A POLITICAL PROFILE OF PROTESTANT MINORITIES IN EUROPE

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ABSTRACT

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This paper uses a large volume of data—in particular, surveys—to explore the character of Protestant identity in contemporary European states. It distinguishes three contexts. First, in the Nordic and certain adjacent states, the dominance of Protestantism was complete, but more recent secularisation has provoked a reaction from Christian parties which enjoy strong support from active Protestants. Second, in certain states which in the past were predominantly Protestant, and where the ethos of the state was aggressively so, a significant Catholic minority was counter-mobilised politically; but as the dominant state-building parties became increasingly secular, committed Protestants reacted in different ways, including the formation of splinter parties (as in the Netherlands and Switzerland) or working within the traditional parties (as in Great Britain and Germany). Third, in a few states there has traditionally been a small Protestant minority which has played a significant role in national development, but in these cases (mainly successor states to the Habsburg monarchy) decades of communist rule have largely obliterated what might have been distinctive patterns of political behaviour. The paper explores variation in group identity patterns and in attitudes towards the state in those cases for which appropriate survey data are available, and devotes particular attention to the position within the United Kingdom, where religion has played a prominent role in the state- and nation-building process.

Key words: religion; Protestants; minorities; identity; political parties

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

John Coakley is Head of the School of Politics and International Relations at University College Dublin. He is also the founding director of IBIS. He has edited or co-edited: *Changing shades of orange and green: redefining the union and the nation in contemporary Ireland* (UCD Press, 2002); *The territorial management of ethnic conflict* (2nd ed., Frank Cass, 2003); *From political violence to negotiated settlement: the winding path to peace in twentieth century Ireland* (UCD Press, 2004); *Politics in the Republic of Ireland* (4th ed., Routledge, 2004); and *Crossing the Border, New relationships between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland* (Irish Academic Press, 2007).

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Introduction

In an increasingly secular European continent, proponents of traditional religious values often see themselves as engaged in an up-hill struggle. As one fundamentalist Protestant put it, such has been the willingness of British governments to compromise that Protestant liberties have been undermined: "The question now arises as to whether Queen Elizabeth will be the last British Monarch to take the Protestant Coronation Oath. May God forbid" (Noble, 1998). The author traced this threat to a long-term campaign by a "disciplined and able confederacy" spearheaded by the papacy, with the assistance of "Jesuit cunning". The result had been a series of unfortunate concessions to Catholics, from "the so-called Catholic Relief Act" of 1829 to the dropping of the denunciation of "Priestcraft and Popery" from the Royal Declaration in 1910. From this perspective, Europe was a forum of exceptional importance, as articulated vividly some years ago by Northern Ireland's current First Minister and former poll-topping member of the European Parliament:

> The prophetic significance of the European Union has been revealed as the saga unfolds. … First, the sign which it chose as its symbol was the Woman riding the Beast. This comes from a prophecy in Revelation 17. The depiction of the harlot woman was reproduced on the centenary stamp of the European Union, in a huge painting in the Parliament's new building in Brussels, and by a huge sculpture outside the new EU Council of Ministers Office in Brussels. The new European coinage, the Euro, bears the same insignia. The Tower of Babel has been used on the posters emanating from Europe—a truly suggestive prophetic sign (Paisley, 1999).

This intervention (sparked off by the fact that seat numbering in the European Parliament leapfrogged from 665 to 667, skipping the number of the Beast) may be unrepresentative of contemporary Protestantism, but it is a potent reminder of the existence of a sizeable body of opinion which sees religion and politics as inextricably interlinked, and which regards the battles of the reformation era as unfinished business.[1]

But how sizeable is this body, and what is its contemporary political significance? The object of this article is to offer a broad profile of the political role of contemporary European Protestantism by exploring variations in the relationship between Protestant minorities and the political world across the continent. The profile is developed in three stages. First, an effort is made to assess the extent of the nominal Protestant presence in European societies. Second, the more complex specifically religious characteristics of Protestant populations are examined. Third, the interplay between religious identification and other forms of identity is explored.

Protestants in Contemporary Europe

There was a time when the political map of Europe could provide a reasonably accurate indication of the religious denominational complexion of the continent. The peace of Augsburg (1555) had offered a formula by which rulers in Europe's central zone, the Holy Roman Empire, could choose the religion of their subjects. But the

principle *cuius regio, eius religio*, while it might have functioned effectively in Europe's northern and southern extremities (including Lutheran Scandinavia and Catholic Iberia), offered a less predictable formula for the identification of popular religious affiliation elsewhere. Confessional imposition from above clashed with popular preferences from below, resulting in complex patterns of religious adherence (Wallace, 2004: 191-4).

Later geopolitical restructuring resulted in further denominational mingling. The formation of the Netherlands and of Switzerland saw the incorporation of Catholic territories in Protestant-controlled unions, and German unification in 1870 resulted in the same outcome on a broader canvas. The three constituent kingdoms of the United Kingdom that came into existence in 1800 were of similarly diverse background: England and Scotland with established Anglican and Presbyterian churches respectively, Ireland with an Anglican established church but a predominantly Catholic population.

Table 1. Protestants by state, c. 1920 and 2004-05

Country of:	Protestants c. 1920 (%)	Est. Protestants, 2005		Est. Protestants, 2004, as %	
		Number (000s)	%	*All religions*	*Whole sample*
Protestant Europe					
Iceland	99.5	260	90	91	43
Norway	97.2	4,104	89	87	44
Finland	97.4	4,455	86	96	73 *
Denmark	98.6	4,513	86	93	59
Sweden	99.8	7,809	64	87	28
Estonia	78.6	232	29	38	9
Mixed Europe					
Great Britain	70.0	29,341	62	50	25
Germany	64.3	28,976	37	48	26
Switzerland	58.7	2,493	35	46	33
Netherlands	53.5	3,486	26	38	18
Latvia	57.3	280	12	43	29 *
Catholic Europe					
Hungary	27.2	2,360	23	26	16 *
Slovakia	17.7	505	9	9	7
Austria	3.1	366	5	5	3
Ireland	7.4	138	4	3	3
Czech Republic	4.0	247	3	10	3
Slovenia	2.6	48	3	3	2
France	1.5	1,468	2	3	1 *
Belgium	0.5	155	2	1	1
Luxembourg	1.1	8	2	1	1
Portugal	0.1	128	1	0	0
Lithuania	3.8	40	1	1	1 *
Croatia	0.7	36	1	0	0 *
Italy	0.4	341	1	1	1 *
Poland	3.7	141	0	0	0
Spain	0.0	115	0	1	0

Notes: The data for c. 1920 refer to the period between 1918 and 1925, except in the cases of Portugal (1900), France (1906), Spain (1910), Italy (1911) and Ireland (1926). The data refer to the

same territories as in 2004-05, except in the case of Poland and Germany, where there were significant changes, and Lithuania, where there were smaller changes. The data for this period for Croatia and Slovenia refer respectively to the Savska and Dravska banovines of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The Belgian data are estimates, based on distribution of clergy; those for Great Britain are estimates based on solemnisation of marriages in England and Wales. The "2004" data all refer to that year, except for the cases marked by an asterisk, where an earlier source was used, as indicated below.

Sources: For c. 1920, *Statesman's yearbook*, 1927, except in the following cases: France—*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed. (1911); Portugal, Spain—*Statesman's yearbook*, 1914; Czech Republic, Slovakia—Czechoslovakia, 1924; Croatia, Slovenia—Yugoslavia, 1932; Estonia—Estonia, 1924; Latvia—Skujenieks, 1922; Lithuania—Lithuania, 1925. The 2005 population estimates are from World Christian Database, 2005. The 2004 estimates are based on the European Social Survey, round 2, 2004, except in the following cases: France, Finland, Hungary and Italy, European Social Survey, round 1, 2002; Latvia, International Social Survey Programme, 2003 (see appendix); Croatia and Lithuania, 2001 census data from Croatia, 2007, and Lithuania, 2007.

An indication of the geographical distribution of Europe's Protestant population is given in table 1. This provides a reasonably accurate indication of the traditional pattern, represented by the proportion of Protestants (typically, as established by the population census) around 1920. It updates this by reference to carefully informed estimates of the size of the Protestant population in 2005, expressing this also as a percentage of the total population. It seeks to elaborate these further by using survey data from the same period, providing an indication of the size of the Protestant group both as a proportion of the nominally religious population and of the total population around 2004. The table places Europe's states in three categories. The first includes those countries which were homogeneously Protestant, with tiny minorities belonging to other faiths: the old Scandinavian monarchies of Denmark and Sweden, to which were later added the independent states of Norway, Finland and Iceland. The second is a set of countries whose ethos was traditionally Protestant but in which there was a large Catholic minority, including Great Britain, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland. The third is that part of Europe which was at least externally Catholic, with Belgium, France, Spain, Portugal and Italy as its most obvious examples.

These three zones call to mind immediately the celebrated "conceptual map" of Europe associated with Stein Rokkan, first developed to explain variation in the evolution of Europe's party systems (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967), and later extended to provide a framework for the interpretation of long-term, macro-historical trends in the territorial evolution and the state-building experience of the western part of the continent (Rokkan and Urwin, 1983: 19-65). [2] It also provided an intellectual basis for the exploration of a narrower phenomenon of particular interest here: the significance of religious conflict in the continent (Madeley, 2003). The characteristics of the three zones may relatively easily be described; they have been expanded here to include those new democracies in central and eastern Europe to which western Christianity traditionally extended—as far as the eastern border with the Orthodox churches and the southeastern border with Islam. But this needs to be done in association with an important alternative formulation which proceeded parallel to but independently of Rokkan's, and which identified five categories rather than the three mentioned above (Martin, 1978: 18-27). These geopolitical groups are examined here from the perspective of the political status of Protestants.

The first category is that of the Lutheran North—those areas where the victory of the reformation had been complete, and Catholicism had disappeared entirely. The five Nordic countries are obvious examples; but before 1870 Prussia and certain other German states could have been added to the list. After 1918 there was another addition: Estonia. Although the 1922 census showed that only 78.6% of the population was Lutheran, the Catholic proportion was a mere 0.2%, with most of the balance made up of members of the Orthodox church (19.0%), comprising mainly Estonian converts from Lutheranism (whose ancestors had changed religion in most cases in the nineteenth century), but also the small Russian minority (Estonia, 1924). Structurally, then, Estonia seems different from the more homogeneously Lutheran Nordic countries, but in reality its religious tradition until the nineteenth century— notwithstanding Russian rule—was dominated as thoroughly by its Baltic German pastors as Prussia or Scandinavia were by their counterparts there. Martin (1978: 23-24, 111-113) sees the pattern in this zone as one of church submissiveness towards the state (including even a willingness to accommodate to social democracy), individualistic public attitudes, a relatively low level of anticlericalism, and muted levels of political radicalism.[3]

The second category is the mixed zone. This includes three countries which Rokkan saw as overlapping with Europe's city belt, which extended over much of Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland. It also includes the pre-1922 United Kingdom, with its large Catholic minority in Ireland; but the UK continued to have a substantial and growing Catholic minority after Irish independence, now mainly a consequence of immigration. Here, too, we can add a further case: Latvia. The 1920 census showed a Lutheran majority of 57.3%, with a large Catholic minority (23.5%) concentrated in the southeasterly Latgale region (formerly part of Poland rather than of the Baltic provinces of Russia), and a smaller Orthodox minority (8.7%; Skujenieks, 1922). The relative size of the Protestant and Catholic communities in these cases prompted Martin (1978: 19-20, 49-54) to refer to them as the "60:40 model"—a form of duopoly in which the Protestant church is the major partner, with Catholic exclusion from the national myth, a tendency for this minority to be territorially concentrated in the south, and an integrative role for the Catholic church, which tends to align itself with the centre-left. Martin (1978: 20-21) places England in a separate category, with Canada, Australia and New Zealand: in these cases, he argues, the original Protestant Episcopalian character of the state was modified by large-scale Catholic immigration and by the existence of a big Protestant dissenting bloc; Catholics are dispersed rather than being territorially concentrated; and they tend to identify with the left rather than with the right.[4]

The third category is the Catholic south, best represented by France, Belgium, Austria, Italy Spain and Portugal. Here, at least in the past, there has been a real Catholic monopoly, a position which has tended to evoke a powerful reaction in the form of militant secularism. Secular counter-mobilisation has sometimes become so ideologically comprehensive that it may itself acquire characteristics of religious faith; as Martin (1978: 24) put it, "the secular religions produced by France are sometimes a form of Catholicism without Christianity". Although secular or anticlerical forces constituted the most obvious traditional opposition to Catholicism in these countries, small Protestant minorities have sometimes been present. In France, these have been prominent in specific localities, such as Alsace-Lorraine; and in Ireland they possessed a particular importance because of their links to the former external ruling

power (Coakley, 1998). But their relative size has been small, reflecting a notable tendency for "mixed" states to fall into one category only (with a large Catholic minority; not the other way around). This has been explained in terms of the Catholic "cultural definition of unity and of integral religiosity", which led to the more systematic absorption of Protestant minorities than of Catholic ones (Martin, 1978: 203). The end of communism revealed, however, a significant group of countries with a Catholic tradition but strong Protestant minorities, clearly associated with the territories of the former Habsburg monarchy: the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary (and Austria itself has a significant Protestant minority).[5]

Protestants and Religious Commitment

The second broad question concerns what it means to be "Protestant" in contemporary Europe, and whether the meaning of this form of identification varies from country to country. There are several arenas within which religious belief and practice may be measured, and research on the character of religion emphasises how complex and multidimensional this phenomenon is (Slater, Hall and Edwards, 2001; Mockabee, Monson and Grant, 2001). If, however, we seek to make systematic comparisons based on cross-national surveys, we are constrained down a narrower path, one which is determined by the quality of the available data. The path may still be a complex one, though the main dimensions may be identified (Halman and de Moor, 1994: 47-61). Hornsby-Smith and Whelan (1994: 29-30) select five of these dimensions as being of particular importance as indicators of religious commitment: (1) traditional Christian beliefs (in God, life after death, and so on); (2) religiosity (including prayer and self-defined relationship to God); (3) confidence in the ministry of the church (its capacity to respond adequately to moral, family and spiritual needs); (4) permissiveness (attitudes towards such issues as divorce, abortion and homosexuality); and (5) civic morality (conformity to general moral principles).

We may form a general impression of the character of contemporary European Protestantism by considering a later wave of data of the same type (from 1999-2000). This suggests that the level of commitment to traditional Christian beliefs is limited, even among those claiming a religious affiliation—a form of "belonging without believing" that is rather different from Davie's (1994) characterisation of a major strand in Britain as "believing without belonging" (Halman and Draulans, 2006: 282-3). It is possible to devise a crude scale by summing responses to five dichotomous questions: about belief in God, in life after death, in hell, in heaven and in sin. A score of five would imply commitment to the full set of traditional Christian beliefs, but in 1999-2000 the scores for Protestants were only 1.4 in Denmark, 1.6 in Sweden and 2.6 in Finland. Among Catholics in southern Europe, by contrast, the scores were 2.7 in Spain, 3.0 in Portugal and 3.4 in Italy (though dropping to 2.4 in both France and Belgium). This may reflect inter-regional as well as inter-denominational differences, but when we try to control for this by looking at patterns within the same country an anomalous pattern emerges. In Germany, the score among Catholics (2.5) is higher than among Protestants (2.0), as we might expect, and the contrast is even greater in Britain (3.5 to 2.5); but in the Netherlands it is Protestants who score higher (3.4) than Catholics (2.5).[6]

Our concern in this article is not, however, with the character of religious belief as such, but with the social and political correlates of religious denominational

commitment. It is therefore possible to move to a simpler measure. A useful starting point is offered by a five-fold classification of levels of religious practice, as applied to the 1990 European Value Survey by Halman and de Moor (1994: 43-45). This is based on a scale ranging from the most to the least committed, defined as comprising the following five categories: (1) *core church members*, who attend a religious service at least one a month and "actively engage in activities of and for their church";[7] (2) *modal members*, who attend a religious service at least once a month but are not otherwise active; (3) *marginal members*, or formal church members who attend religious services less frequently than monthly; (4) *first generation unchurched*, or people who define themselves as no longer belonging to any religious denomination, but who were brought up within a particular religious system; and (5) *second generation unchurched*, those who have never belonged to any religious denomination.

Most comparative survey data do not permit measurement to quite this degree of refinement. Questions on current religious affiliation and frequency of church attendance are common; questions on religion in which respondents were brought up (if they are not currently denominationally affiliated) are often to be found, at least in particular societies; but questions on other forms of religious activity tend to be confined to specialised modules within specific surveys. For this reason, we may adopt a simpler and more flexible instrument, one that can be more widely applied to the large volume of existing data. This entails redefining the first category, and recognising that in many cases we will not be able to distinguish between the fourth and the fifth (in cases where information on the religion in which respondents were brought up is lacking). We may also modify the labelling slightly, to produce the following categories:[8]

Active members: those who attend church once a week, or more frequently

Semi-active members: those who attend church occasionally, perhaps on such holy days as Christmas or Easter, but no more often than once a month

Passive members: those who attend less frequently than once a year, or who never attend at all, though perhaps participating in rites of passage

Former members: those brought up within a particular religion but who no longer see themselves as church members

Non-members: those who disclaim any religious affiliation.

An attempt is made in figure 1 to measure levels of religious practice on the part of Protestants across Europe. This figure includes the five principal countries in the first category of table 1 (the four major Nordic countries and Estonia, all with a dominant Lutheran tradition), all five of the denominationally mixed (but predominantly Protestant) countries, and just two of the traditionally Catholic countries (the only two with sizeable Protestant minorities, Hungary and Slovakia). The figure thus covers all major countries with significant Protestant populations except France, where the absolute number of Protestants is large, but the relative number is very small, resulting in tiny Protestant subsamples in surveys (see the appendix for a discussion of the data used, and of certain issues in the area of question wording).
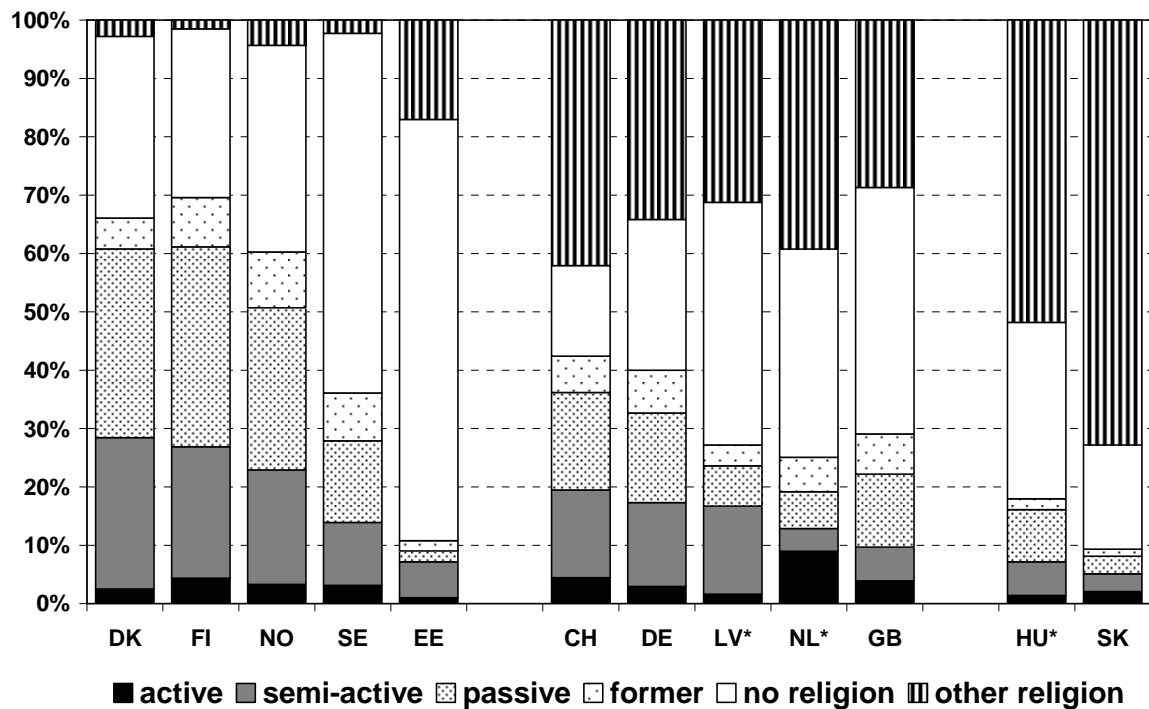
Figure 1. Distribution of Protestants by religious practice, 2006

Note. The data for the Netherlands, Hungary and Latvia refer respectively to 2004, 2002 and 1999.

Source: Computed from European social survey, 2002, 2004, 2006; European value survey, 1999-2000 (see appendix).

One of the most striking conclusions to be drawn from figure 1 is the extent of deconfessionalisation. Although three of the four main Nordic countries still have nominal Protestant majorities (with Sweden as the exception), the proportions which can be classified as active or semi-active have now dwindled remarkably, to less than a third in each case. Estonia represents the most extreme example, though there the presence of a competing religion should be noted (this is the Orthodox church). This pattern is repeated in the "mixed" countries, and in Hungary and Slovakia practicing Protestants constitute a still smaller share of the population. Even as a proportion of the nominally Protestant and formerly Protestant population, practicing Protestants constitute a minority in the Nordic countries, a pattern broadly repeated in the "mixed" countries.[9]

Protestants and Socio-Political Life

The most important question in this article relates to the political profile of Protestants in European states, and in particular to the distinctive identity—if it indeed exists—of the Protestant community. The significance of religion for cultural identity has been persuasively argued by Martin (1978: 77-78), though the primary European examples he gives relate to the role of Catholicism in protecting threatened identity and autonomy in three rather different contexts: in independent states (as in Poland and

Ireland), in "national enclaves" (as in Brittany, the Basque Country and Flanders), and in "socio-political enclaves where no ethnic element is present" (as in the case of German, Swiss and Dutch Catholicism).

It would be interesting to explore how far Protestantism might have had a reciprocal effect, though we would expect this to be residual in most cases, since the contribution of Protestantism to the creation and maintenance of Protestant national monarchies in Europe took place centuries ago rather than decades ago. There are, however, additional obstacles to finding reciprocal examples. As has already been observed, the history of Europe offers few examples of Catholic states with significant Protestant minorities. In the present analysis, furthermore, we confine ourselves to the evidence of large-scale surveys, necessarily overlooking minorities too small to show up in adequate numbers in national surveys, even if their regional impact was significant (in parts of France, for instance, as already mentioned, in Transylvania and in the Swiss Jura district). The data do, however, just about allow us to look at Protestant minorities in Hungary and Slovakia, though prolonged communist rule has distorted the pattern of religio-political mobilisation that might otherwise have developed in these cases. At the end of this section, regional survey data will be used to throw light on a particularly important set of cases where religion, politics and national identity have been intermingled: the "Celtic" peripheries of the United Kingdom.

We may begin with a major survey of national identity in Europe in 2003 (see appendix). This permits the analysis of three groups of countries: the four Nordic countries with a strong Lutheran tradition, the "mixed", traditionally Protestant states with large Catholic minorities (Great Britain, Germany, Switzerland and Latvia; the Netherlands was not included in this survey); and the two central European countries with a strong Catholic tradition but with sizeable Protestant minorities, Hungary and Slovakia. In each case, it was possible to look at the relationship between religion and a range of variables which might be seen as having some implications for national identity, and to do so from two perspectives: first, by distinguishing three groups, Protestants, other religions and the unaffiliated, and then by repeating this analysis, but with Protestants now divided into three categories, active, semi-active and passive, using the differentiating criteria described in the last section.

Table 2. Intensity of identification with country, Protestants and others, 2003

State minus:	Protestant	other religion	no religion	Difference: Protestants other religions	no religion
Norway	46	-	28	-	17
Sweden	44	-	34	-	11
Denmark	59	-	35	-	23
Finland	51	-	32	-	19
Great Britain	44	32	25	12	18
Germany	28	26	23	2	5
Switzerland	45	40	24	5	21
Latvia	47	27	26	20	21
Hungary	79	73	-	6	-
Slovakia	30	43	28	-13	2

Note: Each figure represents the percentage of the relevant category giving the response "very close" to the question "How close do you feel to [country name]?". In Hungary, no respondents were described as having "no religion".

Source: Computed from International Social Survey Programme, 2003 (see appendix)

A pronounced link to religion emerges when we consider general questions about affective bonds. Table 2 reports answers to the question "how close do you feel to Britain?" (and its counterparts in other countries). This shows a clear tendency for Protestants to identify strongly with the state in the Nordic area and in the mixed countries (with Catholics trailing in varying degrees in the latter). We might expect this relationship to be reversed in Catholic countries, and it is indeed in Slovakia; but the tendency for Protestants to identify more strongly than others with the state in Hungary is surprising, though the data are not strictly comparable (see appendix). In all of these cases, the much more lukewarm attitude of the religiously unaffiliated is noteworthy—a finding compatible with that of Hayes (1995) regarding the significance of this form of detachment from religion for the formation of moderate political attitudes. A similar pattern emerges in response to the question "How proud are you of being British?" (and the corresponding question in other countries).

On the other hand, in respect of many more specific questions where one might expect a link with religion, there is, surprisingly, no clear pattern. For example, in response to the question "how proud are you of Britain in … the way democracy works?" (and the corresponding question in other countries), there were no systematic differences between religious categories, either between religions or between different levels of commitment among Protestants. This extends to other specific aspects of pride in one's country, in such areas as influence in the world or achievements in science and technology, sports, or arts and literature. But there is one exception: pride in national history distinguishes Protestants from others (including Catholics in mixed countries) and from the unaffiliated in much the same manner as feeling close to one's country, as described in the last paragraph.

There is a further area which has a much more direct bearing on group identity. Respondents were asked the following question: "We are all part of different groups. Some are more important than others when we think of ourselves. In general, which in the following list is most important to you in describing who you are?" Religion was placed in the middle of a 10-item list (the order was occupation, ethnic background, gender, age group, religion, political party, nationality, family status, social class, and region).[10] Here one might expect Protestants in Catholic countries, as a beleaguered minority, to share the strongest sense of religious identity, followed by Protestants in mixed societies, in view of their exposure to competition with Catholics, with Protestants in traditionally Protestant societies as the most secure, with the lowest level of reliance on religion as a source of identification. In fact, religious affiliation seems to make little difference. It is only when we consider level of religious commitment that significant differences emerge, with the religiously active much more likely than others to see "religion" as important in defining their identity, as we may seen in table 3. This tendency is particularly pronounced in the Nordic states.

**Table 3. Identification of Protestants with "religion" as the most important group,
by degree of commitment, 2003**

State	Active	Semi-active	Passive
Norway	40	2	0
Sweden	25	2	.
Denmark	19	1	1
Finland	26	2	1
Great Britain	14	1	1
Germany	11	.	1
Switzerland	5	1	.
Latvia	14	1	.
Hungary	10	3	2
Slovakia	15	4	.

Note: Each figure represents the percentage of the relevant category selecting the category "religion" as "most important".

Source: Computed from International Social Survey Programme, 2003 (see appendix)

This rather surprising trend—an apparently higher level of Protestant religious identity in Protestant states—may find its explanation in the changing character of European societies, with the rapid pace of secularisation (evident in such areas as the liberalisation of the law in relation to abortion and homosexuality) offering a new challenge to evangelical Protestants. Indeed, we might expect to find a dual pattern of political mobilisation among European Protestants. First, there are theoretical reasons for expecting Protestant electoral support to have residual strength in the old, state-building parties of Protestant Europe, with which the Protestant churches were so closely linked. Second, it is to be expected that Protestant dissatisfaction with the pace of secularisation might well have resulted in a form of rebellion against these forces, as the "broad church" traditional parties became transformed into modern, secular entities. We have abundant survey data to test this, and we may do so by altering the group of countries included in tables 2 and 3, dropping Latvia in favour of the Netherlands in the group of "mixed" countries, and also dropping the two central European cases (where the pattern of party political evolution was distorted by decades of communist rule).
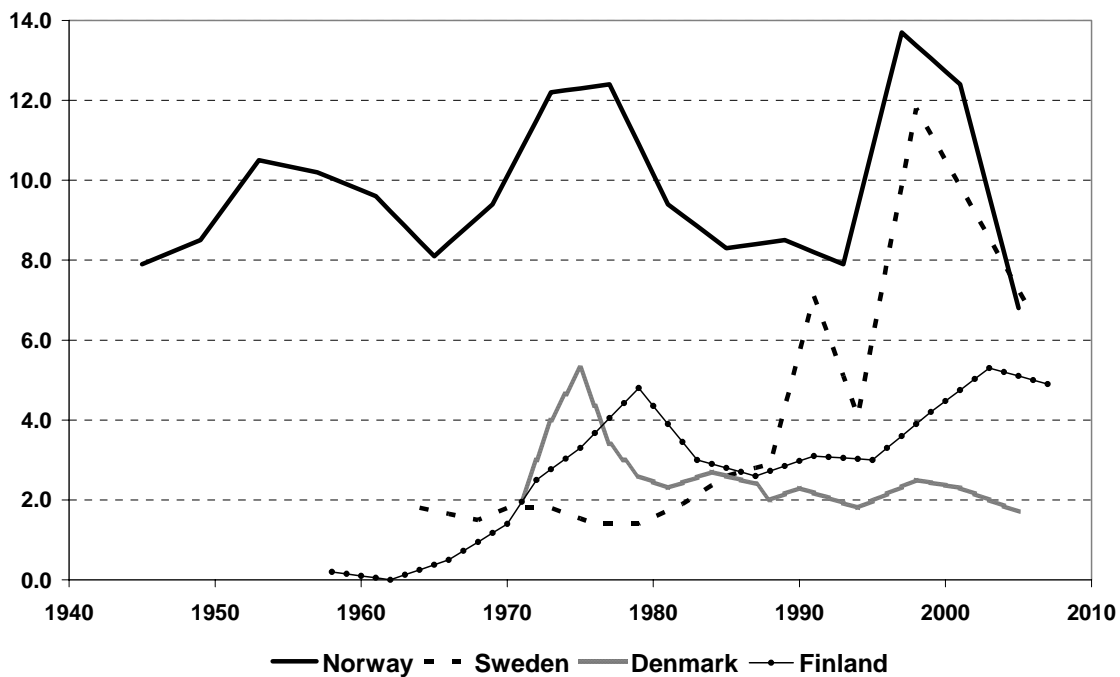
Figure 2. Support for Christian parties, Nordic countries, 1970-2007

Note. The parties in question are the Christian People's Party (Norway), the Christian Democrats (Sweden, Denmark and Finland).

Source: Mackie and Rose, 1991; Caramani, 2000; updated from *European journal of political research* and other sources.

The Protestant reaction to secularism may be seen most clearly in the Nordic countries. There, the very strength of the Lutheran church and its link to the state inevitably associated it with broader social changes over the decades, and with their translation into an increasingly secular legal framework. As well as working within existing parties, and especially within the older parties ousted from positions of dominance by the rise of social democracy, religious activists eventually organised their own parties: first, the Christian People's Party in Norway (1933), followed by the Christian League in Finland (1958), the Christian Democratic Union in Sweden (1964) and the Christian People's Party in Denmark (1970).[11] Although these parties were usually electorally marginal (as may be seen in figure 2, which traces their strength since the second world war), the Norwegian Christian People's Party had a particular political influence, and its Swedish counterpart has enjoyed a surge in support more recently.
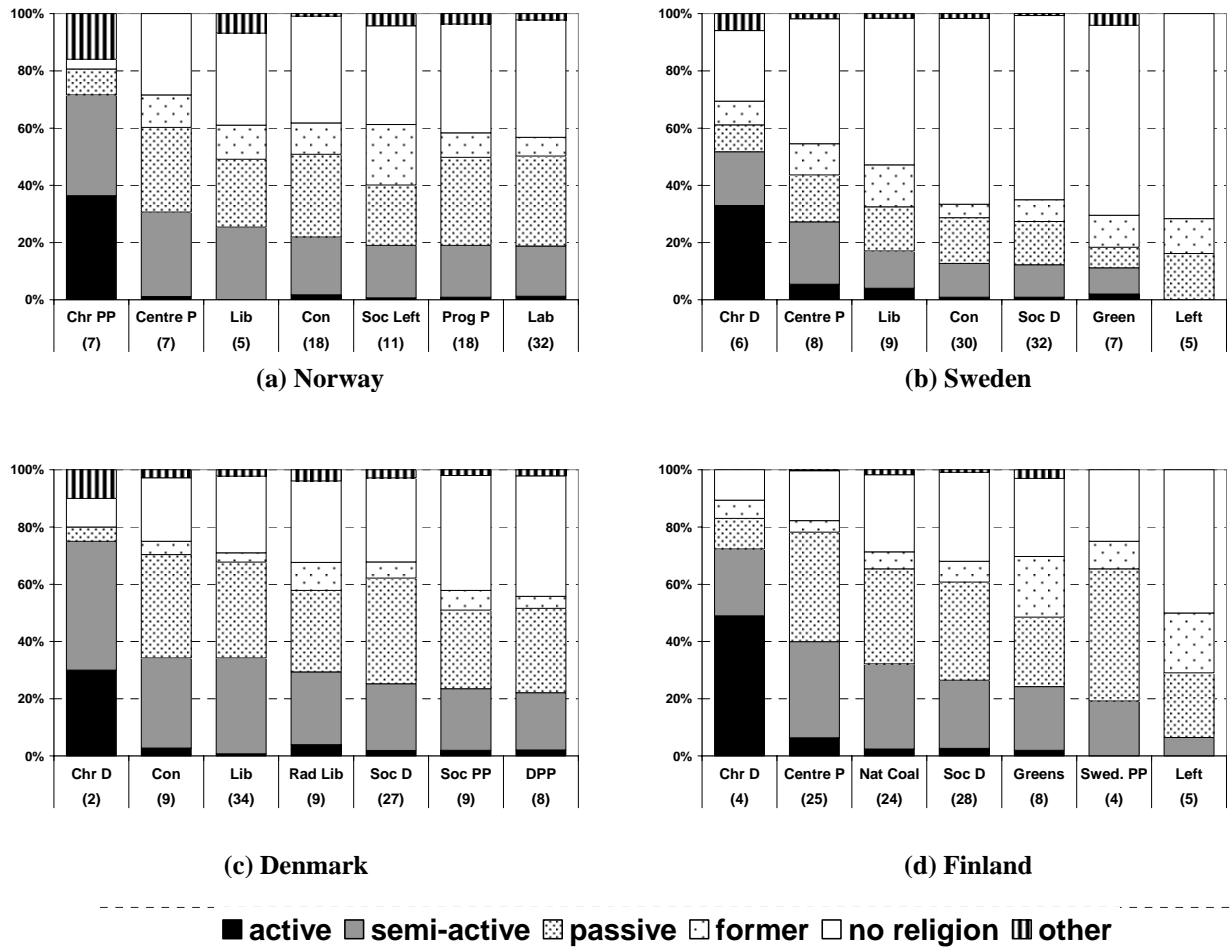
(a) Norway

(b) Sweden

(c) Denmark

(d) Finland

■ **active** ▨ **semi-active** ⊠ **passive** ☐ **former** ☐ **no religion** ⫿ **other**

Figure 3. Party support by Protestant commitment, Nordic countries, 2006

Note. The levels of commitment are as defined in the text. The figures in brackets indicate the proportion of the sample for which the respective parties accounted, excluding those in respect of whom the relevant information was missing. Data refer to those born in the country only.

Source: Computed from European social survey, round 3, 2006 (see appendix)

It is worth exploring further the relationship between religious commitment and party support in these cases. Figure 3 ranks the parties in the four major Nordic countries in order of the degree of their dependence on the religiously committed, using 2006 survey data. The party's electoral support base in terms of the five categories already discussed is presented in each case. Particular attention should be paid to the figures in brackets under each bar; these report the size of each party as a percentage of the whole sample reporting their vote in the most recent election. Overall, the strong relationship between religious commitment and support for the Christian parties is clear. There is little continuing evidence of association with older state-building parties, though there is some tendency for another traditional category, the Centre parties in Norway, Sweden and Finland (parties of rural, agrarian origin in each case), to attract the support of the religiously committed.

In denominationally mixed states, too, the state- and nation-building process was dominated by forces closely aligned to religious elites, giving the state a thoroughly Protestant character, notwithstanding the size of the Catholic minority. This may have meant the political marginalisation of Catholics through discriminatory policies, as in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, a campaign against Catholic influence in public life, as in Germany's *Kulturkampf* following unification in 1871, or military defeat of Catholic forces, as in the Swiss *Sonderbund* war of 1847, which laid the basis for the creation of the federal state in 1848. Protestant hegemony led to distinctive paths of Catholic political mobilisation (behind the Catholic parties in the Netherlands and Switzerland, the Centre Party in Germany and the Irish Nationalist Party in the United Kingdom), with Protestants tending to support the older, state-building parties: initially the Anti-Revolutionary Party, the Christian Historical Union and the Liberals in the Netherlands; the Radical Democrats in Switzerland; the conservative German National People's Party and its liberal rivals, and now the descendant of the latter, the Free Democratic Party; and the Conservatives in the United Kingdom, with significant Protestant dissenting support for the Liberals.
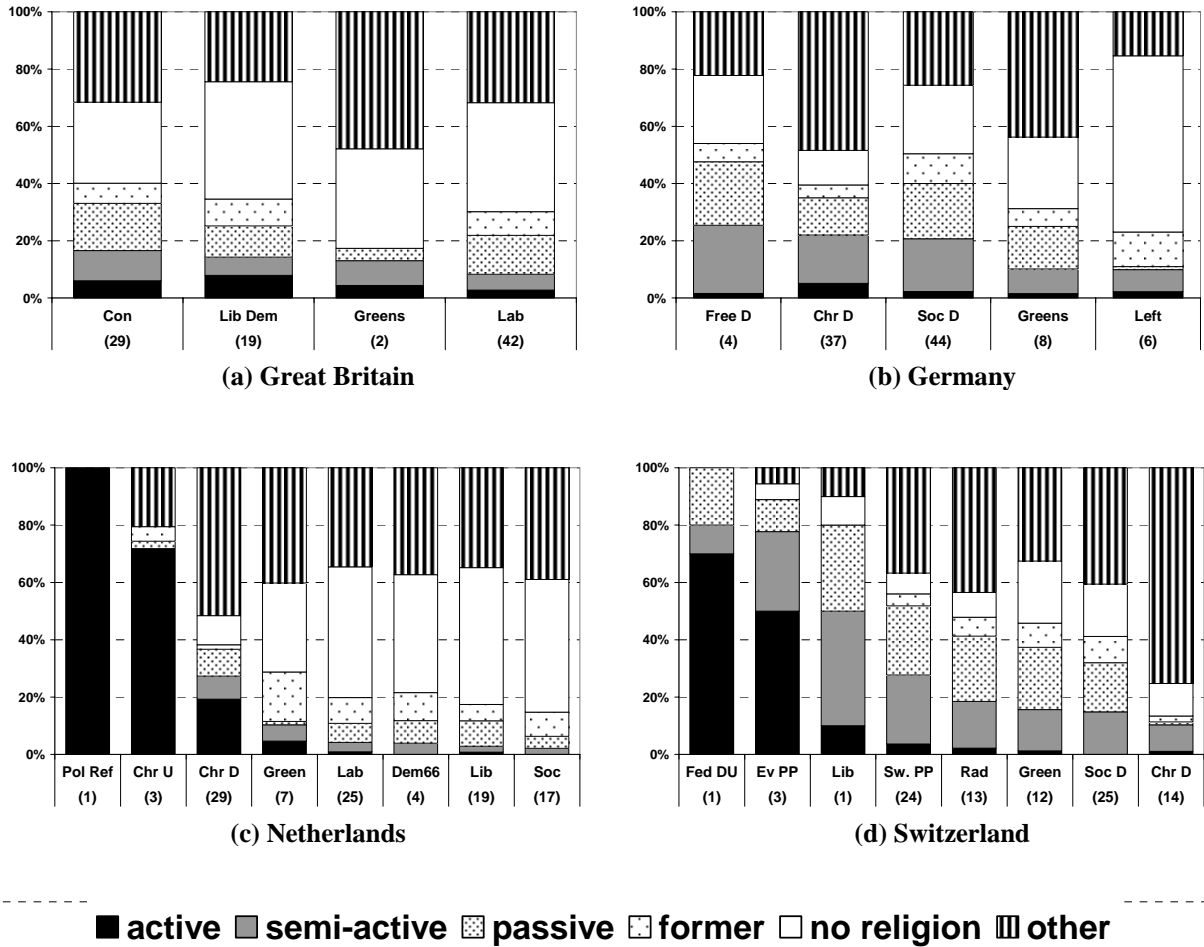
(a) Great Britain

(b) Germany

(c) Netherlands

(d) Switzerland

■ **active** ▨ **semi-active** ⊞ **passive** ▨ **former** □ **no religion** ▥ **other**

Figure 4. Party support by Protestant commitment, mixed countries, 2006

Note. The levels of commitment are as defined in the text. The figures in brackets indicate the proportion of the sample for which the respective parties accounted, excluding those in respect of whom the relevant information was missing. Data refer to those born in the country only. The data in respect of the Netherlands are for 2004.

Source: Computed from European social survey, round 3, 2006; for Netherlands, European social survey, round 2, 2004 (see appendix)

The absence of any reflection of this historical experience in the contemporary party systems of Great Britain and Germany is shown in figure 4, which adopts the same approach as figure 3 in respect of the four "mixed" states. This shows a rather weak association between religion and the main English parties (a point addressed further at the end of this section). In the case of Germany, the continuing over-representation of Protestants in the Free Democratic Party is noteworthy, but so too is their sizeable presence within the Christian democratic group (CDU-CSU). Although the origins of German Christian democracy lay in the (Catholic) Centre Party of the interwar period, survey data from the late 1940s onwards reveal that throughout its existence it has enjoyed a substantial level of Protestant support.[12]

More generous forms of proportional representation in Switzerland and the Netherlands have allowed for the fragmentation of political representation, aided in the former case by strong regional political differentiation and in the latter by the low representation threshold offered by use of a single, nationwide constituency. Catholic-Protestant differentiation in Switzerland continues to be pronounced, with the Christian Democrats attracting few Protestant supporters. On the other hand, the state-building, traditionally Protestant Radical Democrats now enjoy considerable Catholic support, though their small Francophone ally, the Liberal Party, is overwhelmingly Protestant.

In addition, in Switzerland, as in the Netherlands, there are two minor Calvinist parties which have been able to survive with little electoral support, at a level well below their Scandinavian counterparts, partly because they have a strong local base. The Evangelical People's Party, founded in 1919, has won an average of just over 2% at elections since 1971, and draws its strength mainly from the German-speaking, Protestant cantons of Bern, Basel, Zurich and Aargau. The Federal Democratic Union, founded in 1975, has won on average less than 1% at elections, and its support is concentrated in Bern, Zurich and parts of Switzerland's Protestant Francophone area. In the Dutch case, the Political Reformed Party was formed in 1918 by disaffected members of the traditionally Calvinist Anti-Revolutionary Party, and it has won on average just under 2% at elections since 1971. The Christian Union was formed in 2000 as a merger of two smaller parties which had also broken away from the Ant-Revolutionary Party in 1948 and 1975, and its electoral support rose to 4% in 2006. The *raison d'etre* of these committed religious parties was affirmed in the context of other big changes in Dutch politics, in particular following the merger in 1980 of the Anti-Revolutionary Party with the Christian Historical Union (another Calvinist party) and the Catholic Party to form a new party now known as the Christian Democratic Party.[13]

Table 4. Religious composition of United Kingdom by country, 2001-03

Country	Anglican (unweighted)	Presby-terian	Other Protestant	Catholic	Other	No religion	No. of cases religion
England	50	1	17	13	6	12	6,470
Scotland	6	53	10	18	1	11	3,113
Wales	44	3	27	9	2	14	2,073
Northern Ireland	17	23	14	42	2	3	3,600

Note: Figures are percentages of the row totals. The data refer to religious background: those currently unaffiliated have been attributed to the religion, if any, in which they were brought up.

Source: Computed from ESRC Devolution and Constitutional Change Programme combined dataset, 2001-03 (see appendix)

The United Kingdom offers some of the more fascinating illustrations of the impact of Protestantism on political life. Up to the nineteenth century, a state church was established in all three jurisdictions: Anglicanism in Ireland and in England (including its constitutional appendage, Wales), and, rather anomalously, Presbyterianism in Scotland. But the reality of a decisive Catholic majority in Ireland and of decline in the numerical predominance of the Church of England in Wales resulted in disestablishment of the church in these two jurisdictions, in 1869 and 1920 respectively. As is well known, religion was closely associated with the development of English national identity, and it played a similar role in Scotland—antagonism against Catholic powers in Europe and their Jacobite fifth column providing a potent image of a threat against the established order (Colley, 1992). But by the early twenty-first century, the past associations of England with Anglicanism and Scotland with Presbyterianism, never more than approximate, were weaker still, as may be seen in table 4. This uses pooled survey data from 2001-03 to describe the religious composition of the four countries of the United Kingdom. The table does not describe current denominational affiliation (which would leave Anglicans at just 31% of the English sample and Presbyterians at 35% of the Scottish), but rather cultural tradition: those not currently affiliated have been assigned to the religion in which they were brought up.[14] The table shows bare Anglican and Presbyterian majorities in England and Scotland, respectively. It should be noted that in these two countries, and in Wales, Catholics are the second largest denomination—a trend not obvious from the table, since in England and Wales "other Protestants" (including Methodists and Baptists) have been grouped, and they collectively outnumber Catholics.
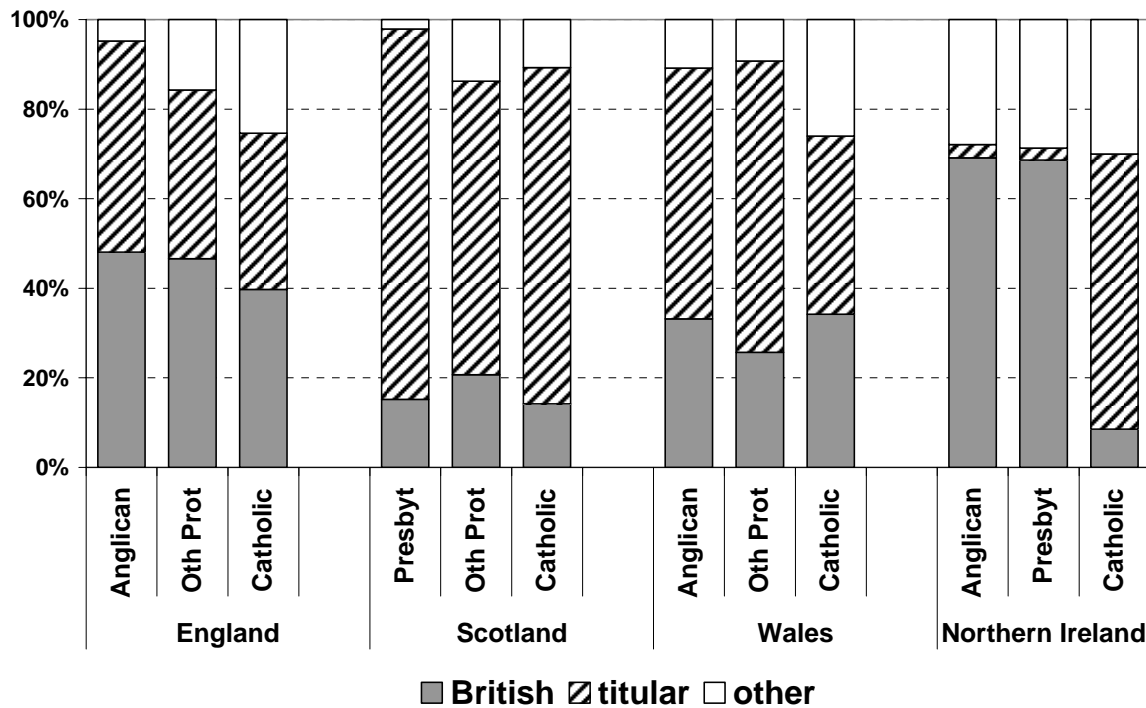
Figure 5. Primary identity by religion, United Kingdom, 2001-03

Note. The three largest denominational groups are listed for each country. "Titular" nationality refers to English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish in the respective countries. The "other" category in Northern Ireland is accounted for mainly by the "Ulster" and "Northern Irish" labels.

Source: Computed from ESRC Devolution and Constitutional Change Programme combined dataset, 2001-03 (see appendix)

There are acknowledged relationships between religion and party support in the United Kingdom, which it is not the object of this article to explore further: the tendency in England, Scotland and Wales of Anglicans to support the Conservative Party disproportionately, for instance, and of Catholics to support Labour, and the much more clearcut differentiation of Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland into opposing nationalist and unionist party political camps.[15] But given the more explicit link between religion and identity in the British state-building process, we might expect these relationships to be reflected in contemporary identity patterns. Figure 5 summarises the distribution of the three largest denominational groups within each country in terms of the national identity they select as their only or primary one, revealing an interesting pattern. First, there are bigger differences between England, Scotland and Wales than between religious denominations within these countries: a strong tendency in England for people to identify as "British" rather than "English", regardless of their religious background, but in Scotland to identify as "Scottish", and in Wales, though more weakly, as "Welsh". It should be noted that breaking these groups into active, passive and non-practicing members of the respective denominations makes little difference to the picture. Second, in Northern

Ireland the differences are stark, with Catholics overwhelmingly identifying as Irish (or in the case of a smaller group as "Northern Irish") and the two main Protestant denominations as British (with smaller proportions identifying as "Ulster" or "Northern Irish")—an effective but rare example of a close association between religion and national identity in this part of Europe.

Conclusion

A glance over the broad canvass of European Protestantism quickly yields certain convincing conclusions. First, it is clear that practicing Protestants are minorities everywhere: even in formerly staunchly Lutheran Scandinavia, those who have formally left the church and those who are nominal but non-practicing members together outnumber those who retain an involvement—however tenuous—in religious practice. Second, even among the affiliated the level of belief in the traditional Christian certainties (such as God, heaven, hell and the afterlife) is fragmented, and church attendance is uneven, though this is less true of the Netherlands than of the Nordic countries. Third, from a socio-political point of view, Protestant political mobilisation tends to take two forms, but in each case is confined to a small, religiously committed minority. In the Nordic countries, it takes the form of "Christian Democratic" parties which, except in Norway, now share the name of the characteristic religious party of Catholic Europe. These parties of Lutheran origin, though standing for defence of traditional Christian values, have enjoyed modest electoral success and all have participated in coalition governments. In the Netherlands and Switzerland, support for the corresponding types of party is weaker but more stable, and the parties themselves stand primarily for defence of principle rather than seeking access to power. The religious message in the party programme in these cases tends to be more pronounced, and although some (such as the Dutch Christian Union) may have won a small level of support from Catholics, they are uncompromisingly Calvinist in orientation.

Distinctively Protestant political mobilisation in Europe is, then, clearly an unusual phenomenon. In some cases, such as the Nordic countries, its rise has been assisted by the secular threat; in others, such as the Netherlands and Switzerland, this very threat has placed it under pressure to cooperate with Catholic parties. The children of Luther and Calvin may well have abhorred Rome, which in its turn decisively rejected their heresies, and the war launched in the sixteenth century may well have continued to the present in certain areas. But the protagonists encountered a more formidable joint enemy in the nineteenth century: the new secular tradition boosted by the French revolution (represented in southern Europe in particular by the Liberal right), and Karl Marx and his followers, for whom religious conflict has had the status of a drug war between rival purveyors of the opium of the people. In response, the religiously committed, Catholics and Protestants alike, have tended increasingly to combine against their secular enemies at national and international level. This is reflected in the steady extension of European Christian democracy outside its original Catholic strongholds. In 2001, the Christian Democrat International changed its name to Centrist Democrat International, and now numbers among its members all of the Nordic Christian parties already discussed, except the Finnish one, though of the smaller parties in Switzerland and the Netherlands discussed above only the Swiss Evangelical People's Party is a member.

It has been argued that the peculiar link between Protestantism and identity in Europe might be an expression of "vicarious religion", where large numbers of passive or unaffiliated individuals "are content to let both churches and churchgoers enact a memory on their behalf … more than half aware that they might need to draw on the capital at crucial times in their individual or collective lives", with resort to religious ceremonies at time of death as an obvious example (Davie, 2001: 271-2). This may well be a powerful force within individuals, linking them in at least a general way to a broader community, though it hardly constitutes the essence of group identity. Yet, there can be little doubt that there are circumstances where religion serves as a crude ethnic boundary marker, acting as a surrogate for some other characteristic, such as geopolitical origin (Coakley, 2002). In Europe, this has been most notable in the Balkans, but in Northern Ireland, as we have seen, it has similar importance. There, being Protestant is seen not merely as an indicator of religious belief, but of sharing in a myth of descent from English or Scottish settlers in the seventeenth century, just as being Catholic implies participation in a myth of descent from the Gaelic Irish "natives".

This article has, however, offered little evidence of circumstances where, other than in Northern Ireland, Protestantism serves as a recognised communal or ethnonational boundary marker. The forms of Protestant identity discussed almost all have diffuse boundaries: the gap between devout Lutherans or committed Calvinists and their more secular co-nationals are ones of degree rather than of kind, and they may relatively easily be crossed (though trends in survey data over time suggest that in practice those exiting from more committed forms of belief outnumber those entering them). Limitations of data do not permit the exploration of other cases where Protestantism has had clearer implications for identity. In Polish Masuria, for instance, there was a tendency, at least in the past, for Protestants to identify as "Masurs", or even as Prussians or Germans, rather than as Poles (Blanke, 1999). In Lithuanian Klaipeda, similarly, there was a tendency for Protestants to identify as "Memellanders" rather than as Lithuanians (Misiunas, 1968). More recently, in the Jura region of the Swiss canton of Bern, the secessionist movement which resulted in the creation of the new canton of Jura was supported mainly by French-speaking Catholics in the northern districts, with French-speaking Protestants in the southern districts apparently giving religion priority over language by voting to remain part of the Protestant but German-speaking canton of Bern (Bassand, 1975; Voutat, 1992). In each case, though, being "Protestant" meant much more than subscribing to a particular form of religious belief. It pointed towards the probability of external origin: in the respective cases, to long-established residence in the southern part of East Prussia rather than in Poland, to similar status in the northern coastal strip of East Prussia rather than in Lithuania, or to birth elsewhere in Switzerland, outside the Jura region.

This overview of the political profile of Europe's Protestant minorities must, then, end on a relatively open-ended note. It indeed seems to be the case that Protestants are now everywhere a minority, however relaxed our defining criterion. Furthermore, with the exception of Northern Ireland, Protestantism no longer appears to serve as a particularly effective boundary marker. This is not to say that its significance has altogether disappeared; but even if it is still of local importance in this respect in parts of Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands, its impact on the broader picture of ethnonational differentiation, never strong, is now probably weaker than ever.

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APPENDIX: SURVEY DATA

The following datasets have been used at various points in this article.

Eurobarometer trend file, 1970-2002: Germany (N=91,498); Great Britain (N=88,792); available from Central Archive for Empirical Social Research, University of Cologne, study no. 3521; technical details: www.gesis.org/en/za

European Social Survey, Round 1 (2002): France (N=1,503), Finland (N=2,000), Hungary (N=1,685), Italy (N=1,207); **Round 2 (2004):** Austria (N=2,256), Belgium (N=1,778), Czech Republic (N=3,026), Denmark (N=1,487), Estonia (N=1,989), Germany (N=2,870), Great Britain (N=1,897), Iceland (N=579), Ireland (N=2,286), Luxembourg (N=1,635), Netherlands (N=1,881), Norway (N=1,760), Poland (N=1,716), Portugal (N=2,052), Slovakia (N=1,512), Slovenia (N=1,442), Spain (N=1,663), Sweden (N=1,948), Switzerland (N=2,141); **Round 3 (2006):** Denmark (N=1,505), Estonia (N=1,517), Finland (N=1,896), Germany (N=2,916), Great Britain (N=2,394), Norway (N=1,750), Slovakia (N=1,766), Sweden (N=1,927), Switzerland (N=1,804); available from Norwegian Social Science Data Archive; technical details: www.europeansocialsurvey.org/.

European/World Value Survey, pooled dataset: Wave 4, all 1999 except Finland (2000): Belgium (N=1,912); Denmark (N=1,023); Finland (N=1,038); France (N=1,615); Germany (N=2,036); Great Britain (N=1,000); Italy (N=2,000); Latvia (N=1,013); Netherlands (N=1,003); Portugal (N=1,000); Spain (N=2,409); Sweden (N=1,015); available from World Values Survey Secretariat, University of Michigan; technical details: http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/

German election study, 1949: Germany (N=1,000); available from Central Archive for Empirical Social Research, University of Cologne, study no. 2324; technical details: www.gesis.org/en/za

German election study, 1961: Germany (N=1,679); available from Central Archive for Empirical Social Research, University of Cologne, study no. 0055; technical details: www.gesis.org/en/za

International Social Survey Programme, 2003: Denmark (N=1,322), Finland (N=1,379), Germany (N=850), Great Britain (N=873), Hungary (N=1,021), Latvia (N=1,000), Norway (N=1,469), Slovakia (N=1,152), Sweden (N=1,186), Switzerland (N=1,037); available from Central Archive for Empirical Social Research, University of Cologne, study no. 3910; technical details: www.gesis.org/en/za

National Identity and Constitutional Change in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, 2001 and 2003: English sample from British Social Attitudes Survey, 2001 (N=2,761) and 2003 (3,709); Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2001 (N=1,605) and 2003 (N=1,508); Wales Life and Times Study, 2001 (N=1,085) and 2003 (N=988); Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey, 2001 (N=1,800) and 2003 (N=1,800); available from UK Data Archive, study no. 5249; technical details: www.data-archive.ac.uk/

NOTES

1. According to Dr Paisley, seat number 666 remained unallocated and unoccupied, awaiting the arrival of the Antichrist, as foretold in the Book of Revelations. A European Parliament official offers a more prosaic explanation: "There have always been more seats than MEPs. Obviously some seats are therefore left free, depending on the distribution of seats among the political groups which can change from session to session. At the time 666 was part of a gap of seats separating two political groups (Liberals and UEN groups)"; email from European Parliament press office, 2 February 2007.

2. See Flora, Kuhnle and Urwin 1999: 141-147 and 349-352 for the fullest interpretation of this geopolitical approach.

3. Accommodation with social democracy was not necessarily easily achieved: the Norwegian Labour Party was particularly left-oriented in its early years (it was affiliated to the Communist International from 1919 to 1923). Further to the East, in Finland and Estonia, a civil war (with major international dimensions) had broken out in 1918 as the militant left sought to advance its programme.

4. The distinction between *England* (with its Anglican state church), *Great Britain* (which contains a second state church, the (Presbyterian) Church of Scotland) and the *United Kingdom* (with its large Catholic population until 1922) is particularly important here. Martin (1978: 21-22) places the USA in yet another category: full-fledged pluralism, where no church is in a dominant position and church-state separation is complete.

5. In the "Austrian" part of the Habsburg monarchy official pressure may have depressed the proportion of Protestants. In 1910, the Austrian census showed a Lutheran population amounting to only 1.6% of the population, and a Calvinist population of 0.5% (though these data included Poles, Italians and Ukrainians as well as Germans and Czechs, among who the level of Protestantism was higher). At the same time, however, the Hungarian census showed that 30% of Magyars were Protestant (25.8% were Calvinist, and 4.2% Lutheran), while of Germans in Hungary (including, of course, Transylvania) 21.5% were Lutheran and 1.2% Calvinist, and of Slovaks 23.2% were Lutheran and 0.5% were Calvinist; calculated from Leisching, 1985: 88 and Csáky, 1985: 282-3.

6. Computed from European/World Value Survey (see appendix); data are for 1999, except for Finland (2000). The scale is as reported in Hornsby-Smith and Whelan (1994: 30-31), except that two variables were dropped (a question about belief in a soul was asked in Spain only, and one on belief in the devil was not asked at all). Those responding "don't know" or not answering were coded as non-believers.

7. This typology was developed earlier by Loek Halman. Being "actively engaged" is interpreted by Ashford and Timms (1992: 37-38) as referring to people who either belong to a church organization or undertake voluntary work for the church.

8. The last two categories correspond to the "apostates" and "stable independents" identified by Hayes (1995). The weighting given to church attendance in this scale may endow it with a "Catholic" bias; it has been observed that certain other indicators, such as frequency of bible reading, are particularly associated with the Protestant tradition (Mockabee, Monson and Grant, 2001: 676).

9. It should be noted that the major surveys used in this article do not all offer the same set of options to voters. The *European/World Value survey* categories are: more than once week; once a week; once a month; christmas/ easter day; other special holy days; once a year; less often; never, practically never; those of the *International Social Survey Programme* are several times a week; once a week; 2 or 3 times a month; once a month; several times a year; once a year; less frequently; never; those of the *European Social Survey* are every day; more than once a week; once a week; at least once a month; only on special holy days; less often; never.

10. The options were as follows: your current or previous occupation (or being a homemaker); your race/ethnic background; your gender (that is, being a man/woman); your age group (that is, young, middle age, old); your religion (or being agnostic or atheist); your preferred political party, group, or movement; your nationality; your family or marital status (that is, son/daughter, mother/father, grandfather/grandmother, husband/wife, widower/widow, not married, or other similar); your social class (that is upper, middle, lower, working, or similar categories); the part of [country] that you live in; none.

11. The Swedish, Finnish and Danish parties changed their names to "Christian Democrats" in 1996, 2001 and 2003, respectively.

12. Already in 1949, Protestants accounted for 46% of the support base of the Christian Democrats (12% below the proportion of Protestants in the whole sample, 58%); in 1961 the corresponding figures was 36% (14% below the proportion in the sample); and the corresponding figures for the 1970s (average for the decade) were 39% (10% below), for the 1980s 41% (5% below) and for the 1990s 40% (5% below); computed from German election studies, 1949 and 1961; Eurobarometer trend file, 1970-2002 (see appendix).

13. For general background, see Jacobs, 1985. Electoral data on these parties are available in Mackie and Rose (1991) and Caramani (2000).

14. Davie (1994: 46) reports estimates that only about 6.7 million people were affiliated to Christian churches in Britain in 1992 (14.4% of the adult population), with Catholics as the largest group (a little over 2 million), followed by Anglicans (a little under two million), with Presbyterians (over one million) as the next largest denomination. When all of those affiliated to these churches are included, however, using baptism as the criterion for Catholics and Anglicans, the number of Anglicans increased to 26.8 million and of Catholics to 5.6 million, with Christians accounting for 64% of the population (Davie, 1994: 48).

15. In Scotland, a particularly strong contrast between Catholics and Presbyterians has been sustained over time. Survey data from 1973 to 1979 show 56% of Catholics, but only 22% of Presbyterians, supporting Labour (weighted data; computed from Eurobarometer trend file 1970-2002); comparable data from 2001-03 show the proportion of Catholics supporting Labour at 73%, with that of Presbyterians at 43% (computed from National identity dataset, 2001-03).