. (Durkheim 1995, [1893] 1984, ch. VI)

More recently, Steve Bruce has synthesised the work of previous modernisation theorists like Ernest Gellner and David Martin to argue for the irreversibility of secularisation in modern society. Social differentiation drives a relativism that leads to a constricting sphere of influence for religion in both public and private. (Bruce 2002: 2-43, 1998: 5-7, 15) Exceptions to this rule are found only in cases where religion acquires a this-worldly role, principally as a vector for ethnic or nationalist resistance - as in Poland under communism or in divided societies like Northern Ireland - or as a site of social integration during periods of rapid social dislocation, as with rural-urban migration. (Bruce 1998: 19-21) This argument is also

made - albeit in a different way - by Anthony Giddens, who suggests that detraditionalisation involves the replacement of religious forms of expertise by scientists and their technological 'expert systems'. The work of Pippa Norris and Ron Inglehart dovetails with that of Bruce, and especially Giddens. They claim that rising material wealth and political stability reduce the ontological insecurities that drive religiosity. (Norris and Inglehart 2004) However, while Giddens foresees a 'return of the repressed' in response to high modernity's inability to address the ultimate questions of human existence, Norris and Inglehart tie religion's appeal exclusively to its ability to dispel insecurity, and thereby predict its obsolescence. (Giddens 1991: 194-5, 207-8)

Social differentiation, rising wealth, education and security, and growing trust in expert systems all help to explain the decline in religious attendance, affiliation and belief in Europe. And though attendance has declined far more than affiliation or belief, evidence from surveys and church rolls shows a very clear trend toward private secularisation in the latter half of the twentieth century. But conventional modernisation theories provide only part of the explanation for these trends. After all, social differentiation and rising wealth and education have had little effect on American religiosity, and the American population is roughly equivalent to that of western Europe. The 1999-2000 World Values Surveys show that the same is true of most of the Hindic and Muslim worlds, where wealthier or better educated people are no less religious than the poor.

This brings me back to my earlier discussion about the link between private and public forms of secularisation. If this thesis is correct, we need to go beyond social and economic structures or ideas of rationality to consider the highly *emotive* political projects which helped to raise the appeal of secularism among the wider

population. Take the public secularism which emerged in the city-states of Renaissance Italy. Italian princes, keen to guard their autonomy against papal ambitions, were in turn prepared to offer a much wider degree of latitude to their writers and artists. Emboldened, these intellectuals began to break with traditional modes of representation and grope towards private secularisation. (McNeill 1991 [1963]: 555) Secularism was thus not a purely intellectual movement, but also flourished for political reasons. The Reformation similarly helped to legitimate the political boundaries of Protestant rulers, from the patrician Swiss confederates and Dutch kings to the Tudor monarchs of England. Full-blown secularism later gained ground among the philosophes of the French Enlightenment in the 18th century, who in turn provided the political ammunition for the secular French revolution. In retrospect, one can see that while secular freethinkers could develop their ideas about rationality, the mass popularity of such ideas often depended on their alliance to particular political causes.

Revolutionary France became the model for the modern secular nation-state, but we often forget that the struggle between church and state had only just begun. In many Catholic European states, secular liberals supported nationalism, and were opposed by traditionalist Catholics whose political philosophy harked back to dreams of the Roman Empire and universal church. The same was true among Jews, with most European rabbis opposing Zionism for its this-worldly vision. Meanwhile, most European Catholics continued to attend regular worship in a church that aspired to universality. This often made it difficult to build cohesive nations. Here in Italy, the struggle was particularly fierce, and Catholic resentment of Mazzini's liberal nationalist project ran so deep that the Church only began to support the idea of an Italian nation with Mussolini's Lateran Pact of 1929. (Laven 2006: 266-7)

Throughout this period, secularism was achieving success not mainly because of its intellectual appeal to reason, but because it aligned itself with popular emotional movements promising liberty, equality, wealth and identity to the masses. Chief among these was nationalism, with its plethora of quasi-religious activities including historic monument-building, military parading and the erection of war memorials. (Mosse 1991) The link between secularism and politics continued into the twentieth century. Whereas private secularism had previously been linked to membership in the urban bourgeois population or sections of the nobility, we find, for the first time, its penetration into a significant mass population. Urbanisation and industrialisation helped this process by fragmenting the religious lifeworld of migrants from the countryside. (Bruce 2002) However, socialism, fascism and liberal nationalism all played a role in advancing aspects of private secularisation - especially in Eastern Europe, but also among sections of the West European and even American working class.

In the second half of the twentieth century, notably after 1960, the pace of private secularisation significantly accelerated. This occurred alongside a wider shift in cultural attitudes across a whole range of issues from race and nationalism to sexual mores, divorce and single living. Why was this? Some hold that the rapid growth in both secondary, and especially tertiary, education was key. (Jennings & Niemi 1981) Others point to a period of consistent peace and prosperity between 1945 and 1973, in which the benefits of growth were accompanied by rising income equality. (Inglehart 1990) The student revolts and Vietnam War are sometimes cited as independent shocks which led to historic change. Still others focus on the spread of a centralised mass television media. Another major theory, that of 'social capital', argues that the baby boom generation became less likely to join face-to-face organisations like

churches and unions. (Putnam 2000) Nonetheless, one common denominator seems to be a mass institutionalisation of attitudes that were once held only by small circles of bohemian intellectuals. (Kaufmann 2004)

Yet through all of this cultural ferment, we cannot forget that secularism was associated with a transformative and optimistic sixties quasi-anarchist political vision which foresaw an end to racial, international and economic inequalities and an enlarged realm of freedom and prosperity. As the decades progressed, however, the limits to an optimistic vision of anarchist modernity became ever more apparent. Economic disparities and other inequalities remained or in some cases (as with the American inner cities) worsened. Social problems like crime and anti-social behaviour increased. Politics became more about incrementalism and concrete policy solutions than the 'chiliastic hopes' for Utopian social transformation first derided by Daniel Bell in his *The End of Ideology* (1960).

Our post-ideological age was once heralded as the precipice from which we could glimpse the 'End of History': a world in which there is a consensus around liberal democracy and mixed capitalism and a more relativistic approach to cultural traditions. (Fukuyama 1989) However, the project of neoliberal globalisation failed to inspire large numbers of people. As a consequence, the post-modern condition is not only post-ideological, but, I believe, is also post-optimistic and hence post-secular. This is not to say that there is a religious revival, but instead what we see is the exhaustion of secularism. Its vitality owed much to its link to popular mass movements like nationalism, socialism and sixties anarchism, but such movements only remain alive on the fringes of western society today.

Demography and History

This article explores the connection between demography and the wider macro-social process of secularisation. We are used to thinking about economics, culture or political events as the drivers of history, as with Marxist materialism or Hegelian idealism. More recently, Talcott Parsons thought only in terms of culture, society, polity and economy while Michael Mann's four 'sources of social power' are limited to ideas, economics, politics and military causes. (Mann 1993) Demography has not been absent as a concern among sociologists and historians, but the discrediting of the Malthusian hypothesis led to a considerable neglect of this aspect of human development. (Dallas 2000)

To be sure, there are some who have raised their heads above the established parapet. The Annales School in France (and Le Roy Ladurie in particular) have built demographic change into their models, as has the renowned historian William McNeill. Plagues, claims McNeill, typically had political effects: the Great Plague in the 14th century, for instance, helped alter the global balance of power in favour of western Europe because it lost force as it spread west from Asia. (McNeill 1976) Jack Goldstone further contends that population pressure on food supplies helped set the preconditions for rebellions like the Glorious, French and Russian Revolutions. (Goldstone 1991) Michael Hout focuses on the role of demography as a first, second or even third-order cause of social change. (Hout 2006) Much of demography's impact operates in second-order fashion when superior technology or political organisation leads to differential mortality between groups, allowing demography to reinforce the raw effects of technology. Groups with superior technologies of war and subsistence, like the cattle-herding Bantu, with their advantage over the San in

Southern Africa, or the Europeans with their 'guns, germs and steel' facing aboriginal peoples in the Americas, have thereby been able to spread due to their conquest of new lands and resources. (Diamond 1997) This in turn lowered the invaders' mortality and raised it for their enemies (especially among those under age 5), compounding the invaders' demographic advantage.

Indeed, where demography has been considered, it has generally been seen as the handmaiden of technological change. In other words, improvements in the technology of food production (ie. from hunting/gathering to agriculture), innovations in military organisation and weaponry or transport innovations have allowed certain populations to increase and expand - often at the expense of others. The demic expansion of Bantu populations from West Africa into Southern Africa, or the geographic expansion of Steppe and European peoples to the south and west are cited as examples. (Cavalli-Sforza 2001; Diamond 1997)

Recent research, however, shifts the focus from mortality to fertility. Demographers contend that even in the pre-nineteenth century period, patterns of marriage and birth spacing played a significant role in determining population growth rates. An initial decline in the age of marriage helped raise European population growth rates even before the industrial revolution, and industrialism helped power the expansion of the British population by enabling even earlier marriage and hence higher fertility. (Tilly 1978; Wrigley & Schofield 1989) The overall effect was to double Europe's share of the world's population between 1750 and 1900.

Nevertheless, the seeds of demographic transition were already apparent by the late eighteenth century in cities like Geneva or Paris where Calvinist or secular-bourgeois individualism had begun to result in lower fertility. During the twentieth century, the very same European populations which had expanded now went into relative decline.

As a result, Europe's population declined from 26 percent of the world total in 1900 to 12 percent in 2000 and is projected to reach just 6 percent of the total in 2050. Even within this figure, perhaps a fifth of Europeans will be of non-European origin in 2050, as will half the US population. (Kaufmann 2004: 122) Consequently, those of European origin will form a global minority with the same limited demographic presence as non-whites currently possess in Western Europe today.

Demography at the 'End of History'

Demography barely merited a mention in Fukuyama's epochal work, yet it remains unclear whether secular liberal democracies can sustain themselves demographically in the face of their adversaries. With the medical conquest of mortality, we have arrived at a point where human choice plays an enormous role in determining the relative sizes of human populations. Rarely in history has this kind of 'voluntary' differential fertility been so crucial. The link between culture and fertility choice means that certain populations, bearing particular cultures, seem to be in a more favourable evolutionary position than others in the race to populate the future world. This is not a new theory: indeed Charles Darwin's grandson wrote in *The Next Million Years* (1952) that the population of the future would be one that emphasised social cohesion as a primary value. However, in the late twentieth century world of above-replacement fertility and large-scale secularisation, it was still possible to imagine an alternative scenario of demographically-sustainable secular liberalism.

Recent trends question this trajectory. Europe's population has now peaked and will begin to decline unless augmented by a staggering rate of immigration. Total fertility

rates in Europe have been below replacement for over thirty years (currently at around 1.3-1.4) but the momentum of the post-war baby boom has ensured a comfortable period of slowing population growth. This demographic cushion is now over. Not only will European population start to decline, but it will do so profoundly. The slide will begin in the 2000-2005 period with a loss of some 650,000 people per year, increasing to an annual loss of 3 million per annum by 2050. Already, Russia is losing almost 800,000 people per year and faces a demographic crisis in which low fertility, high mortality and emigration reinforce each other. East Asia will follow suit. The advent of below-replacement fertility in Brazil, Tunisia, and parts of Latin America and India is a harbinger of a longer term global picture, with the UN predicting below-replacement fertility globally by 2085. (Wattenberg 2004) Nonetheless, the outworking of current demographic trends suggests that the global balance of population power will shift enormously, with, for example, Uganda's population overtaking Russia's by 2050, and Africa and the Middle East accounting for a much larger proportion of world population. (Goldstone 2007)

Demography and Religion

Much of the research on the sociology of religion has focused on religion as a social phenomenon whose rise or decline depends upon the conscious choices of individuals within changing structural contexts. However, it is apparent that even in the absence of socially-inspired revivals/declines of religion, the degree of religiosity in a society can fluctuate. The chief non-social mechanism of change is demography. If we consider 'the religious' as a population affected not only by assimilation/dissimilation into the secular population but by migration, fertility and

mortality, we arrive at a more multivalent picture. David Voas is one sociologist who has urged that greater attention be paid to the use of demographic methods in the study of religion. 'People enter, exit, and move within religion,' he remarks, 'just as they are born, will die, and migrate, in life'. (Voas 2003: 94) For Michael Hout, 'demography helps shape the religious landscape ... The combination of differing demography and stable intergenerational religious socialization would be sufficient to equalize or even reverse the relative sizes of the religions.' (Hout 2003: 79-80). 'Silent' demographic effects can be profound in the long-term. For example, Rodney Stark shows how early Christians' favourable fertility and mortality rates as compared to Hellenistic pagans helped to fuel a 40 percent growth rate in the Christian population of the Roman Empire over several centuries. This gave rise to a population increase from 40 converts in 30 A.D. to 6 million by the year 300 leading to a 'tipping point' which helped Christianity become institutionalised within the Empire. (Stark 1996) Currently, many Islamic parts of what was once the Roman Empire have seen major declines in their Christian and Jewish populations due to emigration, lower fertility and mixed marriages. (Fargues 2001)

Those who study the religious marketplace in the United States have been impressed by the extent to which denominations have grown through migration and fertility advantage. Sherkat (2001), for example, finds that American Catholics have been able to offset large net losses to other denominations through gains arising from (largely) Hispanic-Catholic immigrants and their higher fertility. Fertility differentials can also play a key role - especially in the long term. Mormons, once a very small sect, now equal or surpass Jews among post-1945 birth cohorts due to their fertility advantage over Jews and other denominations. (Sherkat 2001: 1472-4) Conservative Protestants, a much larger group than the Mormons, also benefit from relatively high

fertility. Using the General Social Survey, Roof and McKinney (1987) noted that Southern Baptists had roughly twice the fertility of Jews and secular (unaffiliated) Americans. A recent article extends this finding by showing that three-quarters of the growth of conservative Protestant denominations is due to fertility rather than conversion. (Hout, Greeley and Wilde 2001) This has powered the growth of the religious right and increased the base of the Republican party. Indeed, a recent article demonstrates the extremely significant and robust correlation between non-Hispanic white fertility patterns and the Republican vote - especially in 2004. States whose white population tends to be liberal and postmaterialist have lower fertility - as per 'second demographic transition' theory (SDT) - and a lower pro-Bush vote share. (Lesthaeghe and Neidert 2005)

In Europe, there has been less attention paid to fertility differences between denominations. However, the growth of the European Muslim population through immigration is a trend that is widely acknowledged. (Buijs and Rath 2006) Several studies have discovered that immigrants to Europe tend to be more religious than the host population and - especially if Muslim - tend to retain their religiosity. (van Tubergen 2006) Though some indicators point to religious decline toward the host society mean, other trends suggest that immigrants become more, rather than less, religious the longer they reside in the host society. (van Tubergen 2007) Austria is one of the few European countries to collect religious data on their census. A recent attempt to project Austria's population to 2051 found that a combination of higher fertility and immigration will increase the proportion of Muslims (excluding apostates) in the country from 4.6 percent of the population in 2001 to between 14 and 26 percent by 2051. Certainly the secular/unaffiliated population increased from 4 percent in 1981 to 10 percent in 2001, and is projected to grow in the near future.

However, the secular population in Austria has a total fertility rate (TFR) of just .86 children per couple, limiting its long-term growth potential. This means that in the event that secularisation ceases - to say nothing of religious revival - the secular population will peak and begin to decline as early as 2021. (Goujon et al. 2006: 24) All of which suggests that secularisation may fail even if the secularisation thesis is correct.

The Enlightenment in Crisis?

The Enlightenment has always been associated with those of European descent and the lands of Europe and America from whence it came. Yet the decline of the European-origin population and the shrinking geopolitical weight of nations with European-Enlightenment cultures raises a question mark over the future of the Enlightenment project. Immigration may be a technique for transferring surplus population from 'cohesive'/religious countries to 'individualist' societies while maintaining geopolitical and cultural equilibrium, but the automatic secularisation of immigrants in the West is far from established. If immigrants fail to secularise, or instead make common cause with religious 'natives', then ethnic replacement of European populations will also translate into religious replacement of secular populations. In the end, the whole equation turns on the balance between higher religious fertility and the religious decline commonly associated with westernisation and development.

Currently, secularisation appears to be losing the battle. In Norris and Inglehart's words:

One of the most central injunctions of virtually all traditional religions is to strengthen the family, to encourage people to have children, to encourage women to stay home and raise children, and to forbid abortion, divorce, or anything that interferes with high rates of reproduction. As a result of these two interlocking trends, rich nations are becoming more secular, *but the world as a whole is becoming more religious*. (Norris and Inglehart 2004: 22-23, emphasis added)

Norris and Inglehart believe that secularisation will eventually gain the upper hand as poor countries develop, but what if we can no longer take secularisation for granted in its west European heartland? The stalling of the process of religious decline among individuals in developed countries portends a future of gradual religious resurgence. This is because secularism's fertility disadvantage *vis a vis* its religious rival must be compensated for by religious apostasy. In other words, secularism must keep moving in order to stand still. With this in mind, let us move to examine the balance between religious demography and secularisation in western Europe. Our working hypothesis is that *a combination of higher religious fertility and immigration will lead to a growth in the religious population (defined in terms of belief) of the most secular nations of Europe that exceeds the net loss of communicants through religious apostasy*.

Data and Methods

In order to test this hypothesis, we draw upon data from several sources. These include the European Values Survey (EVS) of 1981, 1990 and 1999-2000 and the second wave European Social Survey (ESS) of 2004. We use these datasets because of their time-series dimension and the fact that they ask the same (or similar) questions on religiosity and fertility. The study is limited to ten west European countries, as these are the only cases that were sampled across all specified waves of the EVS on our variables of interest. Germany was dropped because of the difficulties of pre and post-Unification data collation. Second wave ESS data was used because, unlike wave 1, this dataset has a fertility measure and enabled us to match countries with the EVS. We will also be using three surveys of ethnic minorities in the United Kingdom to probe the phenomenon of second-generation immigrant religiosity: the Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities, 1993-1994 (Berthoud et. al 1997), and the 2001 and 2003 waves of the UK Citizenship Survey (Home Office 2003; Office for National Statistics and Home Office 2005).

The desire to maximise the number of countries and cases subject to the strictures of attaining a uniform time-series dataset has resulted in the geographic apportionment within Europe shown in table 1 for all datasets for the period 1981-2004.

[Table 1 here]

This is clearly not a proportional representation of western Europe and should not be interpreted as such. Nonetheless, while the dataset features a strong Scandinavian

dimension, it also contains a range of cases including late-developing Catholic (Spain, Ireland) as well as mixed-faith (Holland, Britain) societies. Though some geographic representativeness is sacrificed, the dataset provides a critical time-series dimension which is missing from most individual-level studies. Finally, all multivariate analyses use Stata 7.0.

Results

Our first task is to establish whether secularisation has indeed occurred in these countries. The standard WVS/EVS question on religious attendance for 1981, 1990 and 2000 asks 'Apart from weddings, funerals and christenings, about how often do you attend religious services these days?' The EVS allows for a seven-category response to this question which was transformed into a two-category variable to distinguish between those who attended weekly or more and the rest, i.e. those who attended monthly or less. The ESS adopted the exact same question, so coding strategy is identical. The results are presented in figure 1 for ten-year cohorts. Notice that there is a pronounced pattern of declining religious attendance as we move from the earliest to most recent birth cohorts. The only exception to this trend is the earliest (pre-1915) cohort. Also evident is the lack of any life-cycle pattern whereby respondents begin to attend as they get older: the four wave lines do not shift upwards in chronological order. The vertical pattern almost certainly owes more to period effects and differences in survey methodology than anything else. This confirms some of the findings of secularisation theory, which argues that religious attendance falls across generations and does not revive as one ages through the life course.

Figure 1.

[Figure 1 here]

Source: EVS 1981, 1990, 1999-2000 & ESS 2004

* Data for 2000 uses Norway responses from 1997

** Data for 2004 from ESS which uses same question but different methodology

In addition to attendance, the EVS asks a battery of questions concerned with private religious belief. Though these do not match up with the ESS questions, there is a high degree of comparability between the EVS and ESS questions on private religiosity. The EVS question asks: 'Independently of whether you go to church or not, would you say you are: 1-a religious person, 2-not a religious person, 3-an atheist'. The ESS question asks 'Regardless of whether you belong to a particular religion, how religious would you say you are?' The ESS uses an eleven-point scale from 'not at all religious' to 'very religious', as opposed to the three categories used by the EVS. Based on comparing percentage responses with the 2000 EVS, we have collapsed the highest six ESS scores into the top EVS score. All others are considered to be 'not religious' or atheists. Looking at the proportion of self-identified 'religious' people by cohort in figure 2, we find that private religiosity, like religious attendance, has declined steadily within these societies across birth cohorts.

That said, there are some interesting divergences from the findings for religious attendance. First, the religious belief data lend support to the life cycle hypothesis that individuals become more religious as they age. Leaving aside the 2004 ESS, which is calibrated to match the 2000 EVS, the lines clearly shift upward across all cohorts with each survey wave. For example, among those born during

1955-65, the proportion describing themselves as religious leapt from 35 percent in 1981 (when they were aged 16-26) to almost 60 percent two decades later when they reached their 30s and 40s. This contrasts with the findings of some recent researchers who have noted no evidence of a life cycle effect for religious affiliation in the British case. (Tilley 2003; Crockett & Voas 2006) Moreover, the link between aging and greater religiosity in this data appears to be strengthening among more recent cohorts, though we must be careful in interpreting 2000 data as there may have been a millennium period effect which temporarily raised religiosity.

Figure 2.

[Figure 2 here]

Source: EVS 1981, 1990, 1999-2000 & ESS 2004

* Data for 2000 uses Norway responses from 1997

** Data for 2004 from ESS which uses different question and different methodology

Within our ten country dataset, it is useful to prise apart cases where secularisation took place relatively early (France plus the five largely Protestant countries) from those where it has taken hold more recently (three Catholic countries plus part-Catholic Holland). The results are presented in figures 3 and 4. The data shows that church attendance in the early-secularising (i.e. mainly Protestant) societies is effectively flat for those born after 1945 while it continues to plummet in the mainly Catholic societies. The decline in church attendance across all cohorts is

roughly 10-20 percent in the early secularising countries, but 30-50 percent in the late-secularising ones.

Figure 3.

[Figure 3 here]

Source: EVS 1981, 1990, 1999-2000 & ESS 2004

* Data for 2000 uses Norway responses from 1997

** Data for 2004 from ESS which uses same question but different methodology

Figure 4.

[Figure 4 here]

Source: EVS 1981, 1990, 1999-2000 & ESS 2004

* Data for 2004 from ESS which uses same question but different methodology

The picture is less distinct for private religiosity (see figs. 5 and 6), but differences are noticeable: whereas private religiosity declines by a substantial 20-30 percent across cohorts in the early-secularising societies, it dives by 30-40 percent in late-secularising ones. The evidence again points to a flattening out of secularisation. Here it is important to note that the cessation of secularising trends for religious belief (figure 5) should manifest itself in a different pattern than that found for attendance in figure 3, where we literally see the curves flatten out. This is because people return to

religious belief (but not attendance) as they age, so we should expect downward sloping lines across cohorts, but upward-shifting lines with each survey wave. The proper metric of comparison is to compare the second, third, fourth or fifth points in each survey wave, and we find that these are roughly at the same religiosity level. This picture suggests a steady-state pattern in which younger people in the most secular societies are less religious than their elders but become just as religious over the life course, yielding little change in the overall level of religiosity. It is especially noteworthy that the trough of religiosity among the youngest cohort seems to have been reached in 1981 or 1991 rather than 2000.

It would appear that early-secularising societies have arrived at a baseline of around 5 percent church attendance and perhaps 40-45 percent private religiosity. Here it is worth noting that while private religiosity stands as one of the strongest of all religious indicators on the EVS, it is exceeded by some 10-15 points by belief in god. In the 2000 EVS, for example, 77 percent of respondents in early secularising societies affirmed their belief in god, even though just 64 percent claimed to be religious. Assuming that trends in Catholic Europe follow those in the early-secularising countries, we may well see a future in which western European church attendance falls to very low levels even as society remains fairly evenly divided between religious and non-religious populations. This would appear to corroborate Grace Davie's (1994) observation that many Europeans are 'believing without belonging', though an equivalent number seem, as David Voas and others have observed, to be neither belonging nor believing.

Figure 5.

[Figure 5 here]

Source: EVS 1981, 1990, 1999-2000 & ESS 2004

* No data for Norway in 2000

** Data for 2004 from ESS, which asks a slightly different question and is calibrated to EVS 2000

Figure 6.

[Figure 6 here]

Source: EVS 1981, 1990, 1999-2000 & ESS 2004

* Data for 2004 from ESS, which asks a slightly different question and is calibrated to EVS 2000

Religiosity and Fertility

One postulate of second demographic transition theory is that secularisation is linked to lower fertility. (Surkyn and Lesthaeghe 2004; van de Kaa 1987) Several studies examine the link between religiosity and fertility in Europe and the United States, and most have found a significant effect in at least some models. (Norris & Inglehart 2004: 110; Adsera 2004: 23; Berman, Iannacone and Ragusa 2005; Westoff and Frejka 2006; Berghammer, Philipov and Sobotka 2006) The fertility difference in

terms of number of children ever born (among women aged 18 or over) between those who describe themselves as 'religious' and those who describe themselves as 'not religious' or 'atheist' averages between 50 and 60 points depending on the wave of the EVS or ESS we consider. In 2000, for example, adult females in the EVS who were religious bore 2.19 children over their lifetime as against 1.59 for the nonreligious. These numbers are misleading, however, since religious respondents tend to be older and thus are more likely to have completed their fertility and come from more fertile cohorts. Figure 7 attempts to surmount this difference by illustrating the difference in percentage terms by birth cohort and survey wave.

Figure 7.

[Figure 7 here]

Source: EVS 1981, 1990, 1999-2000 & ESS 2004

* No data for Norway

** Data from ESS, which asks a slightly different question and is calibrated to EVS 2000

Clearly, there is an important difference between religious and secular fertility behaviour that does not disappear with cohort controls, but what about other controls? Table 2 employs multivariate analysis which demonstrates that religiosity remains a significant predictor of fertility in these ten countries when further control variables are applied. We thus accept the notion that the religious have higher fertility, but we will use the average secular-religious fertility differential within cohorts, net of

outliers. This yields an average fertility differential of about 15-20 percent (net of outlying cohorts) which is in the range of the coefficient of .176 found for the EVS model.¹

[Table 2 here]

Projecting the Religious Proportion of the Population

Alone among the surveys considered here, the 1991 EVS asked respondents, 'Were you brought up religiously at home?' Cross-tabulating this question with the 'are you a religious person' question gives us a picture of how many religious individuals have left the faith and how many of the secular have become religious. Here we focus upon the countries which secularised earliest as they are arguably in the vanguard of religious apostasy and thus closest to the endpoint envisioned in developmentalist secularisation theories. Table 3 provides data comparing the currently religious/nonreligious population with the population raised religiously/nonreligiously, by age and sex. Note the striking gender difference: women in 1991 at virtually all ages tend to be more religious than they were raised while the reverse is true for men. Previous research has highlighted the greater representation of women in the religious population *stock*, and this finding confirms that women are also overrepresented among religious retainers and converts in the net religious-secular *flow*.²

[Table 3 here]

If we assume that women tend to pass their values on to their children, this means that the religious population gains in strength from its skewed gender balance, though the analytically tricky issue of secular-religious mixed marriage may counter this.³ Combined with higher religious fertility, this heralds religious growth in the future. On the other hand, as our previous models illustrated, age is an important predictor of religiosity in the 'Protestant' countries. The secular population is younger than the religious one, and hence more likely to be in the childbearing age range. Secularisation may therefore be able to prevail over demographically-driven religious growth.

If we use the above apostasy figures in combination with 1991 EVS data on the age structure, gender and size of the religious and non-religious population, we have the basis for a 100-year projection of the religious-secular balance in the early secularising countries (see figure 10).⁴ Any such exercise must remain highly speculative given the possibility for short-run political and social changes that affect religiosity, but in many situations in the past - as with the rise of Christianity in the first three centuries A.D. - demography has proved an enduring source of social change. (Stark 1996: 74-128) We begin with an assumption that religious women will have a constant total fertility rate of 1.8, as against 1.6 for nonreligious women. This represents an average intra-cohort fertility difference between religious and non-religious women in 1991 that is in the 10-15 percent range.⁵

Using table 3, we calculate a constant annual net 'migration' flow of apostates/converts between the religious and non-religious populations for each five-year age band. The results for the religious population are shown in table 4. In

practice, the fluctuations in migration by age that we see are only partly the result of life cycle effects, and most likely reflect period or cohort effects or statistical fluctuations in the data. Consequently, we opt to smooth out fluctuations by averaging the flows into three 20-year age bands (see table 4).⁶

[Table 4 here]

Figure 8 shows the results of our projection under three scenarios. First is our expected scenario (1.8 vs. 1.6 religious-secular fertility gap, and 6-country conversion/apostasy trend), labeled '1816-E6'. Next comes a projection, labeled '1818-E6', which assumes the same conversion/apostasy, but no fertility gap (1.8 vs 1.8). Finally, we consider a scenario labeled '1816-E10' under which there is a 1.8 vs 1.6 religious-secular fertility gap, but where conversion/apostasy flows are drawn from an average across *all ten* countries in this study (including fast-secularising Catholic ones). Figure 8 shows that secularisation has flattened out by around mid-century in the first two models, but continues strongly in the 1816-E10 model. To repeat: our prediction is that secularisation will begin to move in reverse after mid-century, culminating in a more religious picture in 2104 than in 2004. This runs counter to much of what has been written about west European religious trends.

Figure 8.

[Figure 8 here]

The big story behind the stalling of secularisation in our predicted (1816-E6) scenario is the major reduction in apostasy rates in the six early-secularising societies as compared to the rapidly-secularising Catholic countries. For instance, the difference between the two '1816' apostasy scenarios is 21 percent whereas the gap between 1816 and 1818 fertility scenarios is only 7 percent. In other words, three-quarters of the story of twenty-first century de-secularisation can be attributed to the drying up of apostasy flows and one quarter to higher religious fertility. Note, however, that religious fertility still has a substantial 7-point impact on the religious-secular balance in 2104. If the religious-secular fertility gap widens, as some (Adsera 2004) claim is now occurring, this will have a dramatic impact in the long run, especially under conditions of religious stasis in which large-scale apostasy has ceased. Finally, demography is also important because the female skew of the younger religious population raises the religious proportion of the population under all three scenarios.

Given the results of our multivariate analysis and our statistics on generational fertility patterns, it would be very surprising if secular-religious fertility differentials decline. It is also difficult to discern a return to higher rates of religious apostasy in the most secular six countries. In short, an acceleration in religious apostasy rates is as unlikely as a major religious revival. Assuming that fertility differentials between the religious and non-religious remain as they have for cohorts throughout the twentieth century, we can see how age, sex and fertility structures constrain the direction of future religious change. Thus the imminent death of religion in Europe seems extremely unlikely. This dovetails with Austrian census-based projections showing a long term slowing or reversal in the growth of the religiously unaffiliated population in that country - a population which has hitherto expanded rapidly, but has a fertility rate of just .86 children per woman and may begin to decline by 2021. (Goujon et al.

2006) Should surveys show the religious population remaining stable in the early secularising countries in the next decade or two, longer-term religious growth will become increasingly likely.

The Impact of Immigration

Our discussion thus far presumes that the population of the most secular countries remains unaffected by immigration. Clearly the opposite is true for the countries under consideration as all have below-replacement fertility and positive immigration. Our 2004 ESS data for the ten countries under study had a small Muslim sample of 3.2 percent, and these data show that younger Muslims are as religious as their elders. Trends across the full range of European countries sampled in the 2004 ESS show the same pattern, which diverges from the trend of religious decline with age that one can find for Christians.⁷ These studies suffer from small Muslim sample sizes, but surveys focusing on ethnic minorities and immigrants show that most immigrants are more religious than their west European hosts. (van Tubergen 2006) The religious behaviour of second generation immigrants is therefore critical, and is the subject of several current studies.⁸

Data from three UK studies from of ethnic minorities in the 1994-2003 period also demonstrate strong Muslim religious retention in the second generation. We can see this in table 5, where those of Bangladeshi/Pakistani and Afro-Caribbean origin are many times more likely than the UK white population to express a religious affiliation, attend weekly or emphasise the importance of their faith in their lives. This is especially true of mainly Muslim ethnic groups like the Bangladeshis and Pakistanis, a finding confirmed for North Africans in a recent study of the Dutch case.

(van Tubergen 2007) This reflects widely reported trends such as the relative youth and vitality of Muslim congregations in Britain and the fact that weekly Mosque attendance now exceeds weekly attendance for the Church of England.⁹

Afro-Caribbean immigrants to the UK also tend to be more religious than white Christians, adhering to Pentecostalist and other evangelical Protestant sects, though they acculturate more rapidly than Muslims to secular UK norms in the second generation. (Martin 2001) Notice also that while the second-generation of all immigrant ethnic groups tends to gravitate to the UK norm, this is more true of attendance than belief. Once again, the pattern of religious retention is particularly noticeable among Muslims, who will likely comprise a significant proportion - if not a majority - of future immigrants in heavily secular France and Protestant western Europe in the future.

[Table 5 here]

In addition, we find that of those who were raised in a particular faith, people of immigrant ethnic origins are far more likely than those of British origin to say they 'practice' their religion and that they participate in religious worship (see table 6). This is especially true of Muslims, and 2003 data show that British Muslims under 35 are if anything more likely to express a Muslim affiliation than those over 50.

[Table 6 here]

The combination of immigration, higher immigrant fertility, higher immigrant religiosity and Muslim religious retention will lead to a radical reshaping of the UK

religious landscape. Already, as figure 9 shows, British Muslims and secular Britons have a comparable age profile. As the twenty-first century progresses, secular populations will age due to declining flows of Christian apostates and low fertility while Muslim demography and high (97%) second generation religious retention will allow Muslims to retain their youthful age profile.

Figure 9.

[Figure 9 here]

Source: UK Census 2001

The same dynamics will operate in other west European countries, echoing our earlier small-sample ESS 2004 findings. A recent Dutch study confirms these results: the proportion citing 'no religion' among second-generation Turkish (4.8% for N=566) and Moroccan (3.1% for N=514) Dutch respondents is far lower than the general population and differs little from the first generation, though attendance shows a modest decline. Multivariate analysis indicates that generation has no effect on the religious identity of respondents from these Muslim ethnic groups and only a modest impact on mosque attendance. (Phalet & Haker 2004: 17-22) Meanwhile, census-based Austrian projections indicate that affiliating Muslims will form between 14 and 26 percent of the national population by 2051 on the basis of a very conservative annual net immigration of 20,000. (Goujon et al. 2006) Europe's population has begun to decline in real terms during 2000-2005, some three decades after fertility dipped below replacement. Given this decline, levels of immigration may increase for economic reasons, and we may see nonwhites forming half the population in several

countries by 2104. In the United States, for instance, this point will already have been reached by 2050. (Kaufmann 2004: 211)

Political Effects

It is relatively simple to imagine a future in which the political faultlines of Europe run between the 'native' European-origin populations and those of non-European immigrant provenance. However, this ethnic cleavage may not be inevitable - especially in the long duree. The example of the United States shows how an initial cleavage based on the opposition between 'native' (Protestants) and 'foreign' (urban Catholics and Jews) mutated into a division between liberals and conservatives. This reflected an American society in which an interfaith religious coalition was forming. "If my argument is correct," argued Robert Wuthnow in 1989, "the major divisions in American religion now revolve around an axis of liberalism and conservatism rather than the denominational landmarks of the past." (Wuthnow 1989: 178) Today, conservative Protestants, Catholics and Jews vote much more like each other than their liberal coreligionists. (Guth et al. 2005)

Religious divisions continue to trump ethnic ones among all groups except African-Americans. While one would expect the spectacular increase in the American Hispanic population (from perhaps one percent in 1970 to some 13 percent of the total by 2000) to sharpen ethnic cleavages, the established religious faultlines adapted to the new immigrants. This was especially true on the Republican side, with party modernisers like George Bush and Karl Rove pushing an ethnically-inclusive religious agenda which reached out to traditionalist-minded religious Hispanics. Bush's 'ecumenical' strategy worked well for the Republicans in 2004, netting them 40 percent of the Hispanic vote and a majority of the votes of both American-born

Hispanics and the significant Hispanic-Protestant population. (Guth et al. 2005) Prior to 9/11, the Republicans also won a majority of the Arab-Muslim vote. Today, the Republican elite has managed to keep the idea of an amnesty for illegal Mexican immigrants alive, despite strong congressional Republican opposition.

While this kind of scenario seems more farfetched in the European case, the same would have been said by Americans at the time of Will Herberg's classic *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* (1955) or at any point prior to the end of the Democratic alignment in 1968. The shift is easiest to imagine in first-past-the-post electoral systems like Britain's, where parties are compelled to serve as big tents for a wide range of single-issue groups. Even under a proportional representation system, most European countries have several large 'catchall' parties which bring together disparate groups. Though not all party systems operate as decentralised 'franchise' operations (Carty 2002), resource mobilisation theory stresses that inclusive parties often operate best by sequestering divisive policy differences at the local constituency level. (McCarthy & Zald 1977) Thus within the Labour Party, one constituency association may consist of traditionalist Muslims, another of homosexual and feminist groups, university employees or artists, and still others of morally-conservative local trade unionists. Each faction dominates its own locale, but only more general shared concerns (like wealth redistribution) feed into the national party platform. (Carty 2002) Thus a future conservative 'catchall' party in Europe could combine inner-city, pro-immigration Muslims and rural, anti-immigration Christian traditionalists into one party by allowing each to dominate certain constituencies, with moral conservatism uniting the two on a national level platform.

Studies of non-European immigrants in Europe suggest that this group tends to vote for left-wing parties, but holds more conservative social attitudes than the host

society. This may be partly or even mainly attributed to the stronger hold of religious traditionalism upon immigrant populations. (Dancygier & Saunders 2006) Their natural allies in this respect are social conservatives within the 'host' population. Table 7, based on our original sample of ten West European countries for 1981-2000, shows that religiosity serves as an important cleavage within the 'host' population in Europe. Thus those who consider themselves 'religious' (as opposed to 'nonreligious' or 'atheist') are statistically far more likely to identify themselves as 'conservative' on a liberal-conservative scale. We know from electoral studies that ideology is a key predictor of voting intentions in Europe.

[Table 7 here]

Why would the European right seek to woo immigrant traditionalists rather than secular-nationalist natives? One possible answer is that Europe's history of colonialism and the Holocaust has engendered a moral climate which stigmatises ethnic/racial conservatism more than religious conservatism. Ethnic nationalism is thus deemed less respectable than moral traditionalism, while attempts to cross an ethnic/racial boundary (even in the name of religious conservatism) are viewed positively by the media. Of course, much can change: Muslims may begin to integrate more quickly and immigration may slow down or change its source. In the long term, however, the reversal of secularisation and new electoral calculations by European conservative parties may allow religiosity to displace ethnicity as the major cultural divide in society. This would see religious Christians and Muslims unite against the secular population. Precisely such a shift, from ethnic to religious conservatism, took

place in the United States in the second half of the twentieth century. However, current trends would suggest that this is unlikely to occur in Europe in the near future.

Conclusion

This paper takes as its subject matter the relationship between demography and the Enlightenment. This relationship turns on the balance between religious population growth through higher fertility (and, in the West, through religious immigration), and secularism's capacity to induce apostasy among the children of the religious. Today, religious population growth is outpacing religious apostasy in the world as a whole. In western Europe, by contrast, religious apostasy has trumped religious fertility for a half century (longer in some cases), leading to net secularisation. No trends are set in stone, and it appears that this trend has stalled in six 'cutting edge' societies of Protestant Europe and France where secularisation began earliest. Rates of religious decline across the generations in these countries slowed down in the late twentieth century, and have flattened out for those born after 1945. Meanwhile, religious women continue to maintain a 10-15 percent fertility advantage over nonreligious women (even with controls for age, class, education and income). With secularism stalled, religious demography takes over - even in the west European heartland, and our projections suggest that these countries will be more religious in 2100 than they are today.

Yet these projections become even more telling when we factor in immigration. Non-European immigrants tend to be more religious than members of Europe's dominant ethnic groups, and Muslim immigrants are especially likely to retain high levels of religious activity into the second generation. Those of non-

European or part-non-European origin could comprise as much as a quarter of western Europe's population by 2050, rising to half or even two-thirds of the total by 2100. (Coleman 2006; Coleman & Scherbov 2005: 35-7) In combination, we would expect higher native Christian and immigrant fertility to result in a considerably more religious Europe by 2050 - and especially by 2100. Though non-European immigrants tend to be far more religious than natives, their future trajectories differ by region of origin. Muslim religious retention (regardless of ethnic group) is nearly perfect across age groups and between the foreign-born and native-born, and intermarriage with non-Muslims remains rare. Afro-Caribbean Christians are more likely to intermarry with natives and lose their religiosity across the generations.

This may result in a secular population increasingly composed of Christian, Hindu or 'Other' immigrant-stock apostates together with a shrinking native white nonreligious population. The religious population will be an eclectic mix of Muslim ethnic groups, non-European Christians, and a relatively stable segment of native white Christians. This ethnic *pastiche* could be translated into politics in different ways. Religious individuals tend to be more socially conservative, but their votes go to parties of the Left if they are from ethnic minorities, and to the Right if they are native-born whites. Though ethnic cleavages between native whites and non-European immigrants will initially take centre stage, it is possible to envision an alternative scenario under which a trans-ethnic religiosity becomes the main axis of politics. This would be facilitated by the current opprobrium attached to conservative ethnic nationalism which has helped to deflect conservative politics in the United States along religious as opposed to racial lines. It could be actualised by the kind of decentralised mobilisation mechanisms used by large parties to weld together

disparate coalitions of single-issue groups who disagree strongly with each other but whose differences remain sequestered at the local constituency level.

The switch from ethnic to trans-ethnic conservatism in the United States is a recent development of the 1968-80 period, and is based on an ecumenical strategy of religious and moral traditionalism. The notion that traditionalist Protestants, Catholics, Jews and Muslims (prior to 9/11) now vote more like each other than their liberal coreligionists would astound an American from the 1950s. The idea of traditionalist Christians and Muslims in Europe doing the same may astound us today, but cannot be ruled out as the twenty-first century unfolds. This would not only 'Americanise' European politics, but would raise questions that cut to the very heart of the Enlightenment project.

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¹ In surveys where samples for the oldest and youngest cohorts are small, numbers tend to fluctuate a great deal, thus these results are omitted.

² Hayes (1996) also finds that women are significantly less likely to switch denomination, but did not note the prominence of women among converts from secularism.

³ See Hayes (1996: 644) for further references on the role of women in the transmission of religious values. There is of course the question of the impact of mixed marriages between secular and religious people on the level of secularisation, which falls outside the scope of this paper. Voas finds that mixed marriages in Britain and the Netherlands tend to lead to apostasy among formerly religious spouses. However, these two studies are a) based upon measures of religious affiliation rather than religiosity, and b) remain unclear about whether those who leave their religious affiliation after marriage to a secular spouse are self-selected to do so. In addition, 'the religiously sterilising' effect of mixed marriage appears to vary with the degree of secularism in the country such that there is no similar effect in the more religious context of the United States. (Voas 2003: 91-3) All told, it is difficult to infer that 'religious' people are becoming 'not religious' or 'atheists'. It may therefore be the case that marriage patterns reflect, rather than affect, overarching patterns of secularisation.

⁴ Assumes that the tempo of fertility in all cases follows a 'late fertility' pattern and standard developed country mortality schedule based on the Brass General Standard. Assumes constant fertility differences and constant levels of religious-secular 'migration' by age and sex throughout the duration of the projection. Projections use *People* version 3.0.

⁵ Note that this figure is for the six most secular countries and is somewhat less than the 15-20 percent for all ten countries sampled.

⁶ These grouping assumptions have important consequences for our projections because the unsmoothed data show a large influx of female converts in the 18-24 age group and a slow apostasy thereafter whereas the smoothed results assume a more modest influx of female converts into the childbearing age ranges. Smoothing

substantially reduces the proportion of religious population in 2104, by around ten percentage points.

⁷ Just over 400 Muslim respondents were captured in the 2004 ESS, of which 173 lived in the ten countries studied in this article.

⁸ For example, the 'Muslim Communities in Europe' study or the new NORFACE research programme on the 'Re-emergence of Religion as a Social Force in Europe' <<http://www.norface.org>>.

⁹ See, for example, 'UK Mosque Goers to Double Church Attendance: Stud', Ureader.co.uk 29 October 2005 <<http://www.ureader.co.uk/message/2123353.aspx>>