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**“Tell the Minister Not to Talk About God:”
A Comparative Study of Secularisation in
Protestant Europe**

Isabella Kasselstrand

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Declaration

This is to certify that the work contained within this thesis has been composed by me and is entirely my own work. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Isabella Kasselstrand

Abstract

Secularisation is at the centre of a vibrant debate in the sociology of religion. In the last two decades, literature has started to challenge old predictions and interpretations of the future of religion, but few studies present a detailed contextual examination of religious change in contemporary societies. Offering a comparative analysis of Scotland and Sweden, two nations in the relatively secularised Northern Europe, this thesis argues that diverse historical and political trajectories shape distinct patterns of religious beliefs and practices. Scotland and Sweden are two secularising nations characterised by historically dominant Protestant churches, but which nonetheless differ largely in their experiences of religious decline.

In order to discern and differentiate key aspects of religious change in each nation as well as to explore contextual meanings of religion, a mixed methods approach was adopted, comprised of secondary quantitative data analysis as well as in-depth interviews. Data analysis identified and highlighted broader patterns and individual understandings of *religious beliefs* as well as three dimensions of *religious belonging*: church attendance, religious identification and membership, and participation in rituals.

Results show that on measures of *religious beliefs* and *church attendance*, Sweden appears further secularised than Scotland. Arguably, Sweden has seen rapid and relatively early secularisation, with important social structural and political changes that occurred in the second half of the 19th century. With noticeable generational differences, data on Scotland point towards the mid-20th century as a crucial time of religious decline. Additionally, the remaining functions of the national churches differ considerably in the two nations. A majority of Swedes identify with the Church of Sweden, which serves a largely secular purpose as part of a cultural heritage and as a provider of life cycle ceremonies. By contrast, the Church of Scotland has maintained a stronger commitment to religious doctrine in a nation that is more religiously diverse.

The findings ultimately draw attention to the importance of context in the study of diverse and complex processes of religious change. As a result, they reveal limitations to attempts in the contemporary sociology of religion set out to generalise and dichotomise European trends of religious belief and belonging.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This thesis examines current trends and diverse meanings of religious beliefs and belonging in contemporary Scotland and Sweden. Using a mixed-methods approach comprised of secondary quantitative data analysis and in-depth interviews, the research investigates processes of religious and cultural change in two secularising, Protestant European nations and highlights the superficiality of describing a general European trajectory of religious change. Instead, it provides key insights into diverse processes of secularisation and the different remaining functions of churches in two national contexts.

My interest in the sociology of religion developed as a result of four years of studying and working abroad. As an undergraduate student in California, I was intrigued by the noticeable cultural differences between my native country, Sweden, and the United States, where the latter appeared much more explicitly religious than the former. My personal experience of religion in Sweden was a very weak connection between the Church and religious *beliefs*. I was confirmed in the Church of Sweden and attended church weddings and funerals with the perception that this had historically had a religious meaning, but that for most people, in this day and age, it was simply an acknowledgment of a special moment in life. Religion was typically not discussed, and it certainly was not a matter I contemplated, but as I adapted to life in California, I was compelled to examine and reconsider the assumptions I had arrived with.

This was formally incorporated in my studies when I took a course in *economics of religion*. The course was predominantly focused on Stark and Finke's (2000) rational choice theories of the religious economy. While their ideas were fascinating and persuasive, I found that they underestimated the importance of context, particularly in their accounts of religion in Europe and I, consequently, began questioning the notion of a common European experience. This was the beginning to what has developed into a strong interest in the comparative sociology of religion.

1.2 The Research Problem

1.2.1 Secularisation in Europe?

At a time of major shifts in social structure, early prominent social theorists (e.g. Durkheim, 1912/1995; Marx, 1844/2007; Marx and Engels, 1848/2012; Weber, 1904/2009) questioned the future of religion. They predicted a decline in various aspects of religion as society modernised, a process labelled as *the secularisation thesis*.¹ Throughout most of the 20th century, secularisation theories remained relatively unchallenged, but during the past few decades, it has been at the centre of a lively debate in the sociology of religion, where the link between modernisation and a diminishing presence of religion has been criticised and re-evaluated. The extent or nature of decline that some of the early sociologists prophesised has not been realised, and it has been questioned whether the contemporary world has in fact seen a decrease in religious beliefs (e.g. Davie, 1994, 2002a; Stark and Iannaccone, 1994; Stark and Finke, 2000; Warner, 2010).

Nevertheless, most sociologists of religion agree that there are aspects of religion, in particular church attendance, that have seen a decrease in *Europe* and that, in this sense, Europe is less religious than the rest of the world. (e.g. Berger, 1999; Berger et al, 2008; Bruce 1996, 2002a; Davie, 1994, 2002a; Stark and Finke, 2000; Warner, 2010).² In relation to this, ample attention has been given to exploring and explaining religion and secularisation at a “European level.” Davie (2002a:ix) refers to lower rates of attendance and calls Europe “the exceptional case.” She describes that, overall, Europeans *believe without belonging* in that they still believe in God even if they no longer actively participate in the church.³ As a consequence, rather than speaking of *secularisation*, she asserts that characteristics of religious beliefs and practices are *changing*. Berger (1999:2) believes that Europe is a key exemption to a world that is becoming *more* religious than it has ever been; and Bruce (1996) argues that secularisation originated in Europe with the foundations of

¹ See section 3.3 (pp. 62-68).

² However, recent evidence suggests gradual religious decline in other modern societies, such as the United States (e.g. Pew Research Center, 2013).

³ See section 3.4 (pp. 68-71).

modernity. Consequently, the European setting provides an ideal starting point for looking at contemporary processes and experiences of religious decline.

However, few studies have presented a thorough analysis of what secularisation means in different European contexts. This thesis argues that speaking of a “European case” (Davie, 2002a:2), and describing Europe as *believing without belonging* is problematic. It is debatable whether this is in fact an accurate depiction of religion in Europe as largely different conclusions are reached depending on how such terms are conceptualised. Furthermore, Davie’s account is ineffective in describing a meaningful pattern in Europe, which is far from homogeneous. Arguably, it is insufficient to treat Europe as a unit of analysis when detailing or refuting religious decline. As a result, this thesis offers a comprehensive examination of secularisation in Scotland and Sweden, two different, relatively secularised, European contexts,⁴ with the overall aim to address the question: *To what extent are Scotland and Sweden secularised and how does this fit into previous conceptualisations of religious belief and belonging?*

1.2.2 A Secularising Church?

This thesis seeks to examine the connection between religion, history, culture, and community in secularising societies. It is possible for a church to maintain a significant role in a society characterised by declining levels of religious beliefs, in line with Bruce’s argument that “religion diminishes in social significance, except where it finds work to do other than relating individuals to the supernatural” (2002a:30). However, relatively little attention has been given to exploring and explaining non-religious purposes of churches in secularising societies. Along with this, Zuckerman (2008:166) asserts that individuals who are nominally religious and participate in religious rituals without believing in the supernatural aspect are a group of people that are “nearly always overlooked in discussions, surveys, and analyses that claim to address and reflect the state of religion in our modern world today.” This applies particularly well to Swedes, but to a limited extent, and in a fundamentally different fashion, it also describes the relationship that many non-

⁴ See section 1.3 (pp. 16-18).

religious Scots have to the National Church. This thesis argues that many Swedes are *culturally religious*⁵ (e.g. Demerath, 2000; Zuckerman, 2008), in that they are largely non-religious but maintain a strong bond to the Church as a cultural heritage. Many Scots, on the other hand, associate the Church with belonging to a community.⁶ Looking at Scotland and Sweden within this realm illuminates the complex link between religion and belonging to a social group, a contrast that needs further attention. As a result, this thesis seeks to address the following question: *How can national context explain differences in religious belonging and how the key functions of national churches are maintained, transformed, or abandoned?*

1.3 Contexts of Study

1.3.1 Protestant Europe

When sociologists of religion speak of Europe as considerably more secularised than the rest of the world, it is important to highlight that this, in particular, refers to historically Protestant nations, primarily located in Northern Europe, and to a much lesser degree the Catholic and Orthodox countries. Davie (2002a:6-7) presents data on religious belief and participation throughout Western Europe and a clear pattern emerges: With the exception of Northern Ireland, primarily Protestant nations present low levels of church attendance, while the same measure in majority Catholic nations, apart from France, remains much higher. Similar but less drastic differences can be seen on the measure of *belief in God*. In other words, while Europe is characterised as being secularised on a global scale, this appears to be particularly true for Protestant nations. This, once again, shows both the difficulties of describing meaningful patterns of religion in Europe as a whole, as well as the need for a further study of secularisation within Protestant Europe specifically. For this purpose, Protestant Europe pertains to areas where Protestantism is (or was) the most common religious denomination, that is the United Kingdom, Iceland, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, and parts of Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands (Cipriani, 2010:442) (see Figure 1.1). As

⁵ See section 3.7.3 (pp. 83-85).

⁶ Discussed in section 3.8 (pp. 85-89).

presented in Chapter 2, the introduction of differentiated state churches in Protestant countries may have influenced both the shaping of a national church culture as well as a decline in religion. However, while Protestant nations with national churches may, in some aspects, experience a similar process of secularisation, in others they are separated to an extraordinary degree. This is argued through an analysis of Scotland and Sweden.

Figure 1.1: Protestant Reformation, c. 1560



Source: Spielvogel, 2009:396

1.3.2 Scotland and Sweden

Examining Scotland and Sweden as two case studies from Protestant Europe provides a better understanding of the fundamental importance of context in relation to processes of religious change and the shaping of distinct meanings of religious beliefs and practices. Scotland and Sweden possess a number of similarities, which make a comparison useful. These two fairly small, Northern European nations adopted Protestantism⁷ at the time of the Reformation and experienced a long history of a state church, since disestablished (explored in Chapter 2). Second, both nations appear to be secularising, with relatively low levels of religious beliefs, particularly “traditional” beliefs (Chapter 5), declining levels of church attendance (Chapter 6), religious identification (Chapter 7), and participation in religious rituals, such as marriage and baptism (Chapter 8).

However, it is clear that there are key differences in how the decline in these aspects of religion has developed. Since the Reformation, Scotland and Sweden have experienced largely different historical and political trajectories that have come to shape current trends of religious beliefs and belonging (Chapter 2). Moreover, even if there has been a steady decrease in religious identification and participation in rituals since the separation of church and state, a majority of Swedes still identify with the National Church (Chapter 7) and traditions that mark key points in the life cycle, for example baptism, marriage, and religious funerals, remain important and common parts of Swedish culture (Chapter 8). By contrast, Scots have, to a much more marked extent, ceased to identify with the National Church and to participate in its rituals. This is particularly intriguing given that Swedes appear less religious (Chapter 5) and less active in the church (Chapter 6). This suggests two very different relationships between religious beliefs and belonging in Scotland and Sweden. As a result, these two nations are ideal cases in studying the complex and contextualised processes of secularisation in contemporary societies.

⁷ However, the Church of Scotland is Calvinistic/Presbyterian, in contrast to the Church of Sweden, which is Lutheran. This is explained further in section 2.2 (pp. 23-27).

1.4 Thesis Outline

With *Introduction* and *Conclusion*, this thesis consists of nine chapters. Two are broadly theoretical, one presents methodological observations and research design, and four chapters discuss research findings. One findings chapter focuses specifically on *religious beliefs* and three relate beliefs to three separate dimensions of religious *belonging*; *church attendance*, *religious identification and membership*, and *participation in rituals*. Examining these distinct aspects of *belonging* provides a more nuanced understanding of the role of churches in secularising societies and brings to light how fundamentally disconnected distinct measures of belonging may be.

Chapter 2 offers a historical account of religion and the national churches in Scotland and Sweden. Four key aspects are highlighted as possible reasons for differences in current trends of secularisation. (1) Distinctive Lutheran and Calvinist theological stances concerning rituals, individualism, and a connection to the state. (2) The fact that the Scottish Reformation was led by largely popular demand, while Swedes had Protestantism instated by the king. (3) The extent to which, in Sweden, but not in Scotland, the Church has been intimately intertwined with secular politics. (4) The fact that Scotland has historically been more religiously diverse than Sweden. These suggest that the two nations have experienced quite distinctive religious trajectories since the Protestant state churches were established at the time of the Reformation.

Chapter 3 outlines and critically evaluates key theories and concepts in the sociology of religion that may be applied to current trends in Scotland and Sweden. *Secularisation theories*, *believing and belonging*, *the religious economy*, and *religion and security* discuss mechanisms of religious change. *Cultural religion*, *cultural defence*, and *religion and social capital* describe latent functions of the church in contemporary society. This chapter addresses each of these theories and argues that aspects of each approach can, taken together, offer useful insights that may shed light on processes of religious decline and the alleged link between the church and belonging to a social group.

Chapter 4 discusses methodological concerns in relation to a comparative study

of religion, specifically regarding the fluidity of meanings across social contexts. The chapter further describes and justifies a mixed methods research design. Quantitative analysis of secondary data was conducted in order to provide a broader idea of just how secularised Scotland and Sweden are on measures of belief, church attendance, religious identification, and participation in rituals. To achieve a better and more nuanced understanding of what these trends mean, in-depth interviews were conducted with married couples who had chosen a religious or a secular wedding ceremony.

Chapter 5 presents quantitative findings that suggest that religious beliefs are more common in Scotland than in Sweden, but that “spirituality” appears to be equally widespread in both nations. However, interview findings show that it is debatable whether many individuals who claim to be *spiritual* are in fact *religious*, suggesting that Davie’s (e.g. 1990, 1994, 2002a) categorisation of Europeans as *believing without belonging* is ineffective given limited understandings of diverse meanings and interpretations of measures of religious beliefs. Furthermore, differences between Scotland and Sweden illustrate that a secularising society experiences a decreasing social significance of religion. This means that a highly secularised society will have a *low* prevalence of atheism explained by the lack of a need to define oneself in relation to religion.

Chapter 6 demonstrates clear differences between how Scots and Swedes approach church attendance. Church attendance levels are decreasing in both nations, and both national churches are experiencing particular difficulties in attracting participants. Both Swedes and Scots highlight the need for the national churches to renew themselves and describe their services as “boring.” Scots are more likely to attend *regularly* or *never* while Swedes typically attend *occasionally*, though largely for non-religious reasons. Additionally, changes in church attendance levels suggest more apparent generational differences in Scotland, with changing attitudes towards the church emerging around the mid 20th century. In Sweden, attendance levels over the past century have been remarkably low, suggesting an earlier breach with attendance.

Chapter 7 discusses religious identification and/or membership. In relation to church attendance, this is a fundamentally different form of religious belonging. This

suggests a weakness in Davie's typology of *believing and belonging* largely as a result of her avoidance of conceptualising these terms. On many measures, Swedes seem to *belong without believing* with a strong connection to the Church of Sweden as an often non-religious sense of belonging to a cultural heritage. As a result of religious diversity, most Scots appear to *neither believe nor belong* or *believe and belong*, where identification with the Church of Scotland typically implies religious beliefs, but sometimes, a community or family connection.

Chapter 8 discusses *participation in rituals* as a third form of religious belonging. In both nations, levels of religious life cycle ceremonies are declining in favour of non-religious alternatives. Yet the Church of Sweden still holds a remarkably strong position as a provider of ceremonies, particularly funerals. Despite disestablishment of the state church, there has been a relatively low demand for alternatives, and instead, many Swedes ask for a "secular church wedding." Scots, on the other hand, are perceived to make more active choices among a wider range of alternatives and describe non-religious church ceremonies as either hypocritical or as a sign of respect to family wishes.

Chapter 9 concludes by restating the limited value of assuming a general, European, experience of religion. Europe may be further secularised than elsewhere in the world, and Protestant nations arguably share key similarities that set them apart from the rest of Europe. Scotland and Sweden are two historically Protestant, Northern European nations that appear to be secularising. While the commonality of secularisation is of crucial importance, this is arguably where the similarities end. The concept of *religious belonging* has fundamentally different meanings in these two contexts, highlighting the value of conducting comparative mixed methods research on religion. As such, there are unlimited possibilities to further study religious patterns and experiences in a comparative and contextualised fashion and, as a result, significantly contribute to, and extend, the debate on secularisation in the contemporary world.

Chapter 2: Contextual Background

2.1 Introduction

As a historical process, the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century still influences religious landscapes throughout Europe. Scholars largely agree that Europe, and in particular Protestant Europe is, at least on measures of participation, less religious than the rest of the world (e.g. Berger, 1999; Berger et al, 2008; Bruce, 1996, 2002a; Davie, 1994, 2002a; Inglehart, 2000; Warner, 2010). As a result of distinct religious histories, there is a clear division in measures of religious participation and identification between Catholic Southern Europe and Protestant Northern Europe (Davie, 2002a:6-7; Inglehart, 2000:91). In order to understand current trends of secularisation in Protestant Europe, it is therefore necessary to investigate the historical past. Consequently, the aim of the first part of this chapter is to describe implications of the Reformation, and the possible links between Protestantism and secularisation.

The second and third parts of the chapter present a detailed historical account of Scotland and Sweden as two separate contexts within Protestant Europe. The Reformation had a decisive impact on both countries. During this period, Scotland adopted a Calvinist state church known as the Church of Scotland and Sweden established a Lutheran equivalent, called the Church of Sweden. Since the Reformation, the two nations have developed two very different paths of secularisation. With the aim to shed light on these differences, this chapter further discerns and examines possible historical reasons for the diverse patterns and experiences of religion in Scotland and Sweden.

2.2 Protestantism and Secularisation

There are several theories as to why Protestant Europe is particularly secularised. Weber (1904/2009) asserts that secularisation is an unintended consequence of capitalism that emerged following the Reformation. He states that “People who are saturated by the capitalist spirit today tend to be indifferent if not

openly hostile to religion” (1904/2009:82). While the Catholic Church stressed a religious commitment through separation from the secular world, truly devoted Protestants could show their commitment to God with a strong work ethic and through taking pride in vocational achievements (Weber, 1904/2009:89-90).

The Calvinist branch of Protestantism adheres to the *doctrine of predestination*, the belief that salvation is predetermined with no means to ascertain who is chosen. This is a clear distinction between the Catholic Church and the Calvinist Church, whereas in the former, one can earn salvation through the sacraments (Weber, 1904/2009:107). As a result, Calvinists turned to the material world to find signs of their salvation. This is argued by Weber as he states, “Work without rest in a vocational calling was recommended as the best possible means to acquire the self-confidence that one belonged among the elect” (1904/2009:111). Luther did not subscribe to the idea of predestination as he believed every person regardless of social status could be saved. However, similar patterns in Lutheran societies may be explained by the fact that, as a way to *obtain* salvation, Luther emphasised the importance of a strong work ethic and a sense of pride in the specific circumstances that God had granted each person (Weber, 1904/2009:92-93, 105).

Highly influenced by Weber’s (1904/2009) work, Taylor (2007:77) agrees that Protestantism is a mechanism of secularisation. He states that the single most important reason for secularisation in the contemporary world is the *disenchantment* that Weber (1904/2009) portrayed as a far-reaching demystification of the world around us, particularly characterising Protestant societies. Reformed churches commit to the doctrine of *sola scriptura*, the notion that the Bible alone signifies divine authority. With the dismissal of sacramentalism and various forms of church magic, Taylor believes that the Protestant Reformation was an “engine of disenchantment” (2007:77). Destiny was, for the first time, in the hands of individuals as opposed to operating through, for example, magical objects uncontrollable by any one person. He explains that with the conviction that we reach salvation by our own doing, disenchantment was unavoidable (Taylor, 2007:772).

Both Calvinist and Lutheran theology subscribe to the doctrine of *sola scriptura*, effectively discarding papal authority. However, there are key differences

not the least that Calvinism made a more complete break with Catholicism (Matzke, 2010:148). Kersten explains that:

In Calvinism neither human merit nor the mediation of the church through the sacraments is considered to be a factor in receiving or losing grace; in Lutheranism, however, through Baptism, Holy Communion, and the proclamation of the Word the church becomes the channel through which grace is received (1970:24).

This may be a partial explanation for differences between Scotland and Sweden. In the latter, Lutheran theology has emphasised the importance of church traditions and rituals and these are still perceived to hold a key importance in Swedish society.⁸ Scotland's Reformation, on the other hand, imposed more radical restrictions on the celebration of rituals. This is exemplified by burials where "the dead are to be buried without singing or reading of prayers" (Balfour, 1911:31-36).

Several scholars of nationalism studies focus on the Reformation as a decisive historical event in relation to origins of national consciousness, as well as its effects on religion in general (e.g. Anderson, 2006; Hastings, 1999; Llobera, 1994; Marx, 2005). In line with Weber (1904/2009) and Taylor (2007), Anderson (2006) describes a reduction in sacredness and mysticism with the Reformation, but highlights a different reason. As a result of Protestantism emphasising scripture, literacy spread throughout Protestant Europe. This began with the introduction of vernacular language in churches, leading to a widespread demystification of religion. Through the translations of the Bible, clergy was able to share the Christian message to a large population, including the illiterate masses (Anderson, 2006:12-15; Hastings, 1997:192). Anderson (2006:11) consequently argues that, in this way, religion was brought to the people in a language they could understand, resulting in a transformation of the religious message from mysterious and otherworldly to comprehensible and ordinary. He further explains that this brought about a national consciousness.⁹

⁸ See section 8.2 (pp. 234-248).

⁹ In line with this, Scotland's very high levels of literacy after the Reformation were strongly linked to the demand for a national church that could bring together Scots and offer a sense of a common identity (e.g. Houston, 2002:18). Similarly, there is a close connection between the Church of Sweden, literacy, and a national consciousness, given that the Church of Sweden administered reading tests to all citizens through household examinations – see section 2.3.3 (pp. 31-32).

Building on Anderson's (2006) argument, Anthony Marx (2005) devotes attention to the importance of the state in relation to religion and nation at the time of the Reformation. To this day, the connection between the state and the church is arguably one of the most crucial aspects in understanding contemporary secularisation, particularly in Protestant Europe. Marx (2005:14) explains that leaders in the early modern times were aware that social cohesion is the main factor in achieving a stable level of power. Thus, social institutions, such as the church, are of utmost importance. It was not until the Reformation that state churches developed in their fullest form and the universal religion of Catholicism transformed and adapted into very diverse Protestant state churches. This is in line with Llobera's ideas that national consciousness was more vigorous in Protestant than Catholic nations since "once the unity of Christendom was broken, the oneness of society could only mean that the national church completely coincided with the national state" (1994:135-136). However, this notion is less applicable to Great Britain post 1707, when there were, at one point, four established churches with the Presbyterian Church of Scotland alongside three Anglican churches (Gilley and Sheils, 1994).

Llobera further explains how "national churches" became subject of the state, but that the state generally did not interfere with spiritual matters. In that way, churches became conveyors of more than religious values. In line with this, Marx contends that Protestantism was a focus of "secular allegiance" (2005:27), and Bruce (2004) presents claims of a link between Protestantism and the development of liberal democracy, suggesting a possible explanation not only for decline in religion, but also for the connection between a national culture and religion, even in the secular realm. Many sociologists of religion (e.g. Berger et al, 2008; Bruce, 1996; Casanova, 2001; Davie, 1994; Furseth and Repstad, 2006; Zuckerman, 2008) acknowledge this connection, which has, nonetheless, received considerably less attention than secularisation and religious decline.

Moreover, while state churches were introduced throughout most of Protestant Europe, a key distinction between Lutheranism and Calvinism is their ideas of how church relates to state. Lutheranism is generally more positive towards a close relationship with the state. Calvinism, in contrast, challenges secular authority and regards religious doctrine as "absolute and all-encompassing, ideally

controlling government and the entire society” (Matzke, 2010:148). This is largely different from the Anglican Church of England, which to a further extent shares similarities with the Church of Sweden with Episcopal governance and a close connection between the Church and royal power. The Church of Scotland, on the other hand, does not have a head of the church as they regard this to be God’s role (Church of Scotland, 2012). Furthermore, Lutheranism is, relative to Calvinism, particularly individualistic. Lutheranism emphasises that everyone can, despite diverse circumstances in life, reach salvation as a result of personal commitment to highly individualistic paths to God. As a result, Lutheranism devotes less attention to community and, generally, “opposes the effort of social reform of the church” (Kersten, 1970:25).

These differences between Lutheranism and Calvinism may serve as a reason for the close relationship between church and state in Sweden, and the historically higher level of independence of the Church of Scotland from the state.¹⁰ It may also shed some light on the notion that relative to the Church of Scotland, the Church of Sweden appears to have a much weaker association with community. While these theological differences are noteworthy, in order to understand contemporary trends, different historical trajectories are of key importance. Consequently, historical backgrounds on religion in these two nations are presented below with the aim to provide a detailed description of the contexts of study, as well as to highlight both similarities and differences between Scotland and Sweden.

2.3 Sweden

2.3.1 The Early Christian Period

Around the 9th century, Christian missionaries arrived in Sweden, primarily from the British Isles, Germany, and the Byzantine Empire. At the time, the religious landscape in Sweden was overwhelmingly influenced by Norse paganism. About 200 years later, an attempt was made to officially introduce Christianity in Sweden with the first baptism of a Swedish king, Olof Skötkonung in 1008 (Bäckström et al,

¹⁰ Highlighted by the 1707 shift of authority from Edinburgh to Westminster - see section 2.4 (p. 44).

2004:22; Zuckerman, 2008:122). Zuckerman describes that this, nevertheless, had limited influence on the population as a whole and argues that:

It is quite possible that for most of the time after Christianity was nominally introduced into Northern Europe, the actual beliefs of Christianity didn't seep too deeply into the hearts and minds of the majority of the men and women who lived in rural villages throughout the countryside (2008:124).

He further explains that there is no convincing evidence that Swedes in reality became Christian on a larger scale, perhaps because the conversion to Christianity was initiated by the elite and had little impact on the everyday life of most Swedes. At the same time, Bäckström et al (2004:22) argue that the foundation for the strong bond between church and state was formed during this early Catholic period. For example, in 1164, Uppsala was established as an archbishopric, and it has remained as such to this day, both throughout Sweden's Catholic and, after the Reformation, Lutheran history.

2.3.2 The Reformation in Sweden

The Reformation reached Sweden in the early 16th century when Martin Luther's student Olavus Petri brought Lutheranism to the country, which initially led to vivid debates between Catholic clergy and Lutheran proponents (Kraal, 2010:376). The Lutheran side eventually convinced King Gustav Vasa, and in 1540, he officially introduced the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Sweden (Alwall, 2000:147; Keller and Stewart, 1927:251; Martling, 2008:140; Zuckerman, 2008:124). Keller and Stewart (1927:251) describe the religious change that took place in Sweden in this period as friendly and far from a revolution. They state that "When Gustav Vasa introduced the Gospel into Sweden, no statues of saints had to be burned and no windows broken. This ancient church has kept her bishops and can claim apostolic succession by the same token as does the Anglican Church" (1927:251). They further describe this as a popular change as they argue that "People and Bishops adopted the new faith. The entire country became Evangelical. Gustavus Adolphus who saved the Protestant cause in the Thirty Years' War, remains the great hero of church and state" (Keller and Stewart, 1927:251). Presenting a more convincing case,

Zuckerman describes the introduction of Lutheranism as nothing but a political strategy initiated by Gustav Vasa alone as a means to achieve more power and wealth, and argues that:

This was clearly done – again, not by the popular will of the masses – but by those in power...And again, it seems that this major ‘religious’ transformation - The Protestant Reformation in Denmark and Sweden – was not so much theologically motivated, but rather, was undertaken because it was politically and economically advantageous (Zuckerman, 2008:124).

Bäckström et al (2004:23) note that the ties between church and state that had started to form in the Catholic period strengthened considerably with the Reformation and the break with Rome. Church doctrine was translated into Swedish for the first time and mass was conducted in Swedish, which led to a newfound interest in the church. Fearing a counter-Reformation, Uppsala Synod met in 1593 and officially decided that the Lutheran Church was to operate as the national Church of Sweden (Alwall, 2000:147; Bäckström et al, 2004:23; Martling, 2008:132).

2.3.3 The Church of Sweden in the 17th-19th Century

Bäckström et al (2004:23) describe Sweden after the Reformation as an agrarian society where people knew little of the world beyond their local setting. There was a strong focus on family, stability, and continuity and the Church served as an advocate for these values and functioned as an integral part of the community. Swedes had a close relationship with the Church, not least through life cycle rituals such as baptism, confirmation, weddings, and funerals, but also on a more frequent basis through the weekly service that in addition to being a religious sermon also functioned as a social event and a place to obtain and share information and news. In addition to its religious commitment, the Church also took on more secular roles in the parish. The local minister served as administrative head of the parish and all its functions, such as welfare, healthcare, and education. Bäckström et al further direct attention to the important role of the Church in people’s concept of the world around them.

Up until mid 19th century, church and society were connected in a way that may be hard to imagine today. Church and state, parish and municipality were one unit. A certain number of members of parliament had to be ministers and were therefore an integrated part of government and of the development of society (2004:23, my translation).

However, Zuckerman (2008:122) argues that despite people's close connections to the Church as well as the fact that most people were superstitious,¹¹ it did not necessarily mean that they adopted Christian beliefs. He cites Barton (1986) and states that, "well into the late 1700s, the Christianity of most Danes and Swedes was not theologically or biblically grounded, but simply part of a larger worldview" (Zuckerman, 2008:124).

Interestingly, it is not only the piousness of the people that has been questioned. Tomasson argues that the Enlightenment had a strong influence on the Church of Sweden and that "by the early 19th century, the Church had become rather rationalistic, even quite secular" (2002:76). In the mid 19th century, the appointment of bishops was done on a basis of scholarly achievements, and important figures in the community were regularly offered high ecclesiastical positions. Tomasson (2002:77) further highlights the diminishing orthodoxy of the Church as he argues that the Church showed a high level of tolerance for what may, by wider Christian standards, be viewed as sins, such as premarital sex.

At the same time, the church stood firm on its role as the only religious body for all citizens. In 1686 Church Act, legislation was implemented that prohibited other religions from operating in Sweden. Alwall explains this as he states that:

The Lutheran faith should be held by 'all within our kingdom and its subject countries,' which meant that a person's religious status was entirely linked to his citizenship. For Swedes, this meant that no other religious adherence than that to the Evangelical-Lutheran faith was made possible. The punishment for those who apostasized from the Lutheran faith or spread 'delusive doctrines' was exile...and [they] would be deprived of their rights as Swedish citizens" (2000:149).

Zuckerman (2008:125) explains that the government strictly enforced church matters on the people, not the least by punishing those who could not correctly recite

¹¹ Zuckerman (2008:122) and Martling (2008:167-171) describe that Swedes commonly believed in ghosts, witchcraft, and similar.

the Lutheran catechism at one of the mandatory household examinations¹² and for all Swedish citizens, participation in the Holy Communion was required at least once a year. The government was, in other words, convinced of the importance of cultural homogeneity in the creation and maintenance of a strong national state. In 1726, the government took further steps to secure the connection between a Swedish identity and Lutheranism by forbidding any religious assembly or worship outside the family unless an appointed clergyman was present. Those who resisted faced fines or imprisonment, but the law was not strictly implemented, and was finally revoked in 1858 (Tomasson, 2002:76).

The status of the Church of Sweden was heavily criticised by Christian revivalists as well as liberal and socialist movements that gained popularity in the mid 19th century. This led to a growing demand for religious freedom. As a result, further deregulation occurred in the 1860s, beginning with the first step towards religious freedom when citizens could, for the first time, legally exit the Church of Sweden, but only for specifically approved denominations (Alwall, 2000:150-151; Bruce, 2000:34; Gustafsson, 1990:3). Methodists, Baptists, Catholics, and Jews received approval at this stage, which nonetheless excluded most free churches that formed in this time period (Gustafsson, 1990:4). Second, ministers no longer served in the parliament simply as a result of their profession (Bäckström et al, 2004:24). Third, up until 1862, the parish functioned as the local jurisdiction in charge of religious as well as non-religious matters, but from this year, municipalities were introduced to govern secular institutions¹³ (Gustafsson, 1990:7; Martling, 2008:31). Fourth, the requirement of the mandatory Holy Communion was removed at this time (Bäckström et al, 2004:24).

Beginning in 1749, the Church kept detailed records of every Swedish citizen, a register that includes information on births, marriages, deaths, religious participation, as well as results of household examinations. According to data on a region of parishes in central Sweden, there was a substantial drop in the percentage of people who participated in the Holy Communion at least once a year after the

¹² The Church Act of 1686 stated that each Swedish citizen had to learn how to read and to understand Lutheran doctrine. This was enforced through household examinations conducted by the minister on all citizens in the Parish (Johansson, 2009:889).

¹³ Which at this time did not include schools (Gustafsson, 1994:7).

requirement was removed. Just fifteen years after deregulation, only 30 percent of the population still participated yearly, and by 1890, it was even lower, at around 5 percent (Bäckström et al, 2004:25). Interestingly, this suggests that a majority of Swedes only participated in the Holy Communion at that time because it was compulsory. In line with Zuckerman's (2008) ideas, this brings into question the extent to which Swedes, even 150 years ago, were committed Christians.¹⁴ Similarly, Martling (2008:260) suggests that particularly in central Sweden, church attendance and participation in the Holy Communion had, at the turn of the century, practically vanished.

2.3.4 Industrialisation and Social Change

Bäckström et al (2004:25) explain declining participation at the end of the 19th century as the result of a changing social structure.¹⁵ They suggest that as Sweden began to industrialise, people started associating Christian traditions with the old agrarian lifestyle. Martling (2008:262) describes this time period as an identity crisis of the Church. Those moving to urban areas for new opportunities largely abandoned their old way of life, which included their relationship with the Church. While there was indeed a steep decline in participation in the Holy Communion and household examinations in both rural and urban areas, farming communities held on to these traditions considerably longer (Bäckström et al, 2004:25).

Industrial society was characterised by a strong focus on rationality and a division of labour, including a specialisation of various social institutions. The diverse roles of the church (such as in education and healthcare) shifted. This conforms to Berger's notion of secularisation as "evacuation by the Christian churches of areas previously under their control or influence" (1967:107). In line with this, Alwall argues that, "the end of the nineteenth century was a time of rapid secularisation in Sweden, accelerating considerably with growing industrialization and urbanization" (2000:151). With industrialisation and modernisation, the

¹⁴ In particular given that they were only asked to participate in the Holy Communion *yearly*, and surely, even a somewhat devoted Christian should be able to accomplish that simply by attending on a few occasions throughout the year.

¹⁵ Similar negative trends emerged among men and women as well as within almost all age groups (Bäckström et al, 2004:25).

community or family based social structure largely evaporated, not just in Sweden, but also on a broader scale (e.g. Esping Andersen, 1990:13).¹⁶ As a result, the Swedish welfare model *folkhemmet*¹⁷ formed out of the need for a new safety net (Bäckström et al, 2004:27). At this time, liberal and socialist movements and social democratic ideology, in particular, gained ground (Alwall, 2000:150; Martling, 2008:251). Up until the beginning of the 20th century, the church intensely defended itself against these movements and upheld its commitment to the pre-industrial order. This made Social Democrats, above others, openly hostile towards religion. Protestant churches throughout Europe generally adapted well to modernisation. However, similar to what happened with the Catholic Church in France (Bellah, 1968:41), Tomasson argues that the Church's initial unwillingness to adjust to the structural changes had a secularising effect, as he states, "That the church committed itself so completely to the values of the old order during the early period of modernization is the crucial factor in the development of the far-reaching secularization that occurred in the industrial working class and the educated middle class in Sweden" (2002:79).

2.3.5 The Church and the Welfare State

A social democratic government was formed in 1920, 24 years after the first Social Democrat entered the parliament, and although it faced opposition from the political right, they steadily gained popularity (Socialdemokraterna, 2013). During the second decade of the 20th century, an attempt was made to resolve the conflicts with the Church of Sweden,¹⁸ and gradually, a strong relationship grew between the Social Democrats and the Church of Sweden (Tomasson, 2002:79). It was seen as a mutually beneficial relationship in that the government found that the Church could serve as a key component in the construction of the Swedish welfare model, *folkhemmet*, and the Church could simultaneously solidify its position as the nation's official religious denomination (Bäckström, 2004:29). This may be a reason for why

¹⁶ For Scotland, see section 2.4.7 (pp. 48-51).

¹⁷ *Folkhemmet* (the people's home) is based on the idea that the Swedish society functions as a large family where everyone is taken care of.

¹⁸ Bishop Nathan Söderblom convinced the church that it needed to be politically independent to remain successful (Tomasson, 2002:79).

dissatisfaction¹⁹ with the church-state relationship (Alwall, 2000:151) did not result in disestablishment until a century later. Nonetheless, this inevitably meant that the Church was forced to compromise on its principles in order to best serve the need of the welfare state.

Along with this, Bäckström et al (2004:29) describe how the organisational structure of the Church evolved hand in hand with the needs of the growing welfare state. They highlight the interwar period as the most crucial stage in the development of Sweden as a welfare society, which led to crucial changes for the Church. In 1929, the theological model of the *folk church* was devised (Martling, 2008:275; Thidevall, 2000:300) which involved the requirement of the Church to serve the entire nation and all citizens in line with other public benefits available in the developing welfare state. However, instead of strengthening the organisational structure of the Church, these reforms gave the state gradually increasing power over it. The Church was, in turn, provided with financial security (Bäckström, 2004:30). Martling (2008:289) describes that this was the beginning of a long period of a complete politicisation of church power. For example, in the church motion of 1929, it was suggested by church leaders that people should be free to leave the church, but the parliament disagreed and stopped this plan for the reason that having people leave the Church of Sweden would undermine the foundations of *folkhemmet* and risk fragmentation of the Swedish community (Thidevall, 2000:301).

The social democratic government was more concerned with the formation of a church that fit neatly into their welfare state model rather than the Church's theological foundations. This went on for most of the 20th century and met little resistance from the Church, not only because of the funding it received, but also because the government assigned clergy at the bishop level as well as in other high positions and was perhaps more concerned with appointing "liberal, progressive, non-fundamentalist, or 'modern-thinking' men and women" (Zuckerman, 2008:119) and less with their religious convictions. Although a state *church* was of key importance to the Social Democrats, Zuckerman (2008) further highlights the fact that they were generally opposed to *religion* as a key reason for why Sweden is so secularised. He states that:

¹⁹ Around the turn of the century, discontent spread and motions were presented in the parliament for changes to the law (Alwall, 2000:151).

More than any other political party, the Social Democrats have dominated the parliaments of Denmark and Sweden, with their nearly hegemonic strength only diminishing in recent years. The Social Democrats have always been relatively anti-religious and anti-clerical and have sought at times to weaken or dilute religion's influence throughout society (Zuckerman, 2008:119).

However, given the high level of social democratic involvement in the Church, *anti-religious* is a better description of the party than *anti-clerical*. Social Democrats often sought administrative positions within the Church, but not necessarily for any *religious* reasons. In other words, they effectively separated the Church from *religion* and sought to reinforce the former while not valuing the latter.

In the first half of the 20th century, the social democratic government initiated important reforms that meant diminishing room for Christianity in the Swedish educational curriculum (Tomasson, 2002; Zuckerman, 2008). Tomasson (2002:71) explains that in 1919, the parliament ended the teaching of the catechism in elementary schools, which had been common practice for around 400 years. At the same time, less time was allocated to teachings of Christianity, and such teaching was to focus on ethics above theology, which meant a first step towards a secular curriculum.

The 1950s saw a number of important religious reforms. First, the social democratic government continued its mission of a secular education system and from 1950, Christianity could no longer be taught in schools in an evangelical style. Instead, students were taught *about* Christianity, as well as other religious philosophies,²⁰ specifically through a social-scientific approach (Tomasson, 2002:71; Zuckerman, 2008:119-120).²¹ Second, 1951 marks the year of official freedom of religion in Sweden, when it was, for the first time possible for a citizen to formally exit the Church of Sweden for *no* religious denomination.²² This occurred later in Sweden than in the other Nordic nations (Alwall, 2000:152; Bäckström et al, 2004:30; Bruce, 2000; Gustafsson, 1990:4; Martling, 2008:302). Gustafsson (1990:4)

²⁰ Bruce argues that this is an important agent of secularisation as he states, "Greatest damage to religion has been caused, not by competing secular ideas, but by the general relativism that supposes that all ideologies are equally true (and hence equally false)" (2002a:117).

²¹ That said, the law explicitly favoured teachings about Lutheranism (Tomasson, 2002:71), likely for historical reasons, as well as because it was still the official national religion.

²² Whereas between 1860s and 1951, Swedes could only exit the church for another *approved* religious denomination. See section 2.3.3 (p. 31).

explains that this had little immediate impact as only 0.3 percent of members left the church during the first two years. Third, in 1958, the Church officially lost control over religious education in secondary schools (Martling, 2008:312; Tomasson, 2002:71). As a result of increasing secularisation and immigration, the church-state investigations began that same year, with the purpose of re-evaluating the relationship between the Church and the state. It nonetheless did not result in a final proposition until 1994 (Alwall, 2000:166; Bäckström et al, 2004:31; Gustafsson, 1990:9; Martling, 2008:303).

2.3.6 The Church of Sweden 1960-2000

Alwall (2000:166) describes the period following the changes of the 1950s as characterised by increasing demands for disestablishment of the State Church, mainly as a result of immigration and further secularisation. Bruce (2000:34) gives attention to emerging secularisation in Sweden. Citing Gustafsson (1978), he states that weekly attendance at mass had fallen from 17 percent of the population in the beginning of the century to 2.7 percent in 1965. In 1968, the committee in charge of the church-state investigations presented a proposal regarding the continuing role of the Church. The proposal had four alternatives ranging from maintaining the state church to completely removing all ties between the state and the Church of Sweden including the Church's right of taxation. The committee emphasised the importance of religious liberty and to treat all religious denominations equally. At the time, this was a very controversial proposal and the parliament decided not to proceed (Alwall, 2000:166-167; Martling, 2008:304; Statens Offentliga Utredningar, 1964:13; Statens Offentliga Utredningar, 1968:11).

During the 1970s, political parties started to take an interest in the local parish elections. Several parties, if not all, were often represented on the ballots (Gustafsson, 1990:9). At the same time, church membership was slowly but steadily decreasing. In 1970s and 1980s, between 0.1 and 0.15 percent of members of the Church of Sweden actively exited the Church yearly (Gustafsson, 1990:4). Given increasing immigration as well as a new interest from the Church to examine its position in relation to the state, in 1978, new but less radical proposals were put

forward, this time focusing on membership through baptism rather than simply membership through birth (given that both parents had not left the Church) (Statens Offentliga Utredningar, 1978:1). Most clergy as well as bishops were in favour of the new proposition as membership would require an active choice (at least by the parents) and possibly result in a higher level of commitment among members. However, in addition to clergy, the Synod also consisted of elected representatives from the local parishes. This group largely disagreed with the proposed changes and saw it as “a threat to the traditional openness of the Swedish Folk Church” (Gustafsson, 1990:11). As a result, the Synod of the Church of Sweden rejected the proposal (Alwall, 2000:167). However, it is important to note that the resistance towards disestablishment was not a result of a highly flourishing church culture. Gustafsson (1990:6) describes that in 1981, half of Swedish church members attended a service less than once a year and as few as 9 percent attended at least every other month.

In 1982, the government encouraged further democratisation of the church organisation and formed the General Assembly of the Church of Sweden, which was made up of 251 elected representatives without seats assigned specifically for clergy or bishops (Gustafsson, 1990:11). This, in turn, meant that church governance shifted further and further away from clergy and bishops and became increasingly political. This meant that virtually all decision making power was in the hands of the political parties in that “the price that the Church of Sweden has had to pay for its continued privileged position has been to succumb to the increased influence of the political parties both at the local and at the national levels of Church life” (Gustafsson, 1990:12-13). Along with this, the social democratic government, far from theologically motivated, continued to view the Church as a basic human need that ought to be supported in line with the welfare state model. However, also other political parties were in favour of maintenance of the State Church, and it was only the Liberal Party and parts of the Conservatives who supported disestablishment (Gustafsson, 1990:13).

As a result of an emerging post-industrial society with a stronger focus on the service sector and the individual, the 1990s were characterised by deregulation of several state monopolies in particular within communication and infrastructure

(Bäckström et al, 2004:31-33). Around this time, the church-state investigations that had begun in the 1950s led to a series of changes within the Church of Sweden. Bäckström et al (2004:33) believe that the church reforms came as a result of these larger structural changes in society. In 1991, the church relinquished the civil registration of births, deaths, marriages, personal identity numbers, addresses, citizenship, and data on spouse, children, and parents to the tax authorities, and in 1996, the earlier proposal of church membership through baptism as opposed to birth was accepted (Alwall, 2000:168-169; Bäckström et al, 2004:40). In 1994, the final report in the church-state investigations was submitted in which a proposed separation between church and state was mainly motivated by a wish for the state to remain neutral in relation to various religious denominations (Martling, 2008:307; SOU 1994:42). In spite of this, in particular free churches argued that this proposition did not constitute a complete separation and that the Church of Sweden would still be privileged in the eyes of the state (Alwall, 2000:168).

2.3.7 Disestablishment of the State Church

The first of January 2000 marks the date when church and state were officially separated in most matters (Alwall, 2000:168; Bäckström et al, 2004:40; Martling, 2008:307; Tomasson, 2002:79). The church tax previously collected by the Church of Sweden from all citizens now serves as a membership fee that is still collected as part of the income tax on all members (Bäckström et al, 2004:41). All individuals who were already part of the Church before the disestablishment are still members, provided they have not actively made the decision to leave. The government historically appointed all bishops, but they were now, for the first time, democratically elected by church members. Just as before the disestablishment, church elections continue to be characterised by political party interests (Tomasson, 2002:80). A further example of how church matters are becoming more and more political, and arguably secular, is illustrated by the fact that just prior to the disestablishment, the General Assembly was given the right to decide on theological matters, which was previously handled by the bishops. In relation to this change, Tomasson quotes Swedish journalist Zaremba (1999) who states, “The new Swedish

church is a unique contribution to the history of religion: the world's first religious association where bishops are denied to vote in matters of faith, and where the meaning of Christianity is established by the political parties" (Tomasson, 2002:80).

While the Church of Sweden no longer serves as a formal state church, it nevertheless plays a role as a national church. Specific legislation governs the organisation's structure, leaving an important tie to the state that other religious organisations operating in Sweden do not have. This includes the Church's undertaking in providing funeral services for all citizens, the requirement to remain a democratic organisation, its commitment to serve the entire nation, serving as the official and mandatory religion of the monarch, and to be open for all to take part in (Alwall, 2000:169; Bäckström et al, 2004:41). Because of this, Pettersson (2011) argues that a true separation has, in fact, not yet taken place.

Although the Church of Sweden is, by far, the largest and most influential religious organisation in Sweden, there are a number of smaller Protestant free churches and, as a result of recent immigration from Iraq, Iran, Somalia, Turkey, Bosnia-Herzegovina, former Yugoslavia, and Poland, a significant number of Muslims and Catholics (Alwall, 2000; Bäckström et al, 2004:52; Statistics Sweden, 2012). In spite of this, Sweden still experiences a relatively low degree of religious pluralism.²³ However, membership rates within the Church of Sweden have decreased slowly but steadily since the beginning of the 1970s, going from above 95 percent to just under 70 percent in 2011 (Svenska Kyrkan, 2013).²⁴ Nevertheless, the considerable drop after the disestablishment in 2000 is unlikely to be explained by other denominations recruiting previous members of the Church of Sweden as the eight largest Christian denominations²⁵ aside from the Church of Sweden have also seen a significant decline between 1975 and 2001 (Bäckström et al, 2004:51).

In spite of the declining membership rates, the Church of Sweden is relatively well off financially compared to free church organisations operating in Sweden (Bäckström 2004:50). Membership fees are, on average, one percent of each

²³ For more on pluralism, see section 3.5.2 (pp. 72-74).

²⁴ See section 7.2.1 (pp. 196-200).

²⁵ The Pentecostal Church, the Missionary Church, the Evangelical Free Church, the Baptist Church, the Salvation Army, the Alliance Church, the Methodist Church, and the Adventist Church (Bäckström et al, 2004:51).

member's income²⁶ (Svenska Kyrkan, 2013). The Church of Sweden also receives around 218 million Swedish Kronor²⁷ yearly in gifts and charities. The Church has 22 000 employees, and a large number of volunteers, such as choir leaders and leaders of children's groups. There are over 100 000 choir participants within the Church of Sweden, and 55 000 members are active in parish sewing groups. Through selling textiles and other crafts for the benefit of the Church, these groups make around 48 million Swedish Kronor yearly.²⁸ Every year, approximately 250 000 children participate in one of the church groups, though the Sunday schools that were popular in the past are largely disappearing (Bäckström et al, 2004:50).

In addition to falling membership, Sweden is characterised by continuously declining levels of church attendance²⁹ (Tomasson, 2002:62). Nevertheless, Bäckström et al (2004:44-45) explain that a majority of Swedes are members and participate in ceremonies in the Church whether or not they believe in God or attend regularly.³⁰ Tomasson (2002:62) argues that Sweden is the most secular nation in the world with low levels of belief as well as attendance and that this is displayed as indifference towards religion, and not atheism.³¹ In line with Bäckström et al (2004), he explains that the church is seen as an important part of Swedish culture (Tomasson, 2002:64), and Furseth and Repstad (2006:127) describe how many non-religious Swedes remain members of the Church as it offers a sense of security and a common identity.

As a result of the historical processes described throughout this chapter it may be argued that the long history of the often internally secularising state church and, perhaps most importantly, the over 1000 year close connection to the state are key elements in explaining the current religious landscape in Sweden. Unsurprisingly, while similarities exist, historical events shaping social structure as well as church history are largely different in the case of Scotland. This is consequently the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

²⁶ Excluding the burial fee of 0.25 percent for all citizens (Svenska Kyrkan, 2013).

²⁷ Approximately £20.5 million.

²⁸ Approximately £4.5 million.

²⁹ For more on levels of attendance, see Chapter 6 (pp. 159-192).

³⁰ See chapters 7 (pp. 193-232) and 8 (pp. 233-262).

³¹ See discussion of social significance of religion and atheism in section 3.4.3 (pp. 70-71). For more on measures of belief, see Chapter 5 (pp. 123-157).

2.4 Scotland

2.4.1 Religion in Scotland Pre-Reformation

Christianity reached Britain through Roman presence in the region. Pagan states that when the Romans came to Britain, “the old gods had to give way first to the Roman gods, and then to Christianity” (1988:10).³² A precise time period for the beginning of Christianity in Britain is difficult to pinpoint. Pagan (1988:12) explains that Christian settlements were found in Scotland dating from as early as the 4th century C.E., Lynch (1994:100) and Donaldson (1960:7) suggest that Christianity first arrived to Scotland with Ninian in the 5th century, and Bonner (1994:24) dates the emergence of Christianity in Britain to the end of the 6th century. However, the conversion to Christianity from the Celtic religions was a slow and gradual process (Bonner, 1994:24; Brown, 2001:1), and it was not until the 12th century that the Celtic Church was completely overtaken by Roman Catholicism (Balfour, 1911:1).

Donaldson (1960:20) explains that the introduction of parish churches in the 12th century had a profound and long-lasting impact on the religious landscape in Scotland. With this organisational change, the church enhanced its place in the community. Hill (1994:45) describes churches in the early Christian period³³ as closely involved in people’s lives through christenings, weddings, funerals, and mass. The church functioned as the place where the community congregated and it also served to maintain morals and justice. Furthermore, the church was in charge of important societal functions even before the formal introduction of state churches (Hill, 1994:45). Moreover, Donaldson (1960:9) asserts that the church played an important role in the shaping of the Scottish nation in the early 11th century as the church, in fact, preceded the formation of the nation. This may serve as one reason for the emerging bond between the state and the church in Scotland. Lynch further states that, “The papacy and the Scottish Crown had long enjoyed a special relationship, and the emergence of a Scottish Church had owed as much to successive Kings of Scots as they had relied upon it to underpin their own authority” (1994:99).

³² Nevertheless, the Romans had a relatively weak impact on Scotland, symbolised by Hadrian’s Wall in Northern England and Antonine Wall in Scotland built as defence from invaders (Pagan, 1988:10).

³³ Beginning in the early 11th century (Hill, 1994:45).

2.4.2 The Reformation in Scotland

Keller and Stewart (1927:241) explain that the Reformation reached Scotland half way through the 16th century challenging the, what they call, corrupt Roman Church. Lynch, on the other hand, is more cautious in judging the condition of the church at this time and describes it as “a patchwork of endemic faults and new initiatives” (1994:123). The early 16th century was characterised by a growing interest in Luther’s writings. Scotland’s Parliament, far from happy with the challenge to the established religion, made a legislative effort to prohibit these writings. However, restricting religious freedom may indeed have had an opposite effect by empowering those who demanded reform (Cameron, 1994:131; Donaldson, 1960:50; Pagan, 1988:74). In spite of opposition from some elites, the Reformation in Scotland was reasonably nonviolent (Brown 1997:14), and to some extent welcomed among the people (Keller and Stewart, 1927:241). Cameron (1994:132), however, argues that the Reformers faced intense persecution, but that it was, nonetheless, a short-lived struggle.

Led by John Knox, the Reformed Church was established in 1560 when the first General Assembly organised in Edinburgh (Balfour, 1911:21; Donaldson, 1960:53; Keller and Stewart, 1927:241; Pagan, 1988:92). That same year, the Parliament endorsed the faith of the Reformed Church and prohibited the mass (Balfour, 1911:22; Cameron, 1994:134; Donaldson, 1960:549;). The Reformation successfully overtook the Catholic Church throughout Scotland³⁴ (Brown, 1997:14). Donaldson (1960:61) explains that from this point on, the connection between the nation and the church strengthened further to the point where they were indeed inseparable. However, in terms of the authority over the Reformed Church, Scotland was distinctly different from England and the Lutheran nations. In these nations, the power over the church was in the hands of the crown, solidifying an official bond between church and state. This did not happen in Scotland due to the fact that Mary Queen of Scots could not serve as the Supreme Governor of the Church as she was Catholic. Donaldson states that, instead, “the substitute for the royal supremacy,

³⁴ Except from a few communities in the north-eastern and far-western parts of the nation (Brown, 1997:14).

which the Scots could not have, was found in a general assembly consisting of representatives of the same three estates of the realm which at the time formed a Scottish parliament – barons, burgesses and clergy” (1960:61).³⁵

2.4.3 The Struggle for Presbyterianism

The Reformed Church was, at the time of the Reformation, Calvinistic in its theology, but not yet Presbyterian in its organisation³⁶ (Donaldson, 1960:63). After the Reformation was complete, an intense struggle followed between Presbyterians and Episcopalians, but it is important to note that this struggle was not over doctrine, but simply over the organisational structure of the church (Donaldson, 1960:80). John Knox criticised episcopacy as simply another version of Catholicism³⁷ (Balfour, 1911:61; Brown 1997:14;). In relation to this, Brown states that, “rule by bishops under episcopacy was merely ‘popery’ in another guise. Episcopacy was seen as the religion of the royalty and aristocracy and but a short step from Catholicism” (1997:15). In 1578, the General Assembly, in essence, approved Presbyterianism by rejecting the divinity of bishops as well as royal power over the church. Instead, the Church was to be governed by kirk sessions, presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly, all consisting of ministers and elders. However, this was met with opposition from the government, who saw independence of the Church as a threat to their position (Cameron, 1994:137; Donaldson, 1960:72-73; Pagan, 1988:119). As a result, the government declared royal supremacy over the Church and ruled to retain the role of the bishops in the Church’s organisational structure (Balfour, 1911:69; Donaldson, 1960:73). That controlling the Church, and thus the divine, was key to maintain power was well understood by King James I of England and VI of Scotland. Consequently, he ordered the General Assembly to acknowledge royal authority as well as appointed bishops (Cameron, 1994:138).

³⁵ The structure of the General Assembly as representative of all parts of the nation is also explained in Cameron (1994:135-136).

³⁶ Presbyterianism has a democratic structure of kirk sessions for each parish made up of ministers and elders. Some of these ministers and elders, in turn, represent the parish in the presbytery, which then sends representatives to the General Assembly (Brown, 1997:18).

³⁷ Because of their adherence to bishops and royal power (Brown, 1997:14-15).

The battle between the Episcopalians and the Presbyterians continued over the 17th century (Brown, 1997:14; Keller and Stewart, 1927:242). Donaldson states:

The whole period of the controversy between the Presbyterian and Episcopalian parties in the Church of Scotland from 1575 to 1690, has the appearance of alternating phases of one system of church order and the other – episcopacy in 1584, presbytery in 1592, episcopacy in 1610, presbytery in 1638, episcopacy in 1661 and presbytery in 1690...It was all a little like parliamentary government, in which two parties alternately achieve power (1960:75).

Finally in 1690, a settlement was reached in which Presbyterianism was reinstated on a more permanent basis, which meant abolishing the authority of bishops. However, this did not come without a price. The Kirk (The Church of Scotland) was not recognised as independent from the state, and simultaneously, no longer had representation in Parliament. In other words, the Presbyterian Church ultimately responded to Parliament, which oversaw the Church as a secular body and which did not claim any divine rights (Balfour, 1911:111; Donaldson, 1960:91-92; Keller and Stewart, 1927:242; Pagan 1988:74). Along with this, Donaldson (1960) states:

The establishment of Presbyterianism was further tied to the statute of law in 1707 when parliaments of England and Scotland were united, for it was then declared to be “fundamental and essential” condition of the union that the existing government of the Church of Scotland should be maintained (1960:92).

The fact that Scotland ceased to be a sovereign state in 1707 meant that the Kirk had a very different position as a state church than the Church of Sweden in the same time period, illustrated by the fact that the Church of Scotland had to defend and protect religious unity in Scotland with opposition from the British state. In 1712, the newly established British parliament went against the Kirk’s wishes to reject Episcopalians within the law and, while they faced unequal terms, other faiths were now allowed to operate alongside the Established Church (Brown, 1997:188; Donaldson, 1960:94; Pagan, 1988:153).³⁸

³⁸ This essentially meant religious diversity in Scotland as early as five years after the union.

2.4.4 Divisions within the Presbyterian Church

Brown (1997:16) states that not only did the Presbyterian National Church experience turmoil and opposition from Episcopalians, but also from within. Donaldson (1960:94) argues that this came as a result of the decision to allow different religious denominations to operate in Scotland. The 18th century was characterised by increasing dissatisfaction with the Established Church. However, the cause of the discontent was neither the Church's administration nor its fundamental doctrine (Balfour, 1911:18), but rather with the state's control as well as liberal tendencies within the Church (Brown, 1997:17; Donaldson, 1960:96). This eventually resulted in parts of the clergy and the adherents breaking away from the Established Church. In 1733, the first dissenting church was created, and many more followed (Brown, 1997:19; Keller and Stewart, 1927:242).

Brown (1997:17) explains that towards the end of the 18th century, the demand for a separation of church and state was widespread. Eventually, the bitter conflict led to the Disruption of 1843, where the Free Church of Scotland broke from the Kirk and attracted almost forty percent of both clergy and adherents. The Free Church of Scotland set out to replicate every aspect of the Kirk, including its theology, and its mission to serve the whole nation by a presence in each parish.³⁹ This meant that aside from their position in relation to the state, little differentiated the two churches (Brown, 1993:12, 1997:21; Bruce and Glendinning, 2010:108; Donaldson, 1960:98; Keller and Stewart, 1927:242; Robbins, 1994:366; Smout, 1986:187). Donaldson (1960:98-99) explains that at this time, the seceding churches together outnumbered the Established Church. He further argues that it was perhaps a fundamental weakness in Presbyterianism that caused this fragmentation since it was fairly easy for a dissatisfied minister to start a new church within his own Presbytery. Moreover, Brown (1997:22) asserts that the Established Church lost adherents at a very steep rate, which can be illustrated by the fact that at the end of the 19th century, the Kirk only attracted 15 percent of the population. It is important to note that the remainder of the population did not exclusively belong to a dissenting

³⁹ As a result, once the two churches unified in 1900, there was an oversupply of churches throughout the nation.

Presbyterian church, but that, as explained below, other denominations were also gaining momentum in this time period.

2.4.5 Increasing Religious Diversity

Since the Toleration Act of 1712, the Episcopal Church slowly but steadily grew, predominantly in southern Scotland (Donaldson 1960:104). By the end of the 18th century, they were increasingly influential in Scotland, but just like the Established Church, they were plagued with schisms particularly in relation to the association with English migrants as well as the rich and the middle class (Brown, 1997:34; Donaldson, 1960:104; Strong, 2002). In the early 18th century, the Catholic Church only had minor presence in Scotland, estimated at around 17 000 adherents and corresponding to around one percent of the population (Brown, 1997:31). However, the situation changed drastically in the 19th century when the Catholics saw a twentyfold increase. This came, almost entirely, as a result of increasing immigration from Ireland (Brown, 1997:31-32; Donaldson, 1960:108; Pagan, 1988:178). Bruce and Glendinning (2010:109) state that, at this time, Catholics in Glasgow participated more actively in a church than they had prior to leaving Ireland as it was an important way to establish social networks. This ultimately serves as a historical foundation for the role of Scottish churches as a cultural or ethnic defence.⁴⁰

Interestingly, while the Act of 1712 opened up for religious pluralism, it was arguably the social structural changes of the 18th and 19th century that led to the enormous diversification of religion in Scotland. This time period was characterised by increasing mobility. In line with this, Brown states that:

On the threshold of the agricultural and industrial revolutions, Scotland was not homogeneous in religion...It was the economic and social changes of the 18th and 19th century which were to introduce a belated but very rapid and extensive process of pluralism in religion" (1997:17).

As individuals migrated and settled down in new areas, it was not surprising that communities were formed centred around common religious backgrounds. This was

⁴⁰ See section 3.8.1 (pp. 85-87).

a devastating blow to the Established Church, which had enough to struggle against with Presbyterian dissent. Brown states that the 18th century saw a further steep decline within the Kirk, and explains that, “In the space of just over a hundred years the Church of Scotland had shifted from a position of near monopoly in religion to that of one denomination amongst several” (1997:22).

2.4.6 Unification of Scottish Presbyterianism

During the second half of the 19th century, a growing desire for unification emerged among the dissenting churches (Pagan, 1988:156). As stated above, the Presbyterian churches did not clash on doctrine or internal organisation, but mainly in relation to the issue of independence from the state. In line with this, Balfour states that, “the Free Churchmen had still cherished the principle of a National Church, and would gladly have returned to alliance with the State on the acceptance of their own terms as to spiritual independence” (1911:149-150). He further states that they were not optimistic and rather than trying to reach an agreement with the Established Church, the dissenting churches sought allegiance with one another. In 1847, the United Presbyterian Church was formed as a coalition of dissenting Presbyterian churches (Balfour, 1911:150; Brown, 1993:16, 1997:22; Pagan, 1988:156; Robbins, 1994:367; Stewart and Keller, 1927:242). Up until 1900, there were three larger Presbyterian churches in Scotland; the Free Church, the Church of Scotland, and the United Presbyterian Church. In the late 19th century, the Free Church gradually distanced itself from its mission to serve as an established church in favour of a voluntary principle. This attracted further negotiations for a reunion in particular with the United Presbyterian Church, and in 1900, they merged as the United Free Church⁴¹ (Balfour, 1911:153; Brown, 1997:27; Pagan, 1988:156-157; Smout, 1986:189; Stewart and Keller, 1927:242).

The beginning of the 20th century saw an increasing willingness to bring the Presbyterian churches together. The process of breaking the bond to the state began in 1904 and the Church of Scotland was eventually disestablished as a state church in the 1920s following the Act of 1921, where the parliament recognised spiritual

⁴¹ 90 % of the United Presbyterian kirk sessions and 95% of the Free Church presbyteries agreed to union (Brown, 1997:27). Some dissenters have stayed out to this day (Pagan, 1988:157).

independence of the Church, and the Act of 1925, in which ownership of church property was shifted from the state to church trustees (Brown, 1997:145). Brown (1997:28) states that from the time it was formed until the disestablishment of the state church, the United Free Church discussed a reunion with the Kirk. In 1927, Keller and Stewart wrote that “the union of the United Free Church and the Church of Scotland is only a matter of months” (1927:245). Finally, in 1929, the Kirk merged with a majority of the dissenting Presbyterian churches and was thereafter known as the “National” Church of Scotland (Brown, 1997:22, 1993:17; Cheyne, 1983:186; Pagan, 1988:157; Smout, 1986:189).

2.4.7 Religion in Scotland at a Time of Social Change

In 1851, a church attendance census⁴² revealed a number of important characteristics about the state of the Established Church and its competitors, as well as the level of commitment of the people. The accuracy of the census has been debated, but it is nevertheless the key source of information on religious activity at this time. Brown (1997:60) argues that church attendance was high at this time and that it rose during the second half of the century. He presents figures suggesting that Presbyterian free churches and non-Presbyterian churches made up 68 percent of all churchgoers in the nation, while the Church of Scotland only constituted 32 percent. Interestingly, in Edinburgh, the Kirk attracted only 16 percent of churchgoers (1997:45). Brown further mentions that a century earlier, the Kirk was attended by approximately 90 percent of Scottish churchgoers (1997:46). Largely a function of the Disruption, this sharp decline meant that the Established Church only represented a minority of the Scottish people in an increasingly religiously diverse Scottish society.

However, Brown (1997:47) further argues that membership and attendance in the Established Church actually increased steadily in the second half of the 19th century. Additionally, he describes the turn of the century as the peak in church activity with levels that have not since been measured in Scotland (1997:62). Smout (1986:184) asserts that at the beginning of the 20th century, religion had become less

⁴² This was also repeated in 1882 and 1890 (Smout, 1986:198).

and less important to the Scottish people, characterised by an increasing indifference. In line with this, Cheyne (1983:177) states that around year 1900, more than a third of the population had no connection to a church.

Smout (1986:198) suggests that church attendance was more frequent in the Highlands and other rural areas. He states that rural Scots still cherished the religious activities that the church organised, but that urban areas as well as areas with a high concentration of migrant labour, saw a sharp decline in religious participation. Brown (1993:29; 1997:60) strongly disagrees with this observations and, in fact, argues that church attendance was much higher in the cities, and thus, that the case of Scotland is a clear example of how urbanisation does not cause religious decline. In fact, he states that, “Scotland, like both England and Wales and the United States, exhibited strong growth in church attendance per capita from 1840 to 1905 – the very era of rapid urbanisation and industrialisation” (1993:30).⁴³ However, this was likely due to Catholic immigration that peaked in this time period (Brown, 1997:32).

Brown further directs attention to the effect of migration, both in terms of urbanisation and foreign immigration, on social fragmentation. As churches were places to go to for “jobs, accommodation, friends, leisure, charity, and culture” (1993:131), they became representations of social groups and communities external to the religious realm.⁴⁴ Church affiliation similarly became a marker of social class. In middle class areas, the Church served as a popular organiser of various leisure activities for adults as well as children. In time, it began devoting more time to community building⁴⁵ and less to evangelicalism and inclusion of the working class (Brown, 1997:130-131).

As in Sweden,⁴⁶ the end of the 19th century and the first two decades of the 20th century saw an increasing attention to social inequality in Scotland. The church remained responsive in that a social theology was devised and a Christian-socialist movement was instated (Brown, 1997:133-135). Brown states that doing this was wise as, “to have directly opposed labour and adopted a coherently reactionary political stance would have intensified – or, as in Germany, completed – the

⁴³ For more on participation, see Chapter 6 (pp. 159-192).

⁴⁴ This is arguably the origin of cultural defence of religion in Scotland - see section 3.8.1 (pp. 85-87).

⁴⁵ Increasingly consisting of secular activities (Brown, 1997:131).

⁴⁶ See section 2.3.4 (pp. 32-33).

alienation of the working classes from the churches” (1997:139). However, attempts to unite the Church and the labour movement had different levels of success. Conservative leadership of the Church in the 1920s further polarised not only the Church and the working class, but also the Presbyterians and the rapidly growing Catholic community (Brown, 1997:140-141; Pagan, 1988:178).

At this time, Presbyterians started experiencing more and more competition from Catholics, who almost doubled in number between 1890 and 1939. While there had been tension between Catholics and Protestants since the Reformation, it increased with Irish immigration in the 19th century and further heightened in the early 20th century. In 1918, the government brought Catholic schools into the state system, a decision that was very progressive at this time given that Scotland was the first nation where a Catholic minority received full recognition and support from the government (Brown, 1997:144; Field, 2001:166). Yet, Catholics commonly faced discrimination in the work place, such as being discouraged from applying to specific occupations based on their religious affiliation alone (Brown, 1997:191-194). This further alienated Catholics from Protestants, and instilled a stronger bond within the Catholic community. In line with this, Pagan states that, “It was not only poverty that bound the Catholic community together, but also the resentment it experienced as an immigrant community alternately exploited as cheap labour doing the jobs no one else would do or seen as a threat when times were hard” (1988:179). Most importantly, as explained further below, religious conflict has historically played a key part in the expression of a religious and cultural identity in Scotland (Weller, 2004:9).

Brown (1997:154) explains that while the first half of the 20th century did not see Presbyterian revival, yet, the number of adherents remained relatively stable. Cheyne (1983:186), on the other hand, attributes a Scottish religious decline in this period to profound social changes, particularly emphasising the decreasing sense of stability and security around the economic depression and the World Wars. In line with this, Bruce and Glendinning (2010:124) argue that a decline in affiliation can be attributed to the changing structure of the family during the Second World War.

Brown (1997:162) agrees that the wars, in particular the Second World War,⁴⁷ had a negative effect on the churches, but that this was, nevertheless, short term. He further argues that Presbyterianism experienced an upsurge at the end of the war⁴⁸ and that “evidence suggests that the strong interest in organised religion was amongst young people, perhaps especially those born just before and during the war years” (1997:162-163). However, Bruce and Glendinning (2010:115-117) argue that even if there was an upswing at this time, levels of affiliation were still lower than in the 1920s and 30s, and that the largest decline in church affiliation can be seen among those who were born in the 1940s and 1950s.

2.4.8 Religion in Scotland since 1950

After the increase in church adherence at the end of the wars, the newfound interest in religion quickly began to diminish in the second half of the 20th century (Brown 1997:164; Smout, 1986:207). Brown (1997:165) mentions that one of the reasons for this was the re-housing schemes between the 1950s and the 1970s that led to a sudden loss of a sense of community and connection to a church. Secondly, he asserts that churches were nonresponsive to the changing Scottish political climate. He explains that while the Labour Party had become increasingly popular beginning in the early 1950s, a large majority of elders in the General Assembly were Conservatives. The Kirk therefore experienced increasing difficulties in attracting Labour voters and was thus unable to adjust to emerging social and cultural changes.

Brown highlights that the difficulties facing the churches were less a product of social class⁴⁹ and more a matter of culture as he states that, “the inability to maintain religious or church-based leisure in the weekly life of the people has been a major cause of the declining role of the church as a focus in urban community life” (1997:168). More specifically, as it was opposed to many aspects of youth culture,

⁴⁷ This likely had a modest impact on religion in Sweden, primarily because of its neutral stance, but also because church attendance was already very low at this point in time - see Chapter 6 (pp. 159-192).

⁴⁸ The number of Presbyterian adherents rose by 175 000 in 1946 alone (Brown, 1997:162).

⁴⁹ Brown explains that there is little evidence that lower social groups were any less religious, particularly when considering the strength of the Catholic Church within the working class (1997:166).

such as drinking and gambling, the Church failed to attract younger people to their activities. Furthermore, increasing rights along with changing values for women in the 1960s led to a decline in adherence, explained by the fact that women, as the traditional driving force behind religious participation, were pushed further away from the Church (1997:204). This has, nonetheless, been contested by the fact that, at this time, there had already been a large decline in male participation in the church, and the female decline merely reflected this (e.g. Bruce and Glendinning, 2010:113). Brown argues that the changes explained above can be illustrated as a generational shift in attitudes and behaviour in regards to religion between those born before 1950 and those born after, and that a similar change can be seen in the Catholic community 20-30 years later (Brown, 1997:169, 174).

While tension between Catholics and Protestants continued into the second half of the 20th century, the focus of the conflicts left the workplace and became increasingly involved with leisure activities. This was, primarily, seen in Glasgow with, oftentimes, violent football matches between Rangers, “representing” Protestants, and Celtic, who emerged from the Irish Catholic community. Brown (1997:194-195) explains that secularisation in this time period caused the conflicts to fade along with a decline in perceived importance of religion. Field (2001:166) argues that the state’s support for separate schools for Catholics is a remaining cause of strain, and that a majority of the people, in fact, oppose this arrangement.⁵⁰ Furthermore, Brown argues that one reason for the decreasing intensity of sectarianism is that “for the Protestants, the Church of Scotland, in the late twentieth century has failed to arouse enough interest or passion to ‘defend’ it against perceived threats” (1997:196). While conflicts between Catholics and Protestants are still a reality in parts of the country (Brown, 1997:196; Field, 2001:165; Walls and Williams, 2006), several scholars claim that this has been exaggerated and that sectarianism in Scotland is, today, generally weak (e.g. Bruce et al, 2004; Rosie, 2004). Along with this, Paterson and Iannelli (2006) discuss diminishing differences in educational opportunities between Catholics and Protestants and show findings that suggest an absence of religious discrimination in the Scottish labour market.

⁵⁰ Interestingly, just half of Catholics support having their own state schools (Field, 2001:166).

2.4.9 Religion in Scotland Today

As is presented above, it has been a long time since the Church of Scotland served as a majority church in Scotland, despite its history as the Established Church. In 2009, the Church of Scotland had around 464 000 members, which accounts for around 9 percent of the population (The Church of Scotland, 2012).⁵¹ The Church of Scotland has 1564 congregations throughout Scotland and serves as a democratic organisation with multiple administrative levels. On the parish level, there are kirk sessions made up by elders and ministers, on the district level, the church is represented by presbyteries with ministers and a selection of elders, and the General Assembly of Scotland on the national level. The Church of Scotland has around 43 000 elders, 1100 ministers, and 2000 volunteers. Their annual budget is around £39 million, most of which constitutes donations made by members to local congregations (Flint et al, 2002:51; The Church of Scotland, 2012). The Church provides a vast range of activities for the community. Congregations commonly run children's clubs, crèche facilities, cultural events, and transport services for the elderly.⁵² Additionally, more than half of the congregations provide meeting rooms and community halls that are used by various local organisations (Flint et al, 2002:60-61). To become a member, a person needs to be baptised and to be added to a local congregation's communion roll. No formal membership fee is required, but donations are encouraged (The Church of Scotland, 2012).

The strong bond between the Kirk and the state has long been severed, and today, a majority of Scots agree that the church should refrain from taking a stand in political issues (Field, 2001:167). Nevertheless, while the Kirk is not formally tied to the state, it has a nation-wide mission and is widely considered as the *national* Church of Scotland, and in line with this, the church itself states that "Little remains of the Church's previous establishment, but it retains a strong sense of a national responsibility to bring Christ's Gospel to the whole of Scotland" (The Church of Scotland, 2012).

⁵¹ For more on membership, see section 7.2.3 (pp. 203-208).

⁵² Between 20 and 40 percent of congregations provided these services in 2000. Other services that were provided by a small minority of congregations include non-religious education classes, special needs services, support groups, tutoring, preschool clubs, and support to the homeless (Flint et al, 2002:60-61).

As presented above, the National Church in Scotland has encountered a fair share of struggles throughout its history. Even though the Church of Scotland has a special place as the National Church and the former Established Church, they have, nonetheless, experienced competition from multiple religious organisations since the time of the 1707 Union. Religious affiliation has undoubtedly served as an important component of community or group identification, and, thus, the Scottish people have never been united behind a single religious body. Given this, identification with the Kirk and participation in its rituals are not seen as the cultural norm in Scotland to the same extent that is observed in Sweden.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the notion of Protestantism and the Reformation as agents of secularisation. However, even if this may be the case, it is clear that as two Protestant European nations, the historical experiences of religion differ considerably in Scotland and Sweden. This chapter highlighted four key historical aspects that may serve as part of an explanation for contemporary differences in secularisation in the two nations. The first reason centres on an understanding of theological differences between Lutheranism (Sweden) and Calvinism (Scotland), where the former to a further extent than the latter emphasises church rituals, individualism, and a close relationship to the state.

Second, the Church of Sweden's intimate connection to the crown may have been secularising in itself. In Scotland, from the time of the Reformation, various interests were involved in church governance through the early establishment of a general assembly, and the Church of Scotland was one of the rare national churches in Europe where the church was not closely tied to the crown. Along with this, the Reformation in Scotland was, if not a revolution, at least led by passionate Scottish people against opposing elites. In Sweden, on the contrary, there was never a popular demand to abandon Catholicism (which had been similarly imposed on the people by the state 500 years earlier).

Third, in Scotland, the Church was never as closely tied to secular politics as it has been in Sweden throughout its history. This can be seen until this day where

decision making power within the Church of Scotland is in the hands of people who are actually religious (ministers and elders) and not like in Sweden, where the Church is, despite official independence from the state, an increasingly secular institution run by elected politicians.

The fourth aspect relates to the differences in religious diversity between the two nations. The Church of Scotland experienced turmoil and struggle from the time of the Reformation. With high levels of immigration around the period of industrialisation and urbanisation, Scottish religion became a differentiating marker of a group identity. By contrast, the Church of Sweden had a comfortable and practically unchallenged position as a singular church for the Swedish people for over 400 years.⁵³

Scotland and Sweden share several similarities in relation to their religious backgrounds. Both nations converted to Christianity around the same time and had Protestant state churches established at the time of the Reformation that have since been disestablished. Moreover, both the Church of Scotland and the Church of Sweden serve as *national churches* that, to this day, are the largest religious organisations in their respective nation. Nevertheless, the historical differences described above show how these processes largely diverged from the time of the Reformation. These dissimilarities may arguably assist in explaining important contemporary trends in religiosity and secularisation in Scotland and Sweden. Along with this, the next chapter will present key theoretical concepts that, in conjunction with the historical backgrounds, will be used to explain contextual differences in trends of religion.

⁵³ While the direction of the relationship has been debated, religious diversity or pluralism is widely regarded as having an effect on religiosity - see section 3.5.2 (pp. 72-74).

Chapter 3: Theories and Concepts

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into three parts, beginning with a discussion of various dimensions and definitions of religiosity. The fluid meaning of religiosity arguably makes it difficult to conceptualise, which is of key importance in understanding much of the contemporary debates within sociology of religion. The second part of the chapter focuses on theories of secularisation and religious decline, starting with the fundamental debate on secularisation. This is followed by a discussion of three important theoretical and conceptual contributions to this debate. First, I focus on Davie's (1990, 1994, 2002a, 2004, 2007) conceptualisation of *believing and belonging*, where I highlight the benefits and limitations of applying such a typology on the Swedish and Scottish cases. Second, I will present theories of the *religious economy* as presented by the American sociologists of religion (e.g. Iannaccone, 1991, 1992, 1995, 1998; Stark, 1999; Stark and Bainbridge, 1987; Stark and Finke, 2000; Stark and Iannaccone, 1994, 1995; Stark et al, 2005; Warner, 1993, 2005) and explain why some of their observations may be particularly useful to explain differences between Scotland and Sweden and why others are not relevant to the contexts of study. Third, I will describe how *deprivation theories* (e.g. Furseth and Repstad, 2006; Glock and Stark, 1965; Glock et al, 1967; Marx and Engels, 1848/2012; Rice, 2003; Roof, 1976; Stark and Bainbridge, 1980), as well as social security, and social welfare (e.g. Gill, 2008; Gill and Lundsgaarde, 2004; Norris and Inglehart, 2004) play a role in religious decline as well as offer an alternative explanation for differences in measures of secularisation in Scotland and Sweden.

This brings me to the third part of the chapter where I primarily focus on concepts explaining the remaining functions of religion in secularising societies. First, I provide an account of the inherent connection between *religion, society, and the nation* (e.g. Bellah, 1991; Casanova, 2001; Durkheim, 1912/1995; Hervieu-Léger, 2006; Llobera, 1994; Marx, 2005). This is followed by a description of the concept of *cultural religion* (e.g. Demerath, 2000; Zuckerman, 2008) that can convincingly be applied to the case of Sweden. Third and fourth, I introduce key

literature on the relationship between *religion and social capital* (e.g. Bruce 2002b; Davie 2002b; Hadaway and Roof, 1978; Hammond, 1992; McIntosh et al, 2002; Portes, 2000; Putnam, 2001), and *cultural defence* (e.g. Bruce, 1996, 2002a; Martin, 1978; Zuckerman, 2009), two aspects that I believe offer relevant insights not only to the secularisation debate, but particularly into the role of religion in contemporary Scotland.

Devising a theory that can serve as a universal and comprehensive explanation of religious belief and behaviour is bound to be both imprecise and inaccurate. It is clear that these theories and concepts are only applicable in the light of important contextual differences. As a result, my intention is that, in relation to the historical background presented in the previous chapter, these concepts and theories will serve as tools with which to explore as well as clarify possible reasons for the key differences in my research findings on measures of religious beliefs and belonging as presented in Chapter 5, 6, 7, and 8.

3.2 Definitions of Religion and Religiosity

3.2.1 Defining Religion

Sociologists of religion generally define the term religion in either a *substantive* or *functional* manner: what religion *is* or to what it *does* (e.g. Wallis and Bruce, 1992:9; Davie, 2007:19). Both types of definitions pose certain problems. First of all, a functional perspective may, as Wallis and Bruce argue, “count as religious things that on the face of it do not look very religious (political ideologies or secular therapies) and that are typically regarded as secular by their adherents” (1992:9). On the other hand, a substantive definition of religion poses limitations as to what is studied. As it most often refers to supernatural entities, this form of definition tends to exclude other shapes and forms of religious expression typically seen in non-Western cultures (Wallis and Bruce, 1992:10; Davie, 2007:20; Taylor, 2007:429).

Many sociologists of religion adopt a substantive definition of religion (e.g. Martin, 1978:12; Stark and Finke, 2000:89; Wallis and Bruce, 1992:10; Zuckerman, 2008:154). Wallis and Bruce argue that even those who are interested in studying

functions of religion can do so successfully with a substantive definition as they state that:

While we readily concede the value of exploring similarities between religious institutions and other patterns of behaviour that at times seem to serve similar purposes, calling them all religious gains very little except some contentious theoretical baggage and loses much analytical clarity. A legitimate interest in exploring 'functional' equivalents of religion can be pursued as readily with a substantive definition of religion as a functional one (1992:10).

In line with this, several scholars emphasise the importance of including the "supernatural" in a definition of religion. For example, Stark and Finke (2000:89) explain that "religion is concerned with the supernatural, everything else is secondary," and largely criticise Durkheim's (1912/1995) choice of vaguely defining religion in relation to the "sacred." Martin defines religion as "an acceptance of a level of reality beyond the observable world known to science, to which are ascribed meanings and purposes completing and transcending those of the purely human realm" (1978:12). Zuckerman also stresses the importance of the supernatural and states that "Religion refers to concepts, rituals, experiences, and institutions that humans construct based upon their belief in the supernatural, otherworldly, or spiritual" (2008:154). Taylor (2007:429) asserts that a definition revolved around the supernatural works better on a Christian or Western context of study. He further believes that Wallis and Bruce offer the most appropriate definition of religion in relation to a study on secularisation:

Religion for us consists of actions, beliefs, and institutions predicated upon the assumption of existence of either supernatural entities with powers of agency, or impersonal powers or processes possessed of moral purpose, which have the capacity to set the conditions of, or to intervene in, human affairs (Wallis and Bruce, 1992:10-11).

In line with the scholars above, I believe that a substantive definition is the most useful for this study. In a study of secularisation in Protestant Europe, the notion of the supernatural is key as functional aspects of religion can remain in a context that is to a considerable degree void of supernatural beliefs. I agree with Wallis and Bruce (1992:10) that a functional definition would essentially overlook important distinctions between religious and secular behaviour. Even though I aim to explain functions of religion in a secularised society, many of these so-called

“religious functions” serve largely secular purposes, suggesting that it is of crucial importance to emphasise the distinction of secular and supernatural aspects of religion.

3.2.2 Dimensions of Religiosity

There is a widespread agreement that as a marker of personal importance or commitment to religion, *religiosity* is most appropriately conceptualised as a multidimensional construct (e.g. Cornwall et al, 1986; De Jong et al, 1976; Glock and Stark, 1965; Hackney and Sanders, 2003; Lenski 1961). As a result, there are countless definitions and conceptualisations of religiosity in general and of specific elements of belief and practice in particular.⁵⁴ Cornwall et al (1986:226) explain that there are large variations in both conceptualisation and number of dimensions as a result of different methodological approaches to measuring religiosity.

Glock and Stark (1965) identify five dimensions of religiosity, including *belief, knowledge, rituals, experience, and consequence* (referring to secular attitudes on religion). Hackney and Sanders (2003:45) speak of *cognitive, emotional, motivational, and behavioral aspects* of religiosity. Norris and Inglehart (2004:41) include *participation, values, and beliefs* in their definition of religiosity. De Jong et al (1976:886) argue that there are primarily three key dimensions, which are *belief, experience, and religious practice*. Christian *belief* includes different traditions, interpretations and emphases on, among other aspects, God, Jesus, life after death, heaven and hell, prayer, and the Bible. *Experience* consists of feelings of closeness to the divine and having had a “religious experience.” *Religious practice* includes, among others, church attendance, membership, and financial contribution.

Perhaps the most common approach in the sociology of religion involves categorising religiosity into two broad measures around practice and belief. Cornwall et al (1986:227) refer to this as “personal and institutional mode,” and explain that *personal mode* is made up of beliefs, feelings, and commitment and *institutional mode* of formal attachment to, participation in, and acceptance of formalised religion in relation to a church or denomination. Contemporary contributions to this

⁵⁴ For a discussion of methodological difficulties in measuring religiosity, see section 4.2 (pp. 92-100).

categorisation include for example Stark and Finke's (2000:103) distinction between *objective* and *subjective* religiosity, Davie's (1990, 1994, 2002a, 2004, 2007) typology of *believing and belonging*, and Gill's (2008:116) conceptualisation of *private belief* and *public expression*.

Stark and Finke (2000:103) describe that *objective religion* refers to how an individual behaves within the framework set out by a religion, such as participation in rituals, church attendance, and conformity to rules. Subjective religion, on the other hand, involves the internal aspect of religion, such as values, beliefs, and attitudes. Davie's (1990, 1994, 2002a, 2004, 2007) typology of *believing and belonging* is, although she does not operationalise these concepts, in a way a distinction between objective and subjective religiosity. She includes measures of subjective religion in *believing* (such as belief in God, need for regular prayer, finding comfort and strength in religion, and defining oneself as religious) and objective religion in *belonging* (such as church attendance, baptism, and religious weddings) (Davie, 1994:79).

The distinction between objective and subjective religiosity (or believing and belonging) is essential since they do not necessarily go hand in hand. Davie (1994:2, 2002a:5, 2007:138) speaks of a continued high level of belief with declining levels of belonging,⁵⁵ Roof (1979) calls for a systematic study of interrelationships between different dimensions of religiosity in order to provide a thorough notion of religiosity. Similarly, Voas and Day state that "While it is not unreasonable to assume that Christian practice in the modern world implies belief, the connection between the two deserves empirical investigation" (2010:4-5). Additionally, certain measures of objective religiosity may have a close (and in some cases closer) connection to cultural heritage and identity than to religious beliefs. This research investigates the possibility that secularisation, particularly in the Swedish context, has progressed in such a way that a traditionally religious ceremony is no longer religious.

Nevertheless, while it may serve as a generalised conceptual model of religiosity, a distinction between measures of subjective and objective religiosity may be less appropriately applied to particular contexts. The issue of inclusion of

⁵⁵ *Believing and belonging* is discussed in detail in section 3.4 (pp. 68-71).

what may, in reality, be largely secular practices in the definition of functional religion may be similarly problematic when assuming that an aggregate measure of objective religiosity, including indices such as *affiliation*, *attendance*, and *ritual practice* all measure largely the same phenomenon. This highlights a key methodological issue, particularly in relation to a comparative study of two different contexts.⁵⁶ The difficulties attached to accurately describing religion, religiosity, and secularisation are sources of disagreement and debate within sociology of religion. Specifically how this leads to diverse opinions on secularisation is discussed in the next section.

3.3 Secularisation Theories

3.3.1 Defining Secularisation

Secularisation theories can collectively be used to describe the wide range of views on levels and aspects of religious decline in the modern world. As previously stated, the disagreement does not primarily lie in whether or not there has been, in certain places, a decline in various measures of religiosity, but rather, how to interpret these changes as well as the processes behind them (Taylor, 2007:426). While specific opinions vary from one scholar to another, they can largely be subsumed under three main groups (Warner, 2010);

(1) Proponents of the broad thrust of classical secularisation theory (e.g. Berger, 1967; Bruce, 1992a, 1996, 1999, 2002a, 2006; Comte, 1896; Durkheim, 1912/1995; Marx, 1844/2007; Marx and Engels, 1848/2012; Wallis and Bruce, 1992; Weber, 1904/2009; Wilson, 1966, 1982, 1988, 1992).

(2) Scholars adopting what Warner (2010:41) calls a “modified version” of the classical secularisation theory, accepting parts of it while discarding others (e.g. Berger, 1999; Berger et al, 2008; Casanova, 1994, 2001, 2009; Davie, 1990, 1994, 2002a, 2004, 2007; Hervieu-Léger, 2000, 2006; Martin, 1978; Taylor, 2007).

(3) Academics refuting the secularisation theory entirely (e.g. Finke, 1992; Iannaccone, 1991, 1992, 1995, 1998; Stark, 1999; Stark and Bainbridge, 1987; Stark

⁵⁶ This is discussed further in section 4.2 (pp. 92-100).

and Finke, 2000; Stark and Iannaccone, 1994, 1995; Stark et al, 2005; Warner, 1993, 2005).

The main premise of the classical secularisation theory is a causal link between modernity and secularisation assuming a decline in religiosity and the importance of religion as society modernises (Berger et al, 2008:2; Bruce, 2002a:2; Taylor, 2007:429; Wallis and Bruce, 1992:8-9; Warner, 2010:2). Scholars in the sociology of religion commonly use Wilson's (1982) idea of secularisation (e.g. Hanson, 1997:161; Stark and Finke, 2000; Stark and Iannaccone, 1994:230; Wallis and Bruce, 1992:11), in which he consequently defines secularisation as, in response to modernisation, "religious institutions, actions, and consciousness will lose their social significance" (Wilson, 1966:xiv, 1982:146). Here, *social significance* refers to the place of religion in social systems (Wilson, 1992:150), or more explicitly, the importance of religious beliefs and actions to social institutions and the individual (Bruce, 2002a:3; Wallis and Bruce, 1992a:11). In line with this, Taylor (2007:2-3) refers to three dimensions of secularity:⁵⁷ the public space, religious practice, and belief.

Wallis and Bruce (1992:11) assert that *social significance* involves a multidimensional understanding of religious change. Notably, variations in interpretations of what this means may be the most crucial source of disagreements within the debate on secularisation theory. Taylor (2007:427) and Hanson (1997:161) rightfully observe that the positions taken around the debate are oftentimes grounded in conceptual issues, meaning that the theory can be disputed or accepted based on particular definitions of what secularisation entails. It is in this aspect that reasons for rejecting the secularisation theories appear unconvincing. It is arguably ineffective to look at secularisation as an even decline across various measures (or indeed a decline in all measures) of religion.⁵⁸ Even though this may often be the case, I agree with Taylor (2007:818) and Bruce (1992a:2) that supernatural beliefs should be considered above other indices. This particularly holds true for the purpose of this research, where several functional aspects of religion can

⁵⁷ Secularity refers to "the opposite of 'religious,'" and "indicating an absence of religious motivation or content" (Voas and Day, 2007:96).

⁵⁸ This is also argued by Bruce (2002a:39).

be observed in otherwise secularised societies.⁵⁹ In line with this, Bruce makes a crucial point that:

Although it is possible to conceptualise it in other ways, secularization primarily refers to the beliefs of people. The core of what we mean when we talk of this society being more secular than that is that the lives of fewer people in the former than in the latter are influenced by religious beliefs (Bruce, 1992a:6).

It is unconvincing to deem a nation that scores low on measures of religious belief, but which nevertheless has high levels of what is typically considered *objective religiosity* (such as religious participation, membership, or identification), as non-secularised or as an example of a limitation to the secularisation theory. Wilson mentions this, as he states that:

Loyalty to a specific religious group, even if commitment to its creed has become largely notional, may continue to evoke response, and these generalized, perhaps at times nostalgic, dispositions might continue to provide the basis for voluntary associations to promote particular causes in the field of social welfare, but they do not in themselves show sustained religiosity as such (1992:202).

Religious belonging and rituals may hold a secular meaning to non-believers, suggesting that in some circumstances, it may not in fact be a measure of *religiosity* but of something entirely different. In many aspects that something may well be *non-religious*, that is not concerned with the supernatural at all. Nevertheless, this requires extensive investigation.

3.3.2 Classical Secularisation Theory

Classical social theorists such as Marx⁶⁰ (1844/2007; Marx and Engels, 1848/2012), Comte (1896), Weber (1904/2009), and Durkheim (1912/1995) made extensive contributions to the understanding of the sociological significance of religion. Notably, they all predicted religious decline as society industrialised. For Marx, religion ultimately helped the elite uphold oppression as it offered comfort and an alternative worldview for the unprivileged masses and an ideology of natural

⁵⁹ Here, I do not deny Bruce's (2002a:3) important point that a close relationship exists between these dimensions of religion, even if they can vary substantially.

⁶⁰ Influenced by the ideas of Feuerbach (1841/2008).

order to justify elite privilege. He therefore expected a loss in significance of religion once a revolution had taken place by the working class (Marx and Engels, 1848/2012; Warner, 2010:17). Comte argued that certain aspects of modernisation, more specifically reason, rationality, and science would lead to the demise of religion (Comte, 1896; Warner, 2010:20). Durkheim (1912/1995) argued that the increased awareness of multiple religions would lead to the “cancelling out” of the different religious ideologies. Furthermore, Weber (1904/2009) argued that as people become more and more absorbed by the capitalist society, their focus on religion would decline in that increasing focus would turn to material well-being, as opposed to spiritual needs.

Such predictions have not been realised to the extent that the classical social thinkers expected. Religion still plays an important role in many fully industrialised societies and Inglehart (2008:131) asserts that we are today in fact moving beyond the materialist agenda suggesting that post-material needs such as self-expression are more pronounced than the material values that were the focus of the classical social theorists. Although increasing rationality may be a factor in the process of secularisation (e.g. Bruce, 1996, 2002a; Wallis and Bruce, 1992), contemporary sociologists of religion (e.g. Bruce, 1996:48-49, 2002a:117; Stark, 1999; Stark and Finke, 2000; Taylor, 2007:4) dispute Comte’s (1896) claim that scientific knowledge brings about a decline in religious belief.

However, far from rejected outright, the idea that social structural changes bring religious decline have largely been redefined and defended by several sociologists of religion, most notably Bryan Wilson (1966, 1982, 1988, 1992), and Steve Bruce (e.g. 1992a, 1992b, 1996, 2002a, 2002b, 2006). They uphold the view that some characteristics of modernity are incompatible with religion. More specifically, increasing differentiation of social life and structure, a decrease in the importance of community, religious pluralism, and an increasingly rational and bureaucratic society lead to the decline in the importance of most aspects of religion (Berger et al, 2008:31-32; Bruce, 1996:39; Wallis and Bruce, 1992:9; Warner, 2010:32; Wilson, 1982:154). Their ideas have been met with profound criticism from scholars in the field who adopt a different interpretation of both secularisation as well as the current state of religion in modern society.

3.3.3 Criticisms of Secularisation Theory

Several sociologists of religion that either reject the classical secularisation theory entirely or who oppose aspects of it (e.g. Davie, 1994, 2002a; Stark, 1999; Stark and Finke, 2000; Warner, 2010) argue that objective religiosity (such as church attendance and importance of religion in the public sphere) has declined in Europe, but they nevertheless claim that *privatised religion*, that is, individual beliefs and practices removed from the public sphere (e.g. Berger, 2007:iv), is still thriving. This is what Davie has termed as *believing without belonging*.⁶¹ Davie, and, among others, her American colleagues, Stark and Finke (2000) see a high level of privatised religion in the world (including Europe). Davie argues that the decline in objective religion has not (at least not yet) been accompanied by a large decline in belief (1994:43).

Berger (1999; Berger et al, 2008) holds a slightly different view of religion in Europe. While he now disagrees with the classical secularisation thesis,⁶² he to some extent agrees with Bruce as he acknowledges that Western Europe has experienced declining levels of religious belief, and even more so, participation. He does, however, assert that the rest of the world is more religious than it has ever been (1999:1; Berger et al, 2008:10). He disagrees with Bruce on the cause of secularisation as he argues that it is more likely that Europe is secular because it is European (suggesting historically and culturally specific causes) than because it is modern. He stresses that there is no evidence that indicates a link between modernity and secularisation, and to illustrate this, mentions large differences in all measures of religiosity between the United States and Europe (Berger et al, 2008:6-7, 10).⁶³

Bruce compellingly argues that such positions are “un-sociological” in that if people were *believing without belonging*, belief would come from nowhere (2002a:104). In relation to this, he states that, “The decline of traditional Christian beliefs should be no surprise...There is no mystery about why Christian beliefs should decline when the institutions that carry them decline. Ideologies do not float

⁶¹ For more on *believing and belonging*, see section 3.4 (pp. 68-71).

⁶² After previously supporting it – see Berger, 1967.

⁶³ However, they do not explain how Japan fits in here – modern and secular, but not European.

in ether. They need to be preserved” (2002a:72). In other words, if only a select few participate and religious institutions end up losing social and political significance, it will lead to an inevitable decline in religious beliefs, just as is suggested in his statement that, “deep socialization and constant reaffirmation are required to sustain distinctive beliefs” (2002a:148).

In addition to the diverging opinions on levels of religious beliefs and the contested ability of the secularisation thesis to explain the case of the United States (e.g. Berger et al, 2008; Finke, 1992; Stark and Finke, 2000), as mentioned above, there are several other points of criticism. This includes, first of all, the assertion that the theory is only applicable to the European context (Berger et al, 2008; Warner, 2010:43). Second, as various aspects of religiosity are not decreasing at a similar rate, a linear account cannot be assumed (Stark, 1999; Taylor, 2007:461; Warner, 2010:43). Third, the claim is made that people were not as religious in the past as we assume today (Stark and Finke, 2000; Warner, 2010:4-5). Fourth, that secularisation theory fails to incorporate the importance of state churches in relation to religious free markets (Stark and Finke, 2000; Warner, 2010:4-5), and fifth, the need for clarification of whether secularisation is reversible (Warner, 2010:37).

Notably, several scholars (e.g. Bruce, 1996, 2002a; Wallis and Bruce, 1992; Wilson, 1992, 1998) have refuted most of the points discussed above. Bruce (2002a:37) argues that regardless of the trajectories of the rest of the world, the secularisation theory is, indeed, applicable to Europe, the place where it originally emerged. Furthermore, all measures of religiosity do not have to decline at a similar rate (Bruce, 2002a:39; Wallis and Bruce, 1992). Likewise, the theory does not rule out temporary resurgence of religious groups, and the theory is, in fact, cyclical rather than linear (Bruce, 2002a:173, 176). Moreover, Bruce (1996:29-30) disagrees that Europe has never been very religious and, to illustrate this, presents statistics on church attendance in Scotland in the 19th century that suggest a strong commitment to religious participation. Similarly, Wilson (1998:56) asserts that regardless of participation, Europeans were indeed highly superstitious in the past.⁶⁴ Lastly, Bruce (2002a:241) claims that there are no reasons to expect the processes of secularisation to reverse.

⁶⁴ As discussed in Chapter 2, while Swedes were superstitious in the past, it is debatable if they were ever highly religious (Zuckerman, 2008).

Bruce's arguments are both persuasive and applicable to Protestant Europe. However, his defence of the secularisation thesis in the context of the United States is less compelling and, in line with Casanova's (2001:426) point of view that the different sides in the debate tend to overlook each other's arguments, this research acknowledges some useful aspects of the theory of the religious economy as described by Stark and Finke (2000), specifically those related to importance of the state church on religious vitality.⁶⁵ Bruce (2002a:155) states that he also agrees with some of their observations, but he does not convincingly attempt to incorporate them in his defence of secularisation theory.

While it is undoubtedly the foremost theoretical contribution within sociology of religion to this day, the secularisation thesis cannot serve as a singular, overarching, theory with the purpose of explaining universal changes in religion. However, as presented above, proponents of the theory do not attempt to make this claim and I believe that a better understanding within the debate could come from acknowledging theoretical, contextual, and definitional differences. In view of that, the following three sections explore three key contributions to the debate on secularisation and religious decline that may also serve as cornerstones in offering an explanation for religious change in Scotland and Sweden.

3.4 Believing and Belonging

3.4.1 Davie's Typology

With her typology of religious beliefs and belonging, Grace Davie (e.g. 1990, 1994, 2002a, 2004, 2007) claims that religion in Britain (and most of Protestant Europe) can be characterised as *believing without belonging*. This suggests that people still believe in God and identify themselves as religious while they, at the same time, do not see the need to participate in formal church activities (1994:2, 2002a:5, 2007:138). She argues that *privatised religion* is the most prevalent type of religiosity in Western Europe (1994:75) and that "It seems more accurate to describe late-twentieth- century Britain – together with most of Western Europe – as

⁶⁵ This is discussed further in section 3.5 (pp. 71-75).

unchurched rather than simply secular” (1994:12). She agrees that church membership and participation are both declining in Britain and the rest of the “Protestant North,”⁶⁶ but that instead of following the same pattern, subjective beliefs are increasing (Davie, 1994:13, 43, 2007:138).

In “Religious America, Secular Europe?,” which Berger co-authored with Davie and Fokas (2008), Davie’s typology is applied, but rather than maintaining that Western Europe is generally characterised as just *believing and belonging*, they describe that *belonging without believing* is somewhat common in parts of Europe, in particular the Nordic countries (2008:15). This is in line with Hervieu-Léger’s (2006:48) argument that it is possible to *belong without believing* in that one can believe in the *social* aspect of religion meaning that belonging is therefore part of maintaining a community.⁶⁷ Davie (2007:141) admits that *belonging without believing* may be an entirely accurate description of Scandinavia where church affiliation and participation in rituals remain high. She highlights that they nevertheless do not participate any more frequently than the rest of Europe. This ambiguity of the terms *believing* and *belonging* makes Davie’s typology problematic to apply to a specific context of study. It appears as though very diverse conclusions can be reached depending on what measure is under examination.

3.4.2 Conceptualising Believing and Belonging

Davie does not provide a clear definition of either *believing* or *belonging*, and states that:

The terms ‘believing’ and ‘belonging’ are not to be considered too rigidly. The disjunction between the variables is intended to capture a mood, to suggest an area of enquiry, a way of looking at the problem...operationalizing either or both of the variables too severely is bound to distort the picture (1994:93-94).

That said, she primarily uses *church attendance* as indicator of *belonging* (although she also mentions rates of baptism and religious weddings), and *belief in god* (and occasionally prayer, self identified religiosity, and finding comfort in religion) when she refers to *believing* (1994:79). Although it is a reasonable argument that defining

⁶⁶ As opposed to the Catholic South with high levels of participation (Davie, 1994:13).

⁶⁷ This is covered further in section 3.8 (pp. 85-89).

the terms may be difficult and risks generating a narrower picture of the religious landscape, I agree with Voas and Crocket (2005:14) that levels of *believing and belonging* are largely inconsistent depending on which measurement is considered. Not defining it more clearly may, as is argued below, distort the picture, rather than the other way around.

This suggests that, while *believing and belonging* has the potential to be a very useful conceptualisation of religious beliefs and behaviour, careful operationalisation is needed. *Belonging* arguably means much more than just attending church or participating in church activities. In fact, the term *belonging* does not seem to have an obvious connection to *attendance*, but rather to *membership* (belonging to) or *identification* (feeling that one belongs). Conflating these measures fails to explain *belonging* in Sweden where we find low levels of church attendance and relatively high levels of church membership and identification, and frequent participation in life weddings, baptisms, and confirmations.⁶⁸ It also does not recognise key differences between Scotland and Sweden, where Scots appear to *believe and belong* or to *neither believe nor belong*, while Swedes are considerably more likely to *belong without believing*.⁶⁹ This again shows the importance of conceptualisation. While it is understandable that Davie wants to look at an “overall” picture of the place and characteristics of religion, she does so without acknowledging these large differences in very relevant indicators of *believing and belonging*.

3.4.3 Non-Belief and Atheism

Davie (1994:79) unconvincingly uses the fact that only four percent of Britons are atheists as an indicator of *believing*. However, this is not an accurate indication that people of Britain, in fact, *believe*. She argues that, “few people have opted out of religion altogether” (1994:2) yet it is questionable whether the fact that only four percent are convinced atheists means that the remaining 96 percent *believe*. Furthermore, secularisation does not mean that everyone becomes atheist (e.g. Bruce, 2002a:41; Zuckerman, 2008:102). With this notion, she effectively assumes that all individuals who are uncertain, who simply do not contemplate religion, or who for

⁶⁸ Religious rituals and life-cycle ceremonies are explored further in Chapter 8 (pp. 233-262).

⁶⁹ See section 7.4 (pp. 224-230).

various reasons are non-religious but refrain from identifying as atheist, in fact *believe*, when these measures are a far better indicator of secularisation.⁷⁰ In line with this, Bruce states that, “Most people did not give up being committed Christians because they became convinced religion was false. It simply ceased to be of any great importance to them. They became indifferent” (2002a:235). Religion becomes less and less important and people lose interest or are not socialised into it by increasingly indifferent parents (Bruce, 2002a:104, 241). In other words, looking at the number of people who express that they are atheist will present a distorted picture.⁷¹

While Davie’s typology of *believing and belonging* may apply as a very broad generalisation of certain indicators of religion, it has limitations both in relation to accuracy and precision. Given the multidimensional quality of religion as explained in section 3.2, this typology is less useful in providing a careful account of religious beliefs and practices in Scotland and Sweden and, as we will see, fails to pick up even the most apparent differences between these two Protestant and Northern European nations.⁷² I briefly return to Davie’s typology in section 3.7, where various secular functions of religion are discussed. First, I present two additional contributions to the understanding of secularisation in the contemporary world, beginning with the application of rational choice theory and economic models to religion.

3.5 Theory of the Religious Economy

3.5.1 Definition

The theory of the religious economy serves as one of the most thorough refutations of secularisation theory.⁷³ It is developed from rational choice theory and is primarily associated with American sociologists and economists of religion (e.g.

⁷⁰ For more on atheism and religious beliefs, see section 5.4 (pp. 150-156).

⁷¹ The reluctance of non-believers to identify themselves as atheists in Scotland and Sweden is explored further in section 5.4 (pp. 150-156).

⁷² A thorough account of indicators of believing and belong in these two nations are discussed in chapters 5-7.

⁷³ And according to Wallis and Bruce (1992:8), the only plausible contender.

Finke, 1992; Iannaccone, 1991, 1992, 1995, 1998, Stark, 1999; Stark and Bainbridge, 1987; Stark and Finke, 2000; Stark and Iannaccone, 1994, 1995; Stark et al, 2005; Warner, 1993, 2005). The United States is likewise the context on which this theory is the most persuasively applied.

Stark and Finke (2000:193) explain that just like other types of businesses, religious institutions operate in a market of supply and demand. Their definition of a religious economy is, “all of the religious activity going on in any society: a ‘market’ of current and potential adherents, a set of one or more organizations seeking to attract or maintain adherents, and the religious culture offered by the organization(s)” (2000:193). Several scholars who follow this tradition controversially argue that the demand for religion is constant everywhere. In other words, they assert that the secularisation thesis is false and that religion is a basic need that humans meet through consuming religious goods (Greeley, 1972; Stark and Finke, 2000:193; Warner, 2010:78;). As a result, the theory of the religious economy is based on a contested supply-side model of religious behaviour (Bankston, 2003:164; Bruce, 1996:163), where a changing supply of religious goods and services determine the level of religious participation. To illuminate this theory and to demonstrate its mechanism, the concept of religious pluralism is frequently used. Not surprisingly, the effect of religious pluralism is also subject to differing opinions.

3.5.2 Pluralism and Religious Vitality

The concept of religious pluralism and its effect on religious vitality is a frequently applied and vividly discussed idea within the sociology of religion. Pluralism is defined as, “the number of firms active in the economy; the more firms there are with significant market shares, the greater degree of pluralism” (Stark and Finke, 2000:198). Bruce (1992b:179-180) carefully explains that this suggests two different ways of looking at religious pluralism: (1) the range of options that people may choose from and (2) the spread or share of the population over these available choices. Pluralism is often used synonymously with diversity (e.g. Bruce, 1992b:178; Voas et al, 2002:214). However, Beckford distinguishes between the two and asserts that the notion of pluralism means a diversity that is welcomed and seen as a positive

aspect within a certain context. He states that, “the mere fact of competition between religious groups is therefore far less significant in itself than is the cultural and legal context that legitimates and underpins competitive pluralism as a normative value” (2001:8), further suggesting that pluralism is more applicable in the context of the contemporary United States than elsewhere.

According to the theory of the religious economy, low levels of pluralism, by definition, limits competition and without the fundamental driving force of free market competition, religious organisations become inefficient. In other words, they do not adapt and respond to its potential customers, which ultimately leads to low adherence⁷⁴ (Berger et al, 2008:16-17; Bruce, 1992a:5; Stark and Finke, 2000:201; Warner, 2010:80). McCleary and Barro (2006) studied this phenomenon and found a positive relationship between pluralism and religious participation. However, Bruce (2002a:223) is critical of this relationship and refers to Chaves and Gorski’s (2001) study, which found that only a minority (12 percent) of all studies done on this relationship seem to support the theory of the religious economy.

Notably, the mechanisms of religious pluralism and vitality can also, rather effectively, be applied to contexts that do not experience the religious free market of the United States. State churches, which historically characterise Europe, are entities operating in a market with virtual monopoly on religion. In a Protestant European context, this is particularly applicable on the Nordic countries where the Lutheran churches overwhelmingly dominate the religious market. Although he is generally not a proponent of rational choice theory, Zuckerman (2008:112; 2009:58) agrees with the idea that the lack of effort presented by state churches in Scandinavia is a convincing reason for secularisation in the region. The theory of the religious economy as presented by Stark and Finke (2000) predicts an increase in religious vitality after a deregulation of a state religion. When pluralism takes hold in a religious market, firms will become aware of each other and compete for market share. In that way, they become more motivated and thus adapt their services to attract customers (Stark and Finke, 2000:200). However, Stark and Finke (2000:201) point out that deeply rooted cultural behaviour interferes with this, making the process long.

⁷⁴ However, this refers to participation only. Privatised religion will, according to this theory, remain high (Stark and Finke, 2000:201).

The idea that religious pluralism increases participation has been met with criticism. For example, a usual counter-argument is that an increasingly heterogeneous world goes hand in hand with secularisation as a result of increasing awareness of multiple religious ideologies (e.g. Berger, 1967; Bruce, 2002a; Durkheim, 1912/1995). Bruce (2002a:153), a strong critic of Stark and Finke's ideas, states that the theory of the religious economy is not applicable to Europe. He uses the examples of Ireland and Poland as nations with low levels of pluralism and high levels of participation. He further states that, "the greatest damage to religion has been caused, not by competing secular ideas, but by the general relativism that supposes that all ideologies are equally true (and hence equally false)" (2002a:117).⁷⁵ What is interesting, then, is that Stark and his colleagues see the world becoming *more* religious, and states that pluralism is one of the reasons for this. At the same time, Bruce (2002a:207) argues that Europe and also the United States are becoming *less* religious, and that pluralism is, likewise, one of the reasons for this. A third view is that of Voas et al (2002) who suggest that there is no relationship at all between pluralism and religious participation. A final view is the idea that *both* effects are plausible, such as argued by Martin (1978) and Wilson (1966)⁷⁶ suggesting that the idea of pluralism may explain religious vitality *and* that religious pluralism also leads to a reduction in the convictions of doctrine. Nevertheless, these changes need to be viewed alongside with historical and cultural processes that largely differ depending on context.

3.5.3 Europe and the Theory of the Religious Economy

Bruce acknowledges that some aspects of the theory of the religious economy are useful: "There is considerable sense in many supply-side observations, and they are as likely to be made by secularisation theorists. But it does not follow that they can provide a basis for a coherent theory of religion" (2002a:155). It makes sense that a church funded by the state will make less of an effort to attract "customers," as they receive the same funding regardless of levels of participation. In some sense, a religious organisation can be regarded as a firm operating in a market of religious

⁷⁵ In line with Durkheim's (1912/1995) notion that "all refute all."

⁷⁶ Discussed by Bruce 1992b:171-172.

goods and services and in Europe, churches are often considered a public good rather than a competing firm whose goal is to maximise recruitment. However, the nature of religious goods and services makes Stark and Finke's ideas less straightforward. They greatly disregard the impact of culture and tradition when they assume that people choose religious affiliation in the same way that they decide on everyday purchases. Along with this, Bruce (1999) regards this theory to be applicable only in a society where "choosing religion has become unimportant and trivial" (Furseth and Repstad, 2006:119). Although it is likely that a state-sponsored church will make less conscious efforts to attract participants and therefore be an integral cause of secularisation in Protestant Europe, it is less convincing that this process would reverse by the emergence of pluralism. Evidence from most of Western Europe, including Scotland and Sweden, suggest that religious participation and levels of beliefs are declining rather than increasing, despite continuous religious deregulation.

3.6 Religion and Security

3.6.1 Deprivation Theory

Similar to Marx' (1844/2007) idea that religion functioned as a coping mechanism for unbearable living and working situations, the *deprivation theory* lays out a plausible explanation for a variation in levels of religiosity in contemporary society. In line with this theory, when individuals feel deprived in one way or the other,⁷⁷ they seek reasons, comfort, and compensation that can often be provided by various forms of religious involvement (Furseth and Repstad, 2006; Glock and Stark, 1965; Glock et al, 1967; Rice, 2003; Roof, 1976; Stark and Bainbridge, 1980; Zuckerman, 2008). Secularisation takes place if the problem is rectified with other means, such as reduced poverty and increased social integration (Furseth and Repstad, 2006:86-87, 112). Previous works in the area (e.g. Glock et al, 1967; Rice, 2003) suggest that the deprivation-compensation theory provides an explanation for increased religiosity of women, ethnic minorities, and lower social classes.

⁷⁷ Deprivation in this context arguably has a relative rather than absolute meaning (e.g. Furseth and Repstad, 2006:112-113).

Stark and Bainbridge's (1980), rational choice based model of religious deprivation distinguishes between what they call "rewards and compensators." They state that "When humans cannot quickly and easily obtain strongly desired rewards they persist in their efforts and often may accept explanations that provide only compensators - empirically unsubstantiated faith that the rewards will be obtained - not the rewards themselves" (1980:121). They apply this to religion⁷⁸ and explain that religious beliefs may serve as compensators for unattainable rewards, which may be happiness, stability, financial security, or indeed immortality. As mentioned before, it may be questionable to assume that individuals make calculated choices in relation to religion. However, the deprivation theory may compellingly be applied as a broader socio-cultural explanation to religious decline as is presented next.

3.6.2 Social Security

Recent work by Norris and Inglehart (2004) applies the deprivation theory not only on the micro level but also on religiosity at the national level. Nations where people commonly experience financial hardships or other forms of struggle in relation to elementary feelings of security and stability, are generally more religious (Norris and Inglehart, 2004; Zuckerman, 2008:114, 2009:59). In line with this, Norris and Inglehart argue that "In relatively secure societies...the importance and vitality of religion, its ever-present influence on how people live their daily lives, has gradually eroded" (2004:5).

Zuckerman (2008:114-115; 2009:59) presents this as one of the key reasons for the high levels of non-belief in Scandinavia, and argues that these nations rank highly on various measures of security, such as crime, peace, and political stability. Religious beliefs and participation are lower in nations that have a long history of political autonomy. In this manner, a people that has not regarded their freedom as fragile is less likely to need religion. In line with this, Tomasson argues that:

In the near millennium of the existence of the Swedish nation, it has never been oppressed or been subservient to another nation...Religion has never been associated with repressed nationalism. The opposite situation is found in the most historically religious countries in

⁷⁸ But carefully explain that their proposition of rewards and compensators may be applied to non-religious aspects as well (Stark and Bainbridge, 1980:121).

Europe: Ireland, Poland, and the Balkans (2002a:85).

This may also be applicable to Scotland, a nation that does exceptionally well on most measures of security, but which nevertheless experiences a current constitutional crisis resulting in an upcoming referendum for independence in 2014. The argued link between social security and religious decline is indeed persuasive and proponents of rational choice theory have acknowledged its usefulness. For example, Gill (2008) and Gill and Lundsgaarde (2004) rather successfully bridge Norris and Inglehart's (2004) theory with the theory of the religious economy and the role of public policy through welfare spending.

3.6.3 Welfare Spending

Gill (2008:116) argues that in addition to religious regulation, social welfare spending is another factor contributing to secularisation. He explains that the church was traditionally seen as an institution that provides various forms of welfare. As this role has increasingly been taken over by the government, churches struggle in recruiting new adherents. From Gill's (2008:116) perspective, this is due to the additional "cost" of a religious commitment as opposed to filling one's welfare needs with what is provided by the state. He further suggests that government policy is the strongest explanation of secularisation and that this tends to be disregarded by social scientists in the field who place too much emphasis on cultural and social structural changes and too little on human decision making.⁷⁹

Gill and Lundsgaarde (2004) examine the theory that social welfare spending limits religiosity as they test the relationship between, among others, welfare spending and non-religiosity,⁸⁰ church attendance,⁸¹ and comfort in religion.⁸² After adjusting for several variables, including religious regulation and religious pluralism, level of urbanisation, literacy, rates of owning a television, being considered a Catholic country, and countries in Latin America, they find a strong significant relationship between welfare spending and non-religiosity, church attendance, and

⁷⁹ In line with the rational choice theory (e.g. Stark and Finke, 2000).

⁸⁰ Percentage of the population who declare themselves as non-religious.

⁸¹ Percentage of the population who attend church weekly.

⁸² Percentage of the population who express that they take comfort in religion.

comfort in religion. Higher welfare spending is associated with higher levels of non-religiosity, lower levels of church attendance, and lower levels of comfort in religion. Interestingly, Sweden is the country in their very limited sample with the highest level of welfare spending and with the lowest levels of comfort in religion, one of the lowest levels of church attendance and one of the highest rates of non-religiosity. With lower levels of welfare spending, the United Kingdom presents a slightly lower level of non-religiosity than Sweden.

Gill and Lundsgaarde (2004) present a compelling case, with a plausible theory particularly valuable in explaining differences between many European nations and the United States, given that the former generally have higher levels of welfare spending and non-religiosity than the latter.⁸³ It is possible that in societies with a higher level of social support and security, fewer people will go to religion for both material and emotional help. Their model does not take historical or other social factors into consideration and this explanation is less useful by itself. However, as is presented by Gill and Lundsgaarde (2004), welfare spending and other forms of social support is likely one influential factor in determining levels of religiosity.

The different variations of the deprivation theory as described above are useful for this study as they serve as an addition to the secularisation thesis given that the most modernised societies also tend to be the most stable and affluent, and, with the exception of the United States, also the least religious. It also highlights the effects of a progressive welfare policy as implemented by the Social Democrats in Sweden.⁸⁴ Furthermore, this theory is applicable even to contexts with high levels of certain measures of objective religiosity such as baptism, weddings and funerals in church, as they may very well serve a different purpose than comfort during hardships.

⁸³ In other words, this theory may partially explain the relatively higher levels of religiosity in the United States.

⁸⁴ See section 2.3.5 (pp. 28-31).

3.7 Religion, Culture, and Society

3.7.1 Religion, Society, and Nation

Social theorists have recognised the importance of the connection between religion and society. Durkheim presents a persuasive argument that religion can be seen as a depiction of society itself as he contends that God and society share similar characteristics and functions (1912/1995:208; Furseth and Repstad, 2006:33). He studied elementary forms of religion in Australia and South America and found that many tribes and social groups take part in a religion revolving around a symbol such as an animal or a plant (1912/1995:86). Members of these groups believe that they are all descendants from this symbol (1912/1995:163) that therefore serves as a representation of their society as a whole. Furthermore, he separates objects and social facts that are profane (material) with those that are sacred (1912/1995:34). He describes that these are held separate with a specific place and time for the social group to convene to recognise the sacred, which is consequently how holidays developed (1912/1995:313). Moreover, he asserts that, “society cannot revitalize the awareness that it has of itself unless it assembles but it cannot remain continuously in session” (1912/1995:353). This is consequently the purpose of holidays or specific ceremonies as they alter the sacred with the profane.

One example of this is the sacred representation of certain profane objects, such as a flag, that signify a nation and its morals, beliefs, and culture. In this way, a ceremony, such as a wedding or a school graduation, regardless of whether or not it is religious in nature, can have a place as markers of life stages regardless of levels of religiosity, given that the rituals, rather than being tied to religious beliefs, may instead be a celebration of a national culture. Similarly, Bellah (1991:170, 2005:40) argues that there is an important distinction between Christian beliefs and *civil religion*, a term that he uses to describe the United States. The use of religious rhetoric in many dimensions of American public life has, above all, a “ceremonial significance,” which may serve as another example of the close relationship between society and religion.

Durkheim's observations are acknowledged and applied to the relationship between religion and nationalism. Llobera (1994:143) states that nationalism is in fact a "secular religion" with the nation as a substitute for God. While nation and society (and indeed state) are not one and the same, Durkheim's theory highlights the important link between religion and a sacred expression of culture or community. This may hold true even in a relatively secularised society, since the sacred representation of traditionally religious rituals such as baptism or a school graduation in church may instead be a celebration of society, serving as a complement to or altogether a replacement of religion. This is argued by Casanova, who states that, "The secular is by no means profane in our secular age. One only needs to think of such sacralised secular phenomena as nation, citizenship, and human rights" (2009:1064). This inherent link between religion and the social group is crucial in understanding religion's influence on a national identity (e.g. Marx, 2005), which has consequently received attention (although arguably limited attention) from contemporary sociologists of religion.

3.7.2 Religion, Nation, and National Identity

Current scholars in the sociology of religion largely agree on the role of religion in building a national identity. Davie (1994:95; 2007:140) describes that as religion is part of the history of nations, it is a source of national identity. She states that the Kirk is a focus of Scottish national consciousness. In the same way, Furseth and Repstad (2006:102) explain that in the Nordic countries and in Britain, there are national churches in otherwise secular states and that even people who are not affiliated with these religions are influenced by its values as they are ingrained in the shared values and morals of a nation. Casanova further builds on the close relationship between religion and society and argues that in Europe, "it may be more helpful to think of churches, in the Durkheimian sense of the term, as collective representations of imagined communities than to think of them, in Weber's sense, as monopolistic salvation institutions or firms" (2001:427).

Berger et al (2008:25) agree that the church is a strong marker of national identity, especially in nations with a close connection between the church and the

state. They use Finland as an example⁸⁵ and state that almost all Finns are members of the Church of Finland, and that it is so taken for granted that most public ceremonies and national celebrations take place in the Church that they cannot conceive of an alternative venue. Similarly, Hervieu-Léger speaks of Danes as *belonging without believing*⁸⁶ as she argues that they “do not believe in god and never attend church but faithfully continue to pay the tax that goes to the Lutheran Church because they like to see religious buildings properly maintained for the ceremonies associated with rites of passage” (2006:48).⁸⁷ Berget et al (2008:15) further describe the case of Germany where a full eight percent additional income tax is allocated to the national church and where most people despite this have not exited the church as they may need its services at some point.

Davie (2002a:19; 2007:140; Berger et al, 2008:15) uses the term *vicarious religion* to describe the type of religious affiliation of people who do not want to take part in the church but who would like it to remain for the potential use of themselves, others, and the nation as a whole. More specifically, Davie argues that:

Europeans are not so much less religious than populations in other parts of the world but...are content to let both churches and church goers 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. The almost universal take-up of religious ceremonies at the time of a death is the most obvious expression of this tendency (2002a:19).

However, Davie unconvincingly assumes that the overwhelming proportion of individuals that turns to the churches for funeral services do so for religious reasons.⁸⁸ This is indeed an issue of generalisation, which may be further illustrated by Zuckerman’s observations of a similar religious ritual describing that “there is no question that baptizing of babies is the most important, lovely, and special ceremonies that Swedes and Danes engage in... But it is meaning that is familial, or cultural, or traditional in nature. Not supernatural” (2008:160).

As was introduced in Chapter 2 with the connection between Protestantism and secularisation, nationalism scholars (e.g. Anderson, 2006; Hastings, 1997; Llobera, 1994; Marx, 2005) convincingly use the establishment of state churches as a reason

⁸⁵ Finland is arguably in many ways similar to Sweden in terms of religiosity and church history.

⁸⁶ For more on *believing and belonging*, see section 3.4 (pp. 68-71).

⁸⁷ This may serve as an example of *cultural religion*. For more on this, see section 3.7.3 (pp. 83-85).

⁸⁸ I explain in full why that is in Chapter 8 (pp. 233-262).

for a strong connection between nation, national identity, and religion. It is possible that by applying this to the case of Scotland and Sweden, one can come to a possible explanation for the perceived differences. Brown (1997:184-190) argues that just like similar processes in the rest of Western Europe, the Church of Scotland was an integral part of the development of Scottish national identity after the union of 1707 after which Scotland ceased to be a formal state. However, he points to the lack of a national cohesiveness in church matters⁸⁹ as well as the fact that national consciousness of Scotland has further been complicated by the union when Scottish identity was blurred with a British national identity. Brown further argues that in the early and middle of the 20th century, Scotland regained its own national identity and as it came at a time of religious decline and after the disestablishment of the state church in 1929, a Scottish identity did not have strong ties to the church. In fact, he asserts that religious decline is one of the key reasons for the emergence of a political and cultural nationalism in Scotland between the 1960s and 1990s (Brown, 1997:190).

While the connection between religion and national identity, particularly in Protestant European nations is both theoretically and empirically sensible, I believe it is more appropriate to use the term *cultural identity* to speak of the core connection between a religious heritage and key cultural practices and traditions. In most Protestant nations, deeply rooted traditions are closely influenced by national churches, suggesting that it would be entirely reasonable to speak of religion as part of a national identity, such as Bäckström et al (2004) do when they describe religion in Sweden as a Swedish rather than Christian identity. However the Swedes and Scots I interviewed did not make a conscious connection between their religious affiliation or practices and a national identity. Marx defines national identity as, “a collective sentiment or identity, bounding and binding together those individuals who share a sense of large-scale political solidarity aimed at creating, legitimating, or challenging states” (2005:6), and particularly the latter half of his definition is rather different from the role of religious traditions in the contexts of study. More specifically, a religious identity in these two nations is not about political solidarity, nor did interview participants take part in religious rituals and similar to

⁸⁹ See section 2.4 (pp. 41-54).

acknowledge or express a Swedish or Scottish national identity. Rather, they followed traditional practices because it was simply what others did and what had been done for generations, along with Hervieu-Léger's claim of religion as a "distant shared memory" (2006:48).

In other words, while the sociologists of religion that speak of the link between nation and religion are correct in their observations, only a few scholars have devoted in-depth attention to study the meaning of religious traditions and rituals to people who live in otherwise secularised societies. Fortunately, the contributions made by these scholars (e.g. Demerath, 2000; Zuckerman, 2008) are both extensive and to the point. This is consequently the focus of the next section.

3.7.3 Cultural Religion

The term *cultural religion* was first coined by Demerath (2000:127) to describe a connection between a collective religious identity and a historical past external to religious belief and participation. He speaks of this phenomenon in three largely different contexts; Sweden, Northern Ireland, and Poland. Despite differing levels of religious beliefs and active participation in these nations, religion often takes the form of an expression of a historical heritage or legacy. While Demerath has introduced the concept of cultural religion, it has been extensively applied by Zuckerman (2008) who uses the concept to describe a majority of Danes and Swedes in his qualitative description of religion in Scandinavia. His interpretation of the term is to some extent further centred around the idea of a void of supernatural beliefs while religious traditions and affiliation are maintained, while Demerath (2000) does not necessarily see religious beliefs as incompatible with cultural religion.

Zuckerman defines cultural religion as "the phenomenon of people identifying with historically religious traditions, and engaging in ostensibly religious practices, without truly believing in the supernatural content thereof" (2008:155). He explains that this refers in particular to two main elements: *identification* with a religious group and *participation* in various rituals and ceremonies (Zuckerman, 2008:155-156). He makes an important distinction between active church attendance on the one hand, and other forms of religious belonging on the other. In other

contexts, these measures may be seen as closely related, but in Scandinavia, they are fundamentally different phenomena acknowledged and performed as a result of different underlying reasons.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, Zuckerman (2008:166) notes that individuals who identify with a religion and who take part in religious ceremonies despite a lack of religious beliefs are, for the most part, ignored in contemporary sociological research. Similarly, Demerath (2000:127, 136) argues that even though cultural religion may, particularly in Europe, be used to describe one of the most common forms of religious identification, it has largely been overlooked by sociologists of religion. Notably, he asserts that this is the case despite the fact that cultural religion is of key importance in understanding secularisation. He argues that this phenomenon may represent the last remains of a historical church culture as a “final stage” of secularisation (Demerath, 2000:136-137). Demerath’s statement highlights the importance of examining cultural religion and other forms of remaining functions of religion in relation to secularisation.

To further illustrate the applicability of the concept of cultural religion, Zuckerman describes that even though a majority of Swedes and Danes are socialised into Christianity by learning about bible stories, singing religious hymns, observing religious traditions and holidays, and identifying themselves as Christian, “hardly any of them believed in the basic theological content” (2008:152).⁹⁰ This is in line with Furseth and Repstad’s (2006:139) observation that in the Nordic countries, it is common to use the church for rites of passage regardless of spiritual beliefs. Similarly, Bruce asserts that “we can see an increasingly secular people losing faith but retaining a nostalgic fondness for it” (1996:35).

Essentially, cultural religion is the result of an adherence to a collective heritage, closely in line with Hervieu-Léger’s (2006:48) idea of a “distant shared memory.” In a nation like Sweden that has had almost non-existent religious diversity until relatively recently, cultural traditions and practices are naturally closely tied to the Church. In line with Durkheim (1912/1995), these rituals have a special place in the lives of Swedes and indeed signifies a sacred,⁹¹ yet largely non-

⁹⁰ This is in line with my research findings fully explored in chapters 7 and 8.

⁹¹ In that it carries “a quality of mysterious and awesome power...attributed to the objectifications of human culture” (Berger, 1967:25).

religious meaning. The concept of cultural religion successfully acknowledges this very crucial aspect, which is often missing in other conceptualisations such as religious *belonging* (e.g. Davie, 1994, 2002a, 2007).

Demerath's (2000) use of the term cultural religion can, to some extent, be applied to Scotland as well. Demerath describes cultural Catholics and cultural Protestants in Northern Ireland as "caught up in the religious legacies handed down from family to family, neighbourhood to neighbourhood, and community to community" (2000:131). The idea of identifying with a religious group because of a family history is present in Scotland as well and can in fact to a certain extent be distinguished from religious beliefs. However, this is very much associated with community and family and is therefore largely different from the form of cultural religion found in Sweden. There, an almost national adherence to more or less homogenous cultural traditions is accompanied by an unawareness or complete neglect of the supernatural connection to these practices. Cultural religion, then, is more readily applicable to Swedes, as a group, than to Scots. Instead, a focus on community with the concepts of cultural defence and social capital may more appropriately be used in the Scottish context.

3.8 Religion and Community

3.8.1 Cultural Defence

Largely influenced by earlier work by Martin (1978), the concept of *cultural defence* was put forth by Steve Bruce (e.g. 1996, 2002a). It serves as an explanation of functions of religiosity alternative to spirituality, thereby describing a process in which religion can remain relevant even alongside secularisation, or indeed delay secularisation altogether. He explains that a common source of cultural defence is ethnic pride, which is used to characterise and explain religious tension or conflict either at a national or sub-cultural level (1996:96). In other words, in an "us versus them" situation when a religious identity is questioned or challenged, it can strengthen the sense of community, the attachment to that specific group, and at least

in the shorter term, acceptance of the specific beliefs of the group (Zuckerman, 2009:62).

In relation to the secularisation thesis, Bruce (1996:125) argues that religious tension may maintain but not create religious beliefs and that, “once a religious culture has become fragmented and the close ties between religion and ethnicity lost, then no amount of external pressure will create a shared religion” (1996:123). In other words, according to Bruce, cultural defence simply delays but does not stop or reverse a process of secularisation. He explains that the secularisation thesis can be sustained given there are no empirical examples of a secularised culture that has seen a significant upsurge in religiosity (1996:125).

This concept is above all applicable on the Scottish case, both at a national, and, perhaps even more so, at a sub-cultural level. Martin (1978:80) argues that a strong union between culture and religion is formed when a social group is largely separated from the dominant group or culture. Martin (1978:77-78) further describes two religio-cultural identities applicable to Scotland on which elements of cultural defence may be based. First, a separate national religious identity within a larger political union, such as that between Presbyterianism and the British state, and second, religio-ethnic minorities within the wider culture, as exemplified with the relationship between Catholicism and Protestantism within Scotland.⁹²

According to Bruce’s (1996) argument, it is possible that religious decline takes place in both Scotland and Sweden, but that elements of cultural defence serve to delay, but not stop, the process of secularisation, particularly in Scotland. In line with this, Zuckerman (2009:62) argues that one of the reasons for the low levels of religiosity in Sweden is the virtual nonexistence of the need for cultural defence. He further describes cultural defence as, “whenever national, ethnic, or cultural identity is threatened, the religiosity of the threatened group will typically be strengthened” (2009:62). This may serve as one of the reasons for higher levels of religiosity within minority religions, such as Catholicism in Scotland,⁹³ and various free churches in Sweden.⁹⁴ Most importantly, a majority of Swedes adhere to the largely unthreatened

⁹² This is described further in chapters 2 (pp. 41-54) and 7 (pp. 208-211).

⁹³ Although, the Catholic Church in Scotland is also seeing decreasing attendance (e.g. Brown, 1997:158), and participation in rituals – see section 8.3 (pp. 248-261).

⁹⁴ For Sweden, see e.g. Kasselstrand and Kandlik Eltanani, 2013. However, it is important to note that tension between free churches and the dominant Swedish culture is comparatively weak.

and unchallenged⁹⁵ Church of Sweden, while Scotland is considerably more diverse. This may also account for the importance of religiously defined communities in Scotland, a phenomenon much less prevalent in Sweden.

3.8.2 Religion and Social Capital

Social capital is a multidimensional concept with various meanings revolving around the importance of social ties for individuals and society (Portes, 2000). Here, I refer to social ties specifically in relation to local community, often exemplified by participation in social activities in groups other than family (Putnam, 2000). Hadaway and Roof (1978:10) argue that the local community is of key importance in understanding social bonds and attachment, and that most social activities take place in this setting. In line with this, they assert that when such ties are weakened, so is the attachment to the church. Similarly, a strong connection to a community is associated with increased church attendance (e.g. Hadaway and Roof, 1978; Hammond, 1992). This relationship, which they call the “community factor hypothesis” is tested by McIntosh et al (2002:123). They indeed find that strong ties within neighbourhoods and community are significantly and positively correlated with religious participation.

Putnam asserts that religious institutions are the single most important carrier of social capital in the United States and that they “support a wide range of social activities well beyond conventional worship” (2000:66). With the “Putnam thesis,” his famous contribution to the study of social capital and modern democracies, Putnam (2000) argues that a decrease in social involvement such as group activities and membership is associated with a similar decrease in civic engagement, which in turn is an important component of a democratic society. Bruce (2002b) and Davie (2002b) have interestingly debated the impact of his work on the secularisation thesis through a discussion of religious involvement in the United Kingdom. Bruce (2002b) criticises Davie’s view that a decrease in church participation is not linked to a similar decline in religious beliefs, and that they are rather effects of wider societal trends in line with Putnam’s theory of a decline in public association. He believes

⁹⁵ Nonetheless, Zuckerman (2009:62) mentions that it is possible that the increasing presence of Islam will bring a growing need for cultural defence.

Davie's claims could only be sustained if a lower interest in religious participation was accompanied by other forms of expressions of religious beliefs, but that he fails to see this in the British society (2002b:321). In her response to Bruce, Davie (2002b) argues that her application of Putnam's (2000) work to British church participation is not done as a refutation of the secularisation thesis per se, but that the aim is rather to understand secularisation in relation to other social structural trends.

It is of course possible that both Bruce (2002b) and Davie (2002b) are correct in their observations, meaning that a decrease in religious participation could come as a result of both a general disinterest in social organisations *and* a decline in religious beliefs. I believe Putnam's work should not be disregarded in the attempt to provide a thorough understanding of religious decline in contemporary Protestant Europe, but it is evident that active religious participation and belief are closely interconnected through socialisation as argued by Bruce (2002a:148).

Putnam (2000:281) discusses the common assertion that the disengagement observed in contemporary society could be explained by the strength of the welfare state and government intervention. This could indeed serve as a plausible explanation for the differences between Scotland and Sweden. However, Putnam (2000:281) does not subscribe to this theory and shows this with the fact that group membership in Scandinavia is, comparatively speaking, in fact thriving. This is also supported by Bäckström et al (2004:110) who state that 90% of Swedes are members of a voluntary organisation and that Swedes, on average, are members in between 3 and 4 organisations, not counting the Church of Sweden. They instead convincingly speak of the specific role of the Church of Sweden in relation to the organisational sphere, which is likely a key reason for the differences between Scotland and Sweden in terms of the religious community. They state that the Church of Sweden's close integration with the welfare state has caused a disassociation between the church and various social groups and organisations. Rather than fostering a sense of community as a result of more active organisational belonging, the Church of Sweden is viewed as a government institution providing public service (Bäckström et al, 2004:121).

This is arguably largely different in the Scottish context. While the connection to the Scottish nation is not non-existent, the Church of Scotland is to a further extent than the Church of Sweden regarded as a voluntary organisation among others, to

which a membership is an active choice. In other words, it is possible that social structural changes that have led to a declining need for social involvement has made a negative impact on church participation generally, however, it is, as stated above, important to view these changes in relation to both changes in other measures of religiosity as well as the nature of the organisation in relation to the state and wider society.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter aimed to present a broad overview of theories and concepts that can serve as a framework with which to explain secularisation and the role of religion in secularising societies. With the *secularisation theories*, I presented key perspectives on religious change in contemporary society, particularly as related to Europe. The effects of modernity may thus explain a general decline in religion in both Scotland and Sweden. With the discussion of *believing and belonging* I showed that using such a typology to describe a highly fluid concept like religion on Scotland and Sweden is bound to be inaccurate and limiting, particularly without a clear conceptualisation of the terms. The effect of government intervention on religious vitality is a valuable aspect of the *theory of the religious economy* as it may be used to explain religious decline in Scotland and Sweden and also account for the differences between the two nations. The discussion of *religion and security* has a similar purpose in that it can offer an alternative or additional explanation for differing trajectories of secularisation.

Examining the connection between *religion and society* can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of history, culture, and tradition in relation to religion and secularisation. It may be used to show that traditionally religious rituals can serve alternative functions with a declining focus on the supernatural. Likewise, the concept of *cultural religion* uses a connection to a cultural or historical legacy to explain ritual practice and church affiliation such as seen in Sweden. *Cultural defence* assists in explaining a remaining role of religion in a secularising society such as Scotland, and *religion and social capital* highlights a role of the church in the formation of community and social relationships. It also offers a social

structural explanation to religious decline and emphasises key differences between Scotland and Sweden.

Various contributions attempting to provide a comprehensive answer to patterns of religion in contemporary society have all been subject to criticism and debate. There are advantages and limitations to every one of these theories and concepts, largely dependent on specific research aims and contexts of study. As mentioned, I believe that the theories and concepts presented here will, together with the historical background presented in Chapter 2, serve as useful framework with which to explain similarities and differences in relation to patterns of religion and secularisation in Scotland and Sweden.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapters presented a theoretical and historical framework of religion in Scotland and Sweden. They argued that distinct perspectives on secularisation are largely a result of different definitions, conceptualisations, and specific research settings. In light of this, this chapter suggests that current disagreements are also dependent on methodological approaches and different views on how to appropriately measure religion. Here, I will highlight potential pitfalls and dilemmas in researching religion, as well as present my own research design and perceptions from the field.

In the first part of the chapter, I discuss methodological issues in social research in general and sociology of religion in particular. I have chosen to examine these concerns from a social constructionist perspective (e.g. Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Gergen, 1985; 1999; Maines, 2000; Potter, 1996) as I believe that this epistemological and ontological orientation offers a particularly valuable understanding of the difficulties in categorising and arranging social phenomena such as religion. Sociology of religion is a field that is, possibly more so than others, structured around individual meanings and perceptions of reality. With a broader appreciation of this perspective, many of the common mistakes made in the field of sociology of religion may subsequently be avoided.

In the second part I present a mixed methods research design as well as describe advantages and limitations of both mixed methods generally as well as the specific quantitative and qualitative elements of the research design. This is followed by the final part, an account of my experience conducting this research beginning with a discussion of quantitative data collection and analysis and advantages and disadvantages of conducting secondary analysis. Furthermore, I describe the qualitative data collection process, specifically focusing on the construction of my interview schedule, reasons behind participant selection criteria, as well as strategies for recruiting participants. This is followed by an account of the process of conducting the interviews, including a description of demographic characteristics of

the participants, and a discussion of ethical considerations and dilemmas. Finally, I present how I went about the analysis of interview data.

Regardless of the fundamental importance of empirical research to social science, it is crucial to acknowledge that the process of conducting research comes with certain restrictions. One of the specific aims of this chapter is, therefore, to discuss such limitations both to research in general and within the sociology of religion specifically.

4.2 Key Methodological Issues and Dilemmas

4.2.1 General Concerns in Measuring Religion

As noted in Chapter 3, religiosity is a multidimensional concept that is difficult to define. Specific indicators of this construct are also notoriously difficult to measure. Hill et al (2000:51-52) argue that many attempts at applying set definitions and measures of religiosity have limited value as they often disregard key elements of religious experience and belief and that measures of religion and spirituality are often too narrow or too general to generate valuable findings (Hill et al, 2000:52). Similarly, Luckman (1967:21) asserts that sociological research on religion tends to be uncritical, and Means (1970:184) argues that measures of belief across contexts lack reliability and that social scientific research of religion merely adequately grasps the behavioural aspect.

Bruce further highlights methodological deficiencies in the field and states:

I frequently find myself at odds with other sociologists of religion about the extent of what is variously called "non-organized" religion, religious potential, receptivity to religion, spirituality, implicit religion, and the like. They find a lot of it; I see little. Much of my scepticism stems from the conclusion that current work in this area is methodologically inadequate (2002a:186).

He convincingly argues that some scholars invent latent religiosity by using leading questions, questionable cut-off points in categorising and analysing data, by wrongfully interpreting largely secular responses as religious, and by failing to adopt a critical approach in relation to the meanings behind people's values and attitudes on religion (2002:187).

Not isolated to the sociology of religion, these issues form key methodological questions within social science research more generally,⁹⁶ as presented by social constructionist scholars (e.g. Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Gergen, 1985; Maines, 2000). They emphasise limitations of generalising social research findings as meanings and perceptions held by individuals are social constructs that are constantly altering. They do not dispute that there are shared agreements and patterns in our social world that may be explored through empirical research, but argue that findings should be viewed as fluid rather than firm social realities. They thereby encourage a more critical attitude among researchers. I find value in the social constructionist perspective particularly in relation to the importance of adopting a careful approach within all steps of the research process as well as to acknowledge fluidity of interpretations above all across (and within) social contexts as described below. Nevertheless, I agree with Bruce (2002:187) that despite methodological issues in the field, and even if the findings produced are not without reservations, the role of a social scientist within the sociology of religion is indeed to measure and map out patterns of religiosity regardless of how difficult this may be.

4.2.2 Language and Interpretation

One of the salient features of the social constructionist approach is the importance of language as it drives the process of social construction. It is by the use of language that meanings are passed on to other individuals through interaction, something that is highly dependent on cultural context (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Gergen, 1985, 1999; Potter, 1996). Language is not only the focal point in social constructionism, it is also the tool by which researchers collect information.

A potential problem in the research process revolves around how the fluidity of meanings shapes how the participant interprets a certain question or concept. In line with this, Davie (2007:115) describes the common problem of question wordings as affecting the answers that are given. Voas and Bruce (2004) discuss a similar notion with the 2001 Census in the United Kingdom. Scotland's Census is

⁹⁶ Particularly in relation to respondents' as well as researchers' interpretations of meanings as discussed further in section 4.2.2 (pp. 93-94).

implemented independently from England and Wales and the fact that survey items were ordered differently, that they were worded differently, and that the response options were different, contributed to large variations in statistics of religiosity in Scotland as opposed to England and Wales. Similarly, Hertel (1980) shows significant differences in how respondents interpret the term *afterlife* as opposed to *belief in heaven* and calls for caution in questionnaire construction.

Furthermore, in survey research, there is little or no room for the respondent to explain their interpretation of a term. Along with this, Bruce (2002a:187) argues that many sociologists of religion interpret possibly secular responses as religious. An example of this is Davie's (1994:2) notion that modern Britain is less secularised than many scholars claim as only 4 percent are atheists. However, as mentioned earlier,⁹⁷ this does not necessarily mean that the other 96 percent *believe*, and I agree with Bruce's claim that people may be atheist but choose not to state this explicitly because of the connotation of the word itself (2002a:193).⁹⁸ Survey research also does not grasp what respondents mean when they state that they are *spiritual*. Interview findings presented in Chapter 5 suggest that, to many, this might have an entirely non-religious connotation.

Berger and Luckmann (1966:35-36) argue that when one is born, one is placed in a reality formed from a web of interactions and agreements. As social construction occurs through interaction, the meanings that are imposed upon oneself and that one hold as "true" and "objective" do have certain limitations. If an individual's interpretation of the social world is developed from his or her interactions with various other individuals, then meanings are based on who interacts with whom. While one may argue then that it is possible for each individual to hold a unique meaning of certain terms and concepts, specific interpretations are evidently more homogeneous within a specific cultural context given that a person's thoughts and meanings are constructed based on social interactions within networks of social relationships. This, in turn, shows the importance of social context in research.

⁹⁷ See section 3.4.3 (pp. 70-71).

⁹⁸ Interview findings in relation to the interpretation of the term atheist are presented in section 5.4.2 (pp. 153-156).

4.2.3 Contextual Differences

When studying phenomena highly constructed of people's individual meanings and experiences, it is not only important to consider the general difficulties of structuring such beliefs and experiences, but also the added challenge of conducting such research at a comparative level. Davie (2007:117) argues that comparative research is particularly complex in line with the social constructionist principle of the importance of cultural and historical contexts in the interpretation of meanings (Gergen, 1985:273). She speaks of the necessity to "take into account cultural specificity, historical trajectory, linguistic nuance, and culturally varied motivations" (Davie, 2007:114) and calls for a methodology that can account for this, a task that she believes survey methods are largely unable to accomplish.

Quantitative measures of religiosity, in particular those of the cross-national kind, generally do not consider the diverse conceptual meanings found in different environments and applying set survey items in multiple contexts disregards the historical and cultural processes that have shaped the meaning of religious practice and belief (Davie, 2007:117). Furthermore, religious identification, spirituality and belief may evidently mean largely different things within different religions or denominations and thus, one needs to carefully consider such implications when analysing large-scale cross-national datasets on religion.

Not only is an interpretation in itself contextually influenced, a research participant may also give a particular answer to a question depending on the perceived norms and values of the specific social group (Bradburn et al, 2004:11). Potter (1996:52) gives an example of how a respondent may view one answer as "correct" when he refers to Atkinson (1978) who asserts that a phenomenon is interpreted in different ways depending on values and norms. He uses suicide as an example, where respondents from Catholic cultures are less likely to see a certain death as a suicide. This could influence how the authorities classify this death, and may give a statistic in one society that is not comparable to another. This methodological issue also presents a problem within studies such as Durkheim's "Suicide" (1897) where he found that suicide was more frequent among Protestants than Catholics.

Similarly, Bruce (2002a:206) highlights contextual norms as a problem in the sociology of religion. He argues that a more critical examination of respondents' answers is needed. He explains that in the United States, self-reported rates of church attendance are strongly inflated. In line with this, Hadaway et al state that, "If Americans are going to church at the rate they report, the churches would be full on Sunday mornings and denominations would be growing, yet they are not" (1993:742). In other words, it is likely that participants give answers that they think the researcher wants to hear. Similarly, while it is problematic to speak of general European social norms, Berger et al (2008:12) state that Americans exaggerate their religiosity while Europeans, on the contrary, inflate their secularity.⁹⁹

The potential pitfalls described above are certainly relevant to a comparative study of religious decline in Scotland and Sweden. Perhaps it is even more crucial to carefully consider possible differences in two nations that on the surface look very similar. As described in Chapter 2, while both nations have a history of a Protestant state church, the historical circumstances are very different and have undoubtedly shaped the contemporary religious landscape including meanings, motivations, and interpretation of religious beliefs and experiences. Furthermore, particular contextual assumptions do not only affect the interpretations made by research participants, but also those made by the researcher.

4.2.4 The Role of the Researcher

It is crucial to be aware of how one's own taken-for-granted assumptions may influence interpretations and conclusions. As part of the social world, one goes through day-to-day activities making certain assumptions about what one knows and what one thinks that everyone else knows. Berger and Luckmann describe this with the idea of "objectified reality" (1966:35). Society is constructed, but its components are seemingly firm in a way that one does not have to question the meanings and characteristics of every aspect of it. Potter introduces the concept of "mundane reasoning" to show this, and states that:

⁹⁹ Section 6.3 (pp. 172-175) describes how this may influence church attendance levels in Scotland and Sweden.

When we are discussing features of our world with others – what went on, who did what and so on – we make a fundamental assumption. We assume that we all have at least potential access to the same underlying reality. Any neutral, competent observer, placed in the same position, will see the same thing (1996:53).

Consequently, when a researcher conceptualises ideas and variables or interprets results, he or she oftentimes assumes that what he or she holds as true, this is in fact what everyone else sees as well.

A researcher often takes his or her interpretations of meanings for granted as an objective reality and may therefore fail to capture important but subtle differences. This is in line with Bruce's claim that minor variations in how we interpret an answer or statistic can lead to very large differences in conclusions (2002a:189). He mentions this as he discusses Bibby's (1993) study on religion in Canada. Bibby draws the conclusion that Canadian church attendance has the potential to increase since around 50 percent of the respondents are at least "somewhat concerned about the purpose of life" (Bruce, 2002a:188). It is clear then, that according to Bibby, contemplating the purpose of life is a Christian matter, while the purpose of life might, to others, be an entirely secular matter. This is an issue whether the researcher is an *insider* or an *outsider* to the context he or she studies. A researcher who is from a different culture may adopt his or her own experiences of religion and, for example, assume that high levels of membership or affiliation means high levels of religiosity or religious participation, when, in fact, this may not be the case. In other words, inadequate knowledge of a certain context causes limitations to the research findings.

The insider-outsider dilemma is not only an issue associated with social contexts, but also to the researcher's own opinions, values, and experiences in relation to the topic of study.¹⁰⁰ Furseth and Repstad (2006:207) ask whether or not it is an advantage¹⁰¹ or a limitation to hold religious beliefs or to identify with the religion of study. They describe that it is possible that a person may not be fully able to grasp a religious belief or experience unless one has lived it oneself, but that, on the other hand, as an *insider* one may not retain enough distance to the phenomenon

¹⁰⁰ This does not only apply to the study of religion but to social research more generally.

¹⁰¹ As argued by e.g. Eliade (1959) and Smith (1989).

of study. If one is an *insider* and is oneself a church member who believes in God, one may assume that everyone else who is a member of the church believes in God as well. That said, I agree with Furseth and Repstad (2006:207) that regardless of beliefs and values, a competent researcher is committed to producing fair and, to the extent possible, objective research findings. Nonetheless, it is an aspect worth contemplating since one's own assumptions are so deeply ingrained in how one views the world.

This may be a concern in quantitative as well as qualitative research, but it may be so that quantitative research is particularly problematic with a limited access to respondents' reasons behind a certain statement. This forces the researcher to make assumptions about people's views and values, which, as presented above, are inevitably filtered through his or her own view of the social world. Reflexivity is thus an important aspect of empirical research (e.g. Foley, 2001; St. Louis and Barton, 2002; Watt, 2007). By examining one's own place in the research process, one can come to the understanding that one's own interpretations could cause skewed descriptions, in particular since as a researcher who operationalises concepts, one puts limits on the possible responses based on one's own views. One of the specific issues that I contemplated during every step of the research process is the insider-outsider problem. I am, myself, from Sweden, and my specific views on Swedish society as well as the views I have as an outsider to Scottish society can both be favourable and pose problems. In addition, every researcher has his or her own reasons for choosing to research a specific topic and while no study can be completely objective, it is important to be cautious of one's own basic understandings and how they may cloud one's interpretations of findings.

I believe that the research design of a mixed methods approach, described in full in section 4.3, is a way to reduce these risks as well as those described in the previous sections. However, while it is crucial to adopt a careful approach, I still believe that even if the findings produced are not without reservations and there will be deviations from the patterns, empirical research is still useful in uncovering main themes and relationships, which, just as Bruce mentioned (2002a:187), is certainly a key task of a sociologist of religion. What is arguably another task of scholars of secularisation is a study of the secular. This may seem like an obvious contention,

but has received surprisingly little attention from scholars in the field. The next section consequently discusses this concern as well as emphasises the methodological complexities in relation to a study of non-religion.

4.2.5 Researching Secularity

Studies of secularisation would arguably benefit from a thorough understanding of religious beliefs and practices as well as an examination of values and experiences of those who have chosen to “opt out” of religion in one way or another. A methodological dilemma that has received surprisingly little attention is consequently how one goes about studying the secular. Zuckerman highlights this as a key concern as he persuasively states that:

Many scholars have been aggressively debating secularization for years, and yet despite all of the books and articles that have been written on the subject, all of them – at least that I’m aware of – are generally theoretical and broadly historical in nature, and don’t examine secular life as it is actually lived by non-believing men and women in the here and now, or the nuances of the secular worldviews of actual individuals who are irreligious (2008:96).

Zuckerman (2008:76) further discusses the difficulties in researching the absence of something. How do you study secular life, choices, and experiences when one cannot simply do so by attending a church and thereby to some extent participate in the lived experiences as one can with religion at a place of worship? Davie mentions this concern in relation to *vicarious religion*¹⁰² and states that, “how can a sociologist document a phenomenon which almost by definition remains stubbornly below the radar, at least in its ‘normal’ manifestations?” (2007:112). She calls for new approaches to grapple with this issue, and states that “The crucial point to grasp in terms of sociological method is the need to be attentive to episodes, whether individual or collective, in or through which the implicit becomes explicit” (Davie, 2007:128).

The dilemma of studying a “lack of something” is intriguing and an issue worth contemplating over in relation to this research. Geertz (1968) argues that the most appropriate and accurate studies of religion involve researching and describing how religion is experienced in the moment that it is practiced rather than memories

¹⁰² See section 3.7.2 (pp. 80-83).

or opinions of it. It would undoubtedly be a challenge to conduct an in-depth ethnographic study of lived experiences of secular life in the same manner as within a religious community. This is nevertheless not the aim of this research as the focus is not on practices of the secular per se, but rather on life choices, values, and beliefs held by religious as well as non-religious people in relation to conventionally considered religious ceremonies and traditions.

Furthermore, I consider the dilemma of studying the secular as less of an issue as this research is not focused simply on the secular isolated from the religious. Instead, I aim to explain changes to, as well as remnants of, religion in secularising societies, which are largely tied to the religious and civil institutions that carry such practices.

4.3 Research Design

4.3.1 Mixed Methods

Aiming to overcome, or at least minimise, many of the methodological dilemmas and issues discussed above, I used a mixed methods approach, which is a research design made up of both a qualitative and a quantitative element (Bergman, 2008:1; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:6). Surprisingly little mixed methods research is conducted in the sociology of religion. In fact, I am not aware of any contemporary research on European secularisation that utilises such an approach, and as explained further below, I believe such a design offers the most comprehensive solution to problems of interpretation and generalisation. Furthermore, while both methodologies strongly complement each other (Black, 1999:21), I believe my two research questions to some extent call for slightly different approaches in order to come to a more thorough understanding of patterns of secularisation and the overlap between religion and the secular in relation to religious and cultural practices in the two nations of study.

Mixed methods research gained increased popularity in the beginning of the 1990s and is today the fastest growing method in social science research (Bergman, 2008:11). Even though the approach has seen an increase in acceptance and popularity, it has been argued that qualitative and quantitative methods are

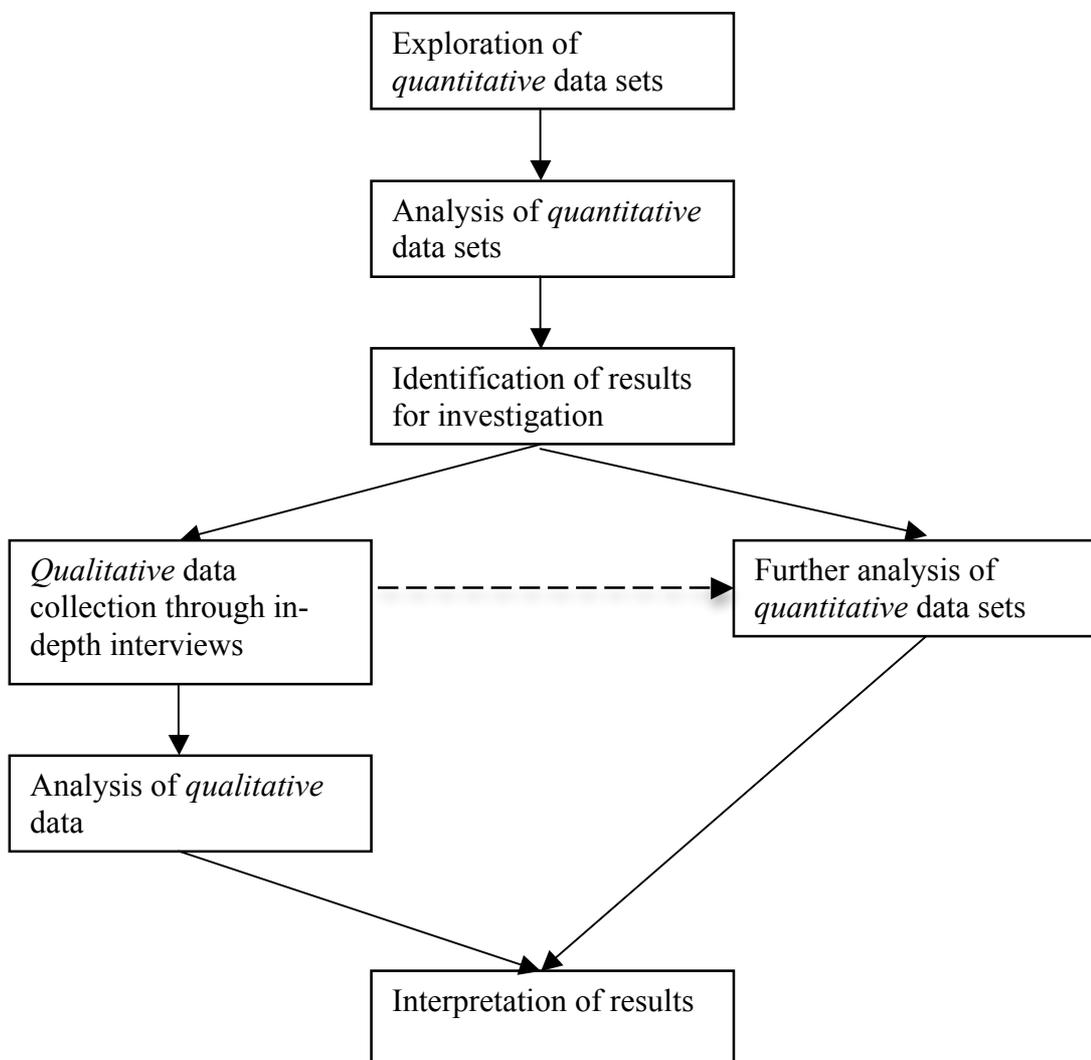
incompatible following the specific epistemological and ontological positions taken by radical positivist and constructionist scholars (Bergman, 2008:12). While it is true that the worldviews differ largely between advocates for qualitative and quantitative methods, I do believe that mixing two methodologies is not only possible, but also favourable. First of all, it is a gross overstatement that quantitative researchers all hold the idea that objective facts can be identified and pinned down like those in the natural sciences. One of the core aspects focused on in research training is that nothing can be proven and through quantitative analysis we merely *suggest* that a certain relationship exists. Similarly, a qualitatively oriented researcher can find value in adopting a quantitative element as an attempt at exploring shared agreements and patterns that most scholars, including qualitatively oriented social constructionists (e.g. Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Gergen, 1985, 1999; Maines, 2000; Potter, 1996) state exist in the social world. Therefore, I argue that a careful implementation and design of mixed methods research can generate a clearer, more comprehensive picture than using one method alone.

Creswell, Plano Clark, and Garrett (2008:68-69) explain that there are four main types of mixed methods designs. *A triangulation design* consists of a concurrent implementation of a quantitative and a qualitative element, which are combined into one interpretation of the research problem. *An embedded design* is often used in experimental research when pre- and post-test quantitative or qualitative data is enhanced with a component of the other method during the intervention phase. *Explanatory and exploratory designs* are two-phased designs with a quantitative (explanatory) or qualitative (exploratory) first phase, followed by a second phase of the other method. The second phase is then dependent on the results of the first phase. In the explanatory design, the second phase of qualitative data collection and analysis is most often implemented to explain or further illuminate quantitative results. In the exploratory design, the purpose of the quantitative component of the second phase is to generalise or test the qualitative results.

The specific design I adopted for this PhD thesis is a modified version of the phased approach called the *Explanatory Sequential Design* (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:71). There are two different versions of this design; the follow up

explanations model and the participant selection model. The difference between the two types consists in the purpose of the quantitative results. In the participant selection model, the quantitative results are used to locate specific individuals with certain characteristics interesting to the study who are then approached for an in-depth interview. The follow up explanations model is suitable when the research questions call for a methodology where qualitative findings are needed to describe and clarify significant differences or surprising quantitative data (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:72). The latter version of the explanatory sequential design was chosen as the most suitable for this study.

Figure 4.1: Implemented explanatory mixed methods design



While the main structure of my design is sequential, I have implemented a modified version with a considerable degree of overlap between the two phases. This flexibility has allowed me to return to quantitative analysis concurrently with the qualitative data collection. The research design consists of an initial phase with a quantitative focus (see Figure 4.1). Here, secondary quantitative data sets were collected, examined and analysed, followed by an interpretation of initial results, which further identified important findings that needed additional investigation. Consequently, the first phase connects to the second through the initial quantitative results. In the next phase, qualitative data collection took place through in-depth, semi-structured, interviews designed to explore and explain the initial quantitative results. Simultaneously, further quantitative analysis was conducted based on initial quantitative results as well as perceptions from the interviews. This was followed by analysis of the qualitative data and, last of all, interpretation of the results.¹⁰³

4.3.2 Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches

Davie (2007:111) explains that research in the sociology of religion has been carried out using a broad range of methods each generating useful data depending on the direction of the research. The aim and reasoning behind my methodology was largely in line with her assertion that, “methods should be considered complementary: taken together they enable the researcher to build up as complete a picture as possible of the phenomenon that he or she is trying not only to describe but explain” (Davie, 2007:111). In line with this, I believe a methodology comprised of both a quantitative and a qualitative element is the most suitable way to approach my research questions.

A quantitative element makes important contributions to my project and ultimately the field for several reasons. Examining quantitative data provides a crucial background to the extent and nature of secularisation in Scotland and Sweden. With an analysis of large-scale surveys, I may cautiously generalise my findings to the population of Sweden and Scotland and thus add important insights to

¹⁰³ A more detailed account of the steps in the research process is presented in sections 4.4 (pp. 107-110) and 4.5 (pp. 110-120).

the current debate on secularisation. More specifically, I may contribute to the critique of Davie's (1990, 1994, 2002a, 2004, 2007) study on *believing and belonging*¹⁰⁴ by systematically examining relationships between constructs of belief and belonging in both nations of study. Additionally, with quantitative data I can control for the effect of demographics and other intervening variables and thereby isolate the effects of and relationships between my key variables of study (Black, 1999:44). Furthermore, the quantitative surveys¹⁰⁵ that I use are repeated in the same manner at different points, which allows for important examinations of trends of religion over time (e.g. Davie, 2007:113; Wuthnow, 1976, 1977).

My qualitative data does not have the ability to explore any general patterns of similarities and differences between Scotland and Sweden, which I believe is an integral part of a comparative study at the national level. The qualitative data is based on a smaller convenience sample,¹⁰⁶ and is therefore not representative of the population at large, which is nevertheless not the purpose of this data. The methods strongly complement each other in that quantitative techniques applied during the first phase of my research process provide a concrete understanding of broad social trends within which the qualitative data collection was pursued.

On the other hand, a qualitative component adds other important features and serves as a strong complement to the quantitative research. As mentioned in section 4.2, quantitative data on religion has been fairly inconsistent and scholars are divided on how this data should be interpreted (Bruce, 2002a). Religious beliefs and values are arguably complex and very personal in nature, making them impossible to pin down in a quantitative study. One of the conceived limitations to quantitative research is its inability to thoroughly capture individuals' experiences. The goal of survey research is to structure a phenomenon in defined categories and patterns, and, following the social constructionist perspective laid out in the first part of this chapter, quantitative research does not sufficiently portray the broad range of complex relationships in the social world. With the concept of *typification*, Berger and Luckmann (1966:45) argue that as one cannot have an in-depth understanding of all patterns and characteristics that exist, typification allows for structuring of one's

¹⁰⁴ See section 3.4 (pp. 68-71).

¹⁰⁵ See section 4.4 (pp. 107-110).

¹⁰⁶ See section 4.5 (pp. 110-120).

world based on own defined ideas of what something means, but that in doing so, we anonymise experiences. When a researcher develops a survey item, he or she puts constraints on what a respondent can answer. In line with this, they argue that “misinterpretation is more difficult to sustain in face-to-face interaction than in less ‘close’ forms of social relations” (1966:45). There is, in other word, value in adopting a qualitative element to quantitative research to grasp more subtle differences in interpretation of meanings.

Qualitative research also adds depth and texture to the quantitative results through contextual explanations from participants. Qualitative research, such as in-depth interviews used in this research, provide crucial insights that are not attainable through quantitative methods alone. This is argued by Zuckerman, who states that:

Surveys can only tell us so much. They can give us snapshots of information – useful information to be sure – but it is often information that amounts to little more than quick and partial glimpses of various aspects of a given population...by conducting face-to-face in-depth interviews with as many people as I could over the course of a year, I was able to get a much richer, subtler, and more nuanced understanding of what it means to be secular in a secular culture than any statistical survey could ever reveal (2008:97).

To get a thorough picture of the meanings that people attach to religious belonging, beliefs, secular participation and the like, the issue at hand needs to be discussed with participants to a considerable depth. I therefore believe that using a mixture of these two methodologies provides a strong and solid tool to examine my research questions. Nevertheless, as is the case with all research design, my approach comes with certain limitations, which are, along with general benefits, discussed below.

4.3.3 Strengths and Limitations of the Research Design

One of the main advantages with a mixed methods approach is that by using a method composed of both a quantitative and a qualitative element, it is possible to create a design that highlights the strengths of each method and offsets the weaknesses (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004:21). In line with this, using two methods creates an opportunity to see the research problem from different perspectives (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:9). As quantitative research tends to focus on numbers and qualitative research on words and in-depth meanings, an

integration of the two leads to a more comprehensive understanding that may not be possible if using one method alone (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004:21). On the other hand, it has been argued that a researcher adopting a mixed methods design needs considerable knowledge in both quantitative and qualitative methods, and an attempt at including a second method in a study to increase its value often leads to a research design and implementation that is too simplistic (Bergman, 2008:1). Similarly, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004:21) state that the researcher needs extensive knowledge on how to appropriately mix the two methods. As with all research, I believe such knowledge is something that is, in addition to completing training courses on the topics, gained with time and experience and that the benefits of conducting such research largely outweigh the potential limitations.

There are also strengths and weaknesses associated with the explanatory sequential design specifically. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:74) explain that because there are separate phases with quantitative data collection and analysis in one and the qualitative approach in the other,¹⁰⁷ this particular research design is straightforward to carry out. Therefore, a single person can conduct this research efficiently. On the other hand, the researcher needs to put thought into the amount of time budgeted for each phase and acknowledge that the qualitative phase will require more time. While considerable time and attention was be given to the examination and analysis of quantitative data, as secondary data sets was used rather than collecting this data myself, sufficient time was budgeted to the in-depth interviews without having to rush either one of the components. For the follow-up explanations model specifically, the researcher needs to carefully select which quantitative results need to be explained in the qualitative phase in order for the research design to yield meaningful results (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:74-75). The initial results from quantitative analysis highlighted key differences between Scotland and Sweden, which consequently informed the content of the qualitative interviews. Further quantitative analysis was, as mentioned, conducted concurrently with the interviews as they sparked interesting findings that called for additional investigation. I believe that with this modification and flexibility, I carefully tailored a methodological

¹⁰⁷ Although, as mentioned in section 4.3.1 (pp. 100-103), my design involves a degree of overlap in the second phase.

approach that involved a research process both suitable and robust for my specific research. A detailed account of this process is presented in the next section.

4.4 Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis

4.4.1 Survey Data

For the quantitative component of my research, data sets were collected for secondary analysis. These data sets are results of surveys that are either entirely on religion or have variables of interest included. For the initial stage of the research process, I used the International Social Survey Programme's (ISSP) data on religion from 2008. The data was collected simultaneously in multiple nations, including Scotland (within a wider British sample) and Sweden. Since the same questions were asked to individuals in all nations participating in the survey, a more direct comparative analysis of this data was possible, but regrettably the sample size for Scotland was relatively small at 173. This data set was used for a majority of the quantitative analysis on the Swedish context, but also the previous survey that the International Social Survey Programme implemented on religion, in 1998, was used specifically to investigate changes over the relevant decade. For Scotland, the attention was directed towards ongoing Scottish Social Attitudes Surveys (SSAS), with a primary interest in the 2001 data with an extended module on religion. I also incorporated trends of church membership and participation in religious rituals with figures from the Church of Sweden (Svenska Kyrkan, 2013), and statistics on marriage ceremonies from the General Register Office for Scotland (2011). The survey questions that make up some of the key variables used in this research can be found in Appendix IV.

Table 4.1: Quantitative data sets

Data Set	Nation	Unit of Analysis	Sample Size
International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), 1998	Sweden	Individuals	1189
International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), 2008	Sweden Scotland	Individuals	1235 173
Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (SSAS), 1999-2011*	Scotland	Individuals	1482-1665

*Excluding 2008.

4.4.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

In the first phase that took place prior to the qualitative data collection, I conducted descriptive analysis in SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), such as frequencies and cross tabulations. The aim of the descriptive analyses was to give a broader overview of various measures of religiosity in the two nations of study on which further investigation was to be based.¹⁰⁸ This was in line with Black’s idea that descriptive statistics “can be quite revealing, providing insights that would not otherwise be apparent” (1999:46). However, he further emphasises that, “Such an approach though, does not provide evidence to support the existence of relationships” (Black, 1999:46). Therefore, as the qualitative data collection began, I moved on to inferential techniques in order to discern the key factors in each nation’s experience. I specifically used techniques such as binary logistic regression, multinomial logistic regression, means comparisons, and analysis of variance.¹⁰⁹ The techniques applied in this research were made possible with the exclusive use of secondary data sets. There are both advantages and disadvantages of conducting such research, which is further considered below.

¹⁰⁸ See section 4.5.2 (pp. 112-114) for a discussion of the key initial findings on which I structured my interview content.

¹⁰⁹ More about these specific techniques, variable coding, and significance of the results are presented in chapters 5-7.

4.4.3 Strengths and Weaknesses of Secondary Data Analysis

There is a common misconception that primary data collection and analysis is at all times superior to the use of secondary data sets and researchers are regularly encouraged to construct and implement their own surveys. However, secondary analysis is gaining increasing popularity in contemporary research (Kiecolt and Nathan, 1985:9) and it is important to note that such an approach carries both benefits and limitations. As a matter of fact, in many circumstances, secondary quantitative data analysis may serve as a stronger and more robust method of research.

The perhaps most obvious advantage to secondary data analysis is that it requires considerably less time and resources, making a mixed methods approach easier to carry out, in particular for a single researcher with limited funds (Kiecolt and Nathan, 1985:11). One of the key aims of this research is to explore secularisation at a comparative, national level. Survey construction and implementation that would yield data generalisable to the populations of the nations of study would consequently be a close to impossible undertaking for a sole researcher with limited resources. Furthermore, secondary data analysis is associated with fewer data collection problems (Kiecolt and Nathan, 1985:11). Many large-scale surveys are administered by organisations employing experts with extensive knowledge on survey construction, sampling techniques, and data collection. They further use robust and tested indices and measurements, which enhances construct validity (Black, 1999:143). These surveys are likewise commonly put through rigorous pre-testing in order to improve the quality of the data by reducing the risk for potential problems, such as ambiguous survey items that may lead to misinterpretations (Hunt et al, 1982:269-270).

While the use of secondary data is beneficial for this research, it is important to consider a small number of disadvantages. The most problematic issue is the lack of key variables needed for the specific research (Kiecolt and Nathan, 1985:14). Multidimensional concepts such as religiosity require a set of indicators or measurements in order to more accurately capture such phenomena. However, few datasets include all such measures of interest. Even the most comprehensive datasets on religion, such as the ISSP, have a very limited set of indicators of religious

belonging. While religious affiliation and church attendance are included, there are no items on religious rituals and life-cycle ceremonies, which are key to this research. The second problem specific to this research involves the use of national samples. Several large-scale surveys, such as the ISSP, have collected representative data on individuals in several countries. However, Great Britain is treated as one collective sample, and the sub-sample for Scotland is relatively small. A way around this problem is to supplement the data with other surveys (Kiecolt and Nathan, 1985:13), which is accordingly done in this study with the focus on Scottish Social Attitudes Surveys.¹¹⁰ Finally, Nathan and Kiecolt (1985:12) suggest that secondary data can constructively be combined with primary data collection in order to present a more thorough picture, precisely an objective of this research design. Discussions of aspects of the primary data collection process are consequently described below.

4.5 Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

4.5.1 Planning the Interviews

The qualitative component of this research consists of semi-structured in-depth interviews. A semi-structured interview is one in which the researcher prepares broader questions or areas of enquiry that each interview is focused around. Beyond these themes and main questions, the interviewer freely probes for more information, changes the order in which the questions are asked, and adapts follow-up questions depending on the specific information given by the participant (Drever, 1995; Fielding, 1993). The semi-structured approach was the most suitable for this research as it allowed an exploration of key topics and questions that emerged from the initial quantitative phase, but it nevertheless let the participant lead the way to matters important to them in relation to the themes and topics discussed (Longhurst, 2010:103). This allowed for a flexible approach in which I was better able to discover the connections made and the meanings held by these individuals in relation to the key topics of enquiry (Kvale, 2007).

¹¹⁰ See section 4.4.1 (pp. 107-108).

I conducted 32 interviews, 16 for each nation, with recently married couples who had married within the Church of Sweden, the Church of Scotland, or in a non-religious ceremony (as in a civil or a humanist wedding). As members of the contexts of study, these individuals hold feelings, thoughts, and values on religion, secularisation, rituals, and beliefs in relation to culture and community. My reason for selecting married couples specifically was that this would allow me to speak to individuals who have had to make active decisions in relation to religious rituals and life cycle ceremonies. Those who had a church wedding may, for example, identify with the church for spiritual reasons, social reasons, or out of tradition, and consequently, one of the key aims of the interviews was to gain a better understanding of what meaning, if any, *belonging* has to them. Additionally, my aim was to investigate why those who chose to have a non-religious ceremony do not “belong” to the church to the extent of those choosing a church ceremony and how this relates to their religious beliefs. Furthermore, couples are fairly likely to have made similar decisions in terms of baptism and religious upbringing for any children they may have. The criterion of “recently married” roughly meant having had a marriage ceremony in the last five years. I believe this ensured that the interviewees would have a relatively clear memory of their experience in relation to their ceremony, including detailed decisions that were made, what the ceremony meant to them, as well as the feelings that it evoked.

I acknowledge that only interviewing recently married couples excludes those who are not married or who have been married for a longer period of time. Similarly, it leaves out any couples that married outwith the national churches or a non-religious ceremony. However, the aim of my interviews was not to obtain a sample representative of the entire population, as is the case in quantitative research, but instead to purposively select individuals that may help explore and highlight key reasons and meanings of religious belonging in contemporary secularising Scotland and Sweden.

I decided to interview couples together rather than separately. The reasons for doing this were threefold. First, marriage is an intimate ceremony between two people and I therefore felt that interviewing them separately would not reveal the whole picture in relation to the decision-making process. Second, I believe that one

can tell a lot about religion in today's society by examining the reactions of the spouse when the other person reveals a specific opinion. This consequently showed to be the case in the field as it uncovered interesting observations in terms of religion as a non-issue (Zuckerman, 2008:102), an interesting finding I would have been unable to grasp had I interviewed them separately.¹¹¹ Third, my perception was that having both individuals present created a more relaxed, informal, atmosphere and that this benefit outweighed the potential, but unlikely, limitations in the expression of their views that having their partner around may cause.

I derived my interview questions from three distinct but related sources. First of all, I considered my sample criteria in order to tailor the themes and questions to married couples specifically. Second, I acknowledged interesting debates and dilemmas in the literature that I wished to explore further. Third, I examined the results of my initial quantitative analysis completed in phase one, from which I obtained interesting themes and patterns. With this in mind, I developed potential sub-questions in relation to each research question that I hoped the interviews could explore. These questions, as well as a general overview of the process of constructing the interview schedule are discussed in the following section.

4.5.2 Constructing the Interview Schedule

The initial quantitative findings revealed interesting differences and similarities between Scotland and Sweden.¹¹² Those raised within the Church of Scotland were more likely than those raised in the Church of Sweden to no longer identify with their church. Additionally, Swedes who were not raised in a religion were considerably more likely than Scots to later in life identify with the national church, and a much greater proportion of Scots than Swedes identified with a religion other than the National Church. Interestingly, a large majority of Swedes who identified with the national church described themselves as non-religious, while a small majority of Scots who identified with the Church of Scotland were religious. Moreover, the results were very similar between the two nations in regards to the groups of people who identified with *no religion* and *other religion*, while there were

¹¹¹ See section 5.4.1 (pp. 150-153).

¹¹² A detailed description of my findings is presented in chapters 5-8.

substantial differences among those who identified with the national church in respective country. This shows why the former state churches are of particular interest and that the issue of *believing and belonging* is both complex and largely different in the two contexts of study. Interestingly, it seems as though belonging to the national church means something different to Swedes, where it is relatively disconnected from religious beliefs, as opposed to Scots, where religious identification is more closely tied (although not entirely), to subjective religiosity. This was consequently one of the key problems to explore in the interviews.

Table 4.2: Questions and topics that interviews aimed to address

<p><i>Research Question 1: To what extent are Scotland and Sweden secularised and how does this fit into previous conceptualisation of religious belief and belonging?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do participants’ religious backgrounds relate to current religious beliefs and practices? • How salient are the participants’ religious beliefs (or lack thereof) to their identity? • How do participants perceive society’s norms and expectations on religious beliefs? Do they experience a tension? • What part do Christian beliefs play in terms of the participants’ religious beliefs? • Do the participants experience church participation (in different forms) as fundamentally connected to their beliefs?
<p><i>Research Question 2: How can national context explain differences in religious belonging and how the key functions of national churches are maintained, transformed or abandoned?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the reasons behind participation (or non-participation) in formal rituals such as weddings, baptisms, confirmations, etc? • What do these rituals mean to the participants? • How do these rituals relate to their religious convictions? • Do the participants experience these rituals as part of belonging to a church, community, or wider society? • What role does the national church play in participants’ lives (on a smaller and larger scale)? • In what ways (if any) do the participants “belong” to the church? • What are the participants’ opinions on the role of the National Church in wider society?

In relation to these observations, the research questions, and literature review, I reflected on the objectives of my interviews. I thereby constructed a list of questions that I hoped the interviews could help answer (see Table 4.2). Based on

these questions, I created themes and broader topics to discuss during the interview. I also prepared very specific back-up questions to, if needed, encourage conversation, as suggested by Longhurst (2010:106). The interview schedule is included in Appendix I. Just as discussed above, as these interviews were semi-structured, the interview schedule was simply a guide to fall back on if needed, and the actual interviews were much more flexible and open-ended. Nonetheless, preparing a structured set of themes and back-up questions was beneficial in that it underlined the connection between my research questions and the interview content. Likewise, it served as a constant reminder of the purpose of the interviews and was, in that way, a tool with which I could direct the participant if the conversations took different turns.

4.5.3 Sampling Strategy

The participants were recruited through various different approaches. I began by asking friends and family for any contacts. This showed to be the most successful strategy as almost all of the couples I was referred to agreed to take part, perhaps in part because someone they knew in person introduced me to them. Approximately half of the participants were recruited in this manner. This recruiting strategy worked particularly well in Sweden. As I was based in Scotland during the recruitment stage, I was relatively limited in terms of how to find participants. At the same time, I had a larger network of contacts in Sweden, which in the end made the process rather straightforward.

I initially thought that contacts within respective churches would be useful in finding participants. In retrospect, this showed to be a less successful strategy. I contacted twelve churches in Sweden either by e-mail or by phone. I informed them that my research involved a study of the role of the national church in relation to family, culture, and community in today's society and highlighted how these findings may be of interest to them as a church. Only one church responded, which may be an interesting observation in itself. A minister from this church was very helpful, but in the end was not able to find me a couple to interview. In Scotland, I contacted four churches. Three of them responded, but only one of them was able to refer me to potential participants. Interestingly, the minister in one of the parishes I

contacted was fascinated by my research but informed me that he had only married one couple in the church since he transferred there years ago. This may in fact serve as an example of the declining role of the Kirk in the provision of life cycle ceremonies (see Chapter 8).

In the same manner, I decided to contact humanist societies in each respective nation. The Humanist Society of Scotland was incredibly helpful in my attempt to find participants who had a non-religious ceremony. They posted a recruitment ad in their newsletter and on their website, which proved to be very successful, as four couples contacted me personally. While the Humanist Society in Sweden was supportive of my research and made attempts to help me find participants and refer me to a celebrant, in the end, they were not able to help me recruit any couples.

The remainder of my couples were recruited through snowball sampling by asking couples that I interviewed for other potential couples. Overall, they were very helpful in giving me contact details to friends and family who had married in the last five years. I decided that e-mail was the most appropriate way to initiate contact with most of the couples. I felt that this approach, as opposed to telephoning them, was a less intrusive means to contact them as it would allow them the chance to discuss it with their spouse and contemplate over their decision before getting back to me. Although I contacted them via e-mail, the response rate was very high.

Particularly in the Swedish context, but to some extent also in Scotland, my experience was largely similar to Zuckerman's (2008:77) in that although a majority were not interested in the topic of religion, they agreed to take part "to be nice." In the end, very few actually declined, but often stated that they "usually don't think about religion at all." Interestingly, before I even conducted any interviews I came across a profound indifference in matters related to religion in Sweden, which was fundamentally different in Scotland. This was further highlighted in the interviews, something that is discussed in full in Chapter 5.

4.5.4 Conducting the Interviews

The interview stage took place between May and September of 2012. Three separate trips were made to Sweden for this purpose. All 32 interviews were conducted face-to-face, with approximately three quarters of them carried out in the couples' homes. The remainder took place in public spaces, such as cafés. As I introduced myself to the couples, I gave them a box of chocolates as a token of appreciation and told them a brief description of my research. I asked them if they agreed to be recorded, and all 32 couples said yes without hesitation. The length of the interviews ranged from around 45 minutes to 1 hour and 45 minutes, with an average length of approximately one hour. Out of the 32 interviews, 17 were conducted in English and 15 in Swedish.¹¹³ The interviews were relaxed, and most of the participants spoke very freely on the topics despite the fact that, as mentioned above, many of them openly admitted they never contemplate such issues nor are they very interested in religion. Others were very passionate about the topic and spoke without a great deal of additional probing or encouragement. The interviews occasionally went off topic, but I never interrupted an interviewee. Instead, I carefully led them back to the question of interest or asked follow-up questions when appropriate.

After each interview, I asked the participants to fill out a short demographics sheet, which is included in Appendix II. A description of the interview participants and the date and place of interview is, likewise, presented in Appendix III. The mean age for the Scottish sample was 33 years with a range of 25 to 47 and a median of 32. The Scottish participants were, overall, highly educated as 6 percent of the individuals had completed secondary school, 16 percent had some higher education or a vocational degree, 53 percent had a university degree, and 25 percent had completed a postgraduate degree. The age of the individuals in the Swedish sample ranged from 24 to 77 years, with a mean of 37 and a median of 32. Of the Swedish participants, 6 percent had left school after 9th grade, 22 percent had completed secondary school, 19 percent had some higher education or a vocational degree, 44 percent had a university degree, and 9 percent had a postgraduate degree.

¹¹³ One of the individuals in the Swedish sample was originally from England and preferred an interview in English.

In addition to the criterion of having married within the last five years in the National Church or a non-religious ceremony, I also ensured that at least one of the individuals in each couple identified as Scottish (for the Scottish interviews) or Swedish (for the Swedish interviews). In most cases, both individuals were Swedish or Scottish, but I interviewed a few individuals who were born and raised elsewhere.¹¹⁴ I did not perceive this as a limitation as in all those cases they had lived in Scotland or Sweden for a considerable amount of time and were married to a Scot or a Swede. They often revealed vivid descriptions of their thoughts and opinions of religion in Scottish and Swedish societies as partial outsiders to the context of study. Additionally, it was fascinating to see how their thoughts and interpretations differed from those of their Scottish or Swedish partner. Nevertheless, the fact that some of the individuals were foreign nationals was carefully considered when interpreting the findings.

I conducted 16 interviews for my Swedish sample and 16 for the Scottish sample. Originally, my aim was that half of these couples had married in the national church and half in a non-religious ceremony. When all the interviews were completed, I had spoken to nine Swedish couples who had married in the Church of Sweden, six who had a civil ceremony, and one who had a humanist ceremony. Interestingly, the Swedish couple that had a humanist ceremony married in Scotland, as humanist marriage ceremonies are not legally recognised in Sweden.¹¹⁵ In Scotland, eight of the couples married in the Church of Scotland, seven had a humanist ceremony, and one couple married in a civil ceremony. In Sweden, all of the interviews were conducted in the regions of Östergötland and Småland, as well as in the Stockholm area in the South East of the country. In Scotland, the interviews were conducted in Lothians and Glasgow, with a majority of interviews taking place in Edinburgh.

Initially, I decided to ask the participants for the size of the community in which they live, but in retrospect, I realised that a distinction between an urban and a rural location made a very limited difference in terms of the choices made. Rather, if anything, the first impression was that it seemed to be more strongly linked to what

¹¹⁴ In addition to Swedes and Scots, I interviewed individuals from Ireland, Northern Ireland, England, United States, Poland, Germany, and New Zealand.

¹¹⁵ This is discussed further in Chapter 8 (pp. 233-262).

type of community they grew up in. It is possible that this would have been largely different had I interviewed couples from different socioeconomic or regional backgrounds. The urban-rural distinction was nonetheless explored further with a discussion of family background as well as analysis of quantitative data.

4.5.5 Ethical Considerations

As the quantitative element consists of analysis of secondary data, the ethical aspects of the collection of this data are in the hands of the primary researchers. There are no known ethical issues associated with this data. The identities of the participants have been protected, as no such information is included in the data sets. I have gained access to this data from different data archives¹¹⁶ and I acknowledge and adhere to the user guidelines set by the primary researchers.

As the qualitative component relates to primary data collection, this is where potential issues could arise. In line with the School of Social and Political Science's Research Ethics Policy and Procedures. I stressed the importance of the protection of research participants through confidentiality. The perceived risks to the participants in this study are minimal, however, it is possible that discussing religious beliefs or marital issues may be difficult. On the rare occasions when I felt like the participant seemed uncomfortable, I moved on to a different question, but generally, the interviews progressed without any problems. The interviews are confidential, and the participants were informed that they were free to leave the study at any time and to refuse to answer any question that they were asked. The participants have my contact information for any questions or concerns, but none have been raised to this date. The fundamental aspect of research is to protect its participants, and any material used throughout the process of completing this research has been carefully handled and stored. Prior to conducting the interviews, I carried out the School Ethics self-audit in relation to my doctoral research project in which I confirmed that no reasonably foreseeable ethical risks were identified.

¹¹⁶ UK Data Archive and ZACAT Data Portal.

4.5.6 Data Analysis

The data collected in the interview stage was transcribed during the autumn of 2012. A large majority of the interviews were transcribed word for word, while shorter segments of conversations that did not relate directly to my topics of interests were briefly summarised or left out of the transcripts (Gibbs, 2007). Audio files were carefully maintained and stored and during the process of analysing the data, I frequently went back to the audio recordings in order to more accurately interpret the manner in which a statement was delivered in the spoken context (Kvale, 2007). Any quotes used from the Swedish interviews have been carefully translated to English for the purpose of writing this thesis.

Gibbs (2007:44-45) discusses the two different analytical approaches to data coding, namely a *concept-driven* and a *data-driven* view. The former involves constructing codes by using theory and previous research, thematic topics in the interview schedule, or prior empirical findings (e.g. Ritchie et al, 2003). The latter approach is concerned with developing codes almost exclusively drawn from the data (Barbour, 2008;196-197). Scholars within grounded theory propose such analytical method (e.g. Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1997) and maintain that one should begin the coding process with few preconceived ideas or theoretical assumption. As I coded the transcripts, I used a combination of a theory driven and a data driven approach as I found this method to be the most suitable for my research. Given that I aim to contribute to the sociological understanding of secularisation, as well as the fact that my interview schedule is largely constructed as a means to explore theoretical issues and initial empirical findings, an exclusively data-driven approach would be both unfavourable and unrealistic. Nevertheless, the interviews served as a crucial opportunity to explore new angles and meanings to previously conceptualised ideas, and without analysing the data with an open mind, the qualitative findings would be largely limited to previous understandings of secularisation and contemporary functions of churches.

In the process of coding the data, I read through each transcript in order to roughly highlight initial thoughts and themes from the interviews. As I re-read the transcripts, the focus and detail of these themes were continuously developed and refined (Barbour, 2008:225). Information relating to each theme was sorted and

organised into separate collections of data. The data was analysed by mapping out relationships between themes as well as patterns between the qualitative themes, quantitative findings, and prior research and theoretical approaches. Attention was given to unexpected findings and how they may potentially fit in to previous theoretical understandings of the topic. The qualitative data, along with the secondary quantitative analysis, form the basis of Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted key methodological issues in relation to conducting a social scientific study of religion. With the first part of the chapter, the aim was consequently to show that considerable care needs to be adopted in conducting research on religion, in particular in regards to the fluidity of interpretations of meanings within and across social contexts. Here, I reported potential issues both in relation to participant interpretation as well as the role of the researcher in the research process. I similarly discussed the dilemma of researching the secular and similar “hidden” phenomena.

As this thesis focuses on meanings and interpretations of religiosity, a methodology was required that allowed for a thorough explanation and understanding of such individualised conceptions while simultaneously maintaining the ability to describe general patterns of religion and secularisation at a national level. In the second part of the chapter, I consequently presented the mixed methods research design implemented for this research. A thorough understanding of secularisation at the broader societal level in Scotland and Sweden require a quantitative approach to grasp general patterns of religious decline. Additionally, in order to explore the overlap between religion and the secular in particular in terms of remaining functions of religion in secularising societies, a qualitative element was adopted to come to a better understanding of religious and cultural identities, meanings and feelings in relation to life-cycle ceremonies, and religious beliefs and affiliation. The two aspects are evidently strongly related and with a mixed methods approach I was able to offer a more comprehensive picture of patterns and experiences of religious decline in Scotland and Sweden.

The remainder of the chapter provided an account of how various data were collected and analysed. Three broader dimensions of enquiry that came out of the literature review and initial perceptions from the field include (1) active religious practice and participation, specifically as related to subjective religiosity, (2) religious beliefs and secularisation, and (3) religious belonging as serving different functions, particularly in relation to culture and community. Detailed results of data analysis is thus the focus of the following four chapters, beginning with a discussion of religious beliefs in Chapter 5, followed by church attendance in Chapter 6, religious identification and membership in Chapter 7, and participation in rituals in Chapter 8.

Chapter 5: Religious Beliefs

5.1 Introduction

Most scholars agree that church attendance levels are relatively low and broadly declining throughout Protestant Europe. Instead, fundamental disagreements stem from different understandings of subjective religiosity. Several scholars (e.g. Berger et al, 2008; Davie, 1990, 1994, 2002a, 2004, 2007; Stark, 1999; Stark and Finke, 2000) argue that low levels of active attendance merely reflect a change in the nature of personal beliefs where *privatised religion* is becoming increasingly prevalent. This is exemplified by Davie's (1990, 1994, 2002a, 2004, 2007) assertion that Europe is *believing without belonging*, where she assumes that "traditional" religious beliefs, such as belief in a personal god and in hell, are often abandoned in favour of individualised approaches to understandings of the supernatural, such as an increasing pervasiveness of *spirituality*. As mentioned in Chapter 3, other scholars (e.g. Bruce, 1996, 1999, 2002a; Wallis and Bruce, 1992; Wilson 1982) instead argue that personal beliefs derive from religious socialisation as opposed to any inherent human need for religion¹¹⁷ and that a decrease in subjective belief thus reflects declining levels of active attendance.

As a contribution to this debate, the first part of the chapter consequently examines various measures of subjective religiosity in the two nations in order to provide a better understanding of personal religious beliefs of Scots and Swedes. In relation to this, levels and meanings of *spirituality* are presented. By examining the relationship between national church identification and religious beliefs in Scotland and Sweden, the second part of the chapter provides a contextualised assessment of meanings of subjective religiosity. Here, key differences emerge that contribute to the understanding of the role of the national churches in contemporary Sweden and Scotland. Quantitative findings are explored further with an account of interview participants' perceptions of religious expectations of the national churches in relation to other religious denominations. The third part of the chapter discusses how

¹¹⁷ As argued by e.g. Stark and Finke (2000).

different understandings of personal and public interest in religion may serve as an important dimension of secularisation. In relation to this, views on and meanings of atheism are explored suggesting different interpretations in the two nations. In line with this, Davie's (1994) argument that low levels of atheism indicate that Northern Europeans *believe* is critically examined.

Ultimately, this chapter attempts to situate Scotland and Sweden in the debate on secularisation by investigating the extent to which Scots and Swedes in fact *believe* as argued by Davie (1990, 1994, 2002a, 2004, 2007). Together with levels of church attendance (Chapter 6), religious identification and membership (Chapter 7), and ceremonial participation (Chapter 8), this provides a more nuanced and contextualised examination of *believing and belonging* in contemporary Scotland and Sweden.

5.2 Current Levels and Patterns

As presented in Chapter 4, subjective religiosity is a notoriously difficult concept to measure, with largely different figures reported by various scholars. Davie (2002a:7) states that 53.4 percent of Swedes believe in God, 46 percent in life after death, 31.2 percent in heaven, and 9.4 percent in hell. Hamberg and Pettersson (1994:206) present figures that suggest that only 15 percent of Swedes believe in the existence of a *personal* god and that 31 percent identify themselves as religious (1994:206). Zuckerman (2008:25) states that 26 percent of Swedes believe in God, of which 16 percent believe in a personal god, 33 percent believe in life after death, 31 percent in heaven, and 10 percent in hell.

Bäckström et al (2004:64) present more detailed data with which they examine what these specific indices mean to individuals. It is, however, questionable, whether they make a convincing interpretation of the results. They show figures suggesting that 18 percent of Swedes believe in a personal God, 20 percent believe in an "impersonal power or force," 36 percent believe God is "something within each person," 15 percent are unsure what to believe in, and 12 percent do not believe in a god, a supernatural power, or force. The authors do not believe that the secularisation thesis can be applied to Sweden, and that current

figures merely reflect a “religious change” (Bäckström et al, 2004:12) With these findings in mind, they argue that “75 percent of the adult population believe in transcendent forces,” and that it reflects faith in a postmodern society (2004:65). However, it is questionable whether a belief that “God is within each person,” is, in fact, a supernatural belief or something quite different. It might mean, for example, merely that the respondent views religious beliefs as deeply personal to each individual. This is explored further below with figures of spirituality as well as interview participants’ interpretations of this form of belief.

Field (2001:164) presents figures that suggest that Scots are considerably more religious than Swedes,¹¹⁸ but that religious beliefs are steadily declining. He further shows that in 1976, 85 percent of Scots believed in God, a figure that decreased to 80 percent in 1983, 78 percent in 1987, and 73 percent in 1997. In the 1980s, around 7 in 10 adults believed Jesus was the Son of God, and 9 in 10 Catholics and 3 out of 4 of those identifying with the Church of Scotland believed Jesus died for our sins and was resurrected. Between 1976 and 1997, the proportion of Scots who believed in an afterlife decreased from around half to 42 percent, and in 1997, 44 percent believed in heaven *and* hell. Brown (2007:417) states that in 2000, 26 percent of Britons believed in a personal god, and that in 2001, 61 percent believed in God. Davie (2002a:7) shows that 71.6 percent of respondents in Great Britain believe in God, 58.3 percent in life after death, 55.8 percent in heaven, and 35.3 percent in hell. Bruce (1996:33) argues that, in Britain, there has been a decline in various measures of religious beliefs in the second half of the 20th century. Furthermore, he states that in 1991, 10 percent of Britons identified as atheist¹¹⁹ and 13 percent as agnostic. Moreover, in 1991, 72 percent believed in a supernatural power.

Figures presented above suggest that traditional Christian beliefs, such as in God, heaven and hell, are more common in the British context than in Sweden. Nevertheless, they further indicate that Scotland and Sweden are secularising with beliefs becoming less and less common. In the next section, research findings presented by prior literature above are compared to data from the ISSP (2008) and the SSAS (2001). As statistics on religiosity are subject to survey construction and

¹¹⁸ Although the data Field refers to is from 1997.

¹¹⁹ Up from 4 percent ten years earlier.

various interpretations of respondents and researchers, the results are further explained using interview data, highlighting what these beliefs may mean to Scots and Swedes.

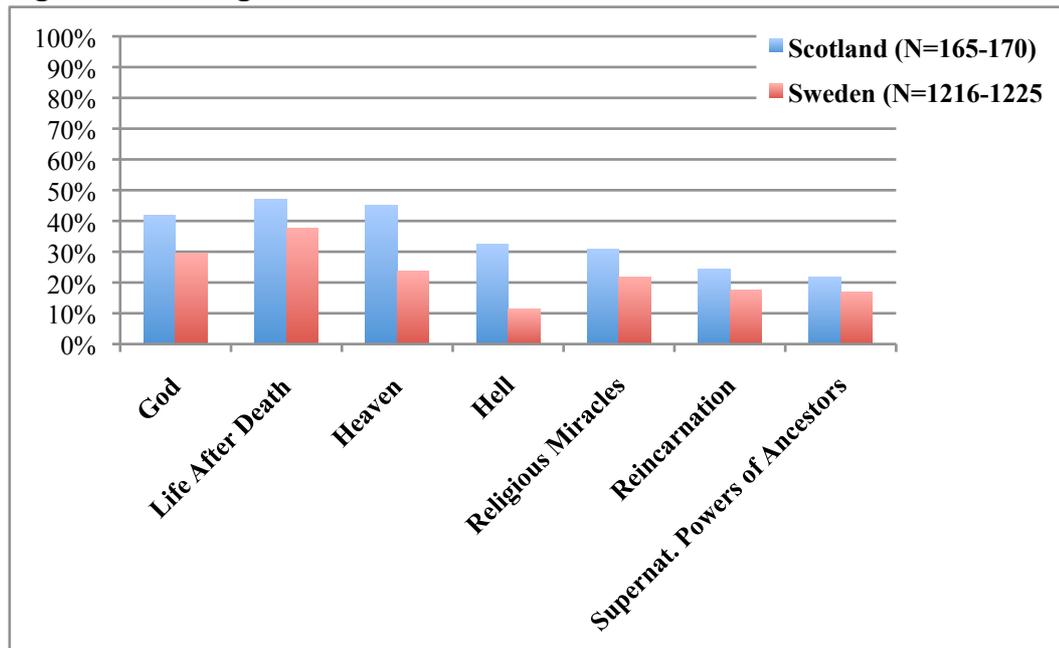
5.2.1 Measures of Subjective Religiosity

Figure 5.1 presents percentages of Scots and Swedes who explicitly believe in *God, life after death, heaven, hell, religious miracles, reincarnation, and supernatural powers of ancestors*. Scots are more likely than Swedes to say that they believe in any one of the seven measures. Interestingly, the difference between the two nations is particularly large on “traditional” Christian beliefs such as heaven and hell, in line with Zuckerman’s (2008:11) assertion that Swedes have the lowest belief in hell in the world. Davie (1990, 1994, 2002a, 2004, 2007) speaks of a great majority of Europeans as holding religious beliefs. However, it is debatable whether they really are. Less than half of Scots and even fewer Swedes explicitly believe in any one of these seven indicators, suggesting that a minority of Scots and Swedes are religious, at least in the more traditional, Christian sense.¹²⁰ This suggests that while religious beliefs may be more common in Scotland than in Sweden, it is not clear that most Swedes or Scots *believe*, suggesting that the issue of *believing and belonging* is more complex and polarised than as applied by Davie.

Figure 5.2 (Scotland) and Figure 5.3 (Sweden) present various measures of subjective religiosity by age cohort. In Scotland, older age groups are considerably more religious than younger on all three measures of religiosity. This is in line with Voas and Crockett (2005:15) and Field (2001) who argue that older individuals are more religious than those who are younger. In the youngest cohort, only 28 percent of Scots are spiritual or religious, a figure that is close to 75 percent in the oldest age group. This is arguably due to a decline in religious socialisation, as we will see with church attendance levels in Chapter 6.

¹²⁰ However, in SSAS (2001), belief in God for Scotland is 72 percent, clearly highlighting the difficulties in measuring religious beliefs. This is also complicated by the fact that many Scots and Swedes do not explicitly state that they e.g. believe in God or that they are spiritual as they are simply *unsure*. It is difficult to judge whether most of those who are unsure in fact *believe*. This is discussed further in section 5.2.2 (pp. 131-135).

Figure 5.1: Religious beliefs of Scots and Swedes



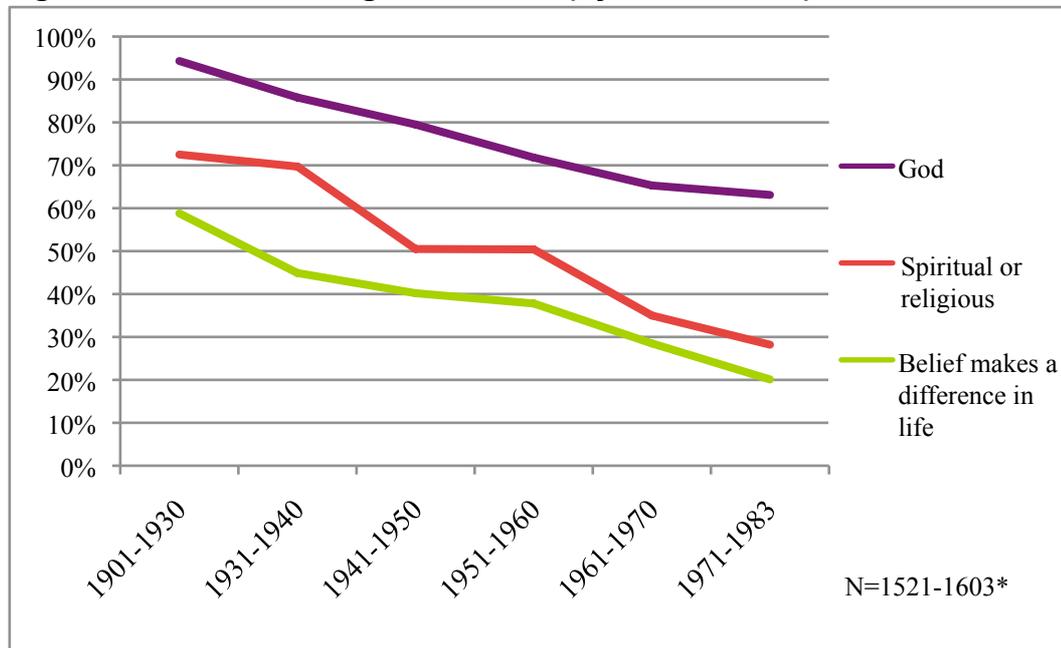
Data source: International Social Survey Programme, 2008

Similarly, the Swedish findings suggest that there is a weaker relationship between age and religious beliefs in Sweden. It is more common to be religious than spiritual in older age groups while younger individuals are more likely to be spiritual than religious, indicating that Davie might be correct that contemporary society has seen a decrease in traditional religious beliefs in favour for spirituality. Nevertheless, both these forms of belief are relatively low suggesting that while beliefs might be changing, most Swedes are still neither religious nor spiritual.

Sociologists of religion disagree on whether age differences are due to age effects, meaning that people's levels of religiosity change as they age, or cohort effects, suggesting generational shifts in levels of belief. While it is possible that there is a bit of truth to both sides, Bruce's (2002a) assertion that religious beliefs and participation are formed through a process of socialisation is more convincing than e.g. Stark and Finke's (2000) argument that people *become* more religious as they age in order to ensure themselves of an afterlife as their life approaches the end. In fact, Hamberg's (1991) longitudinal study on Sweden shows that while older individuals were more religious, all cohorts saw a decline in subjective religiosity

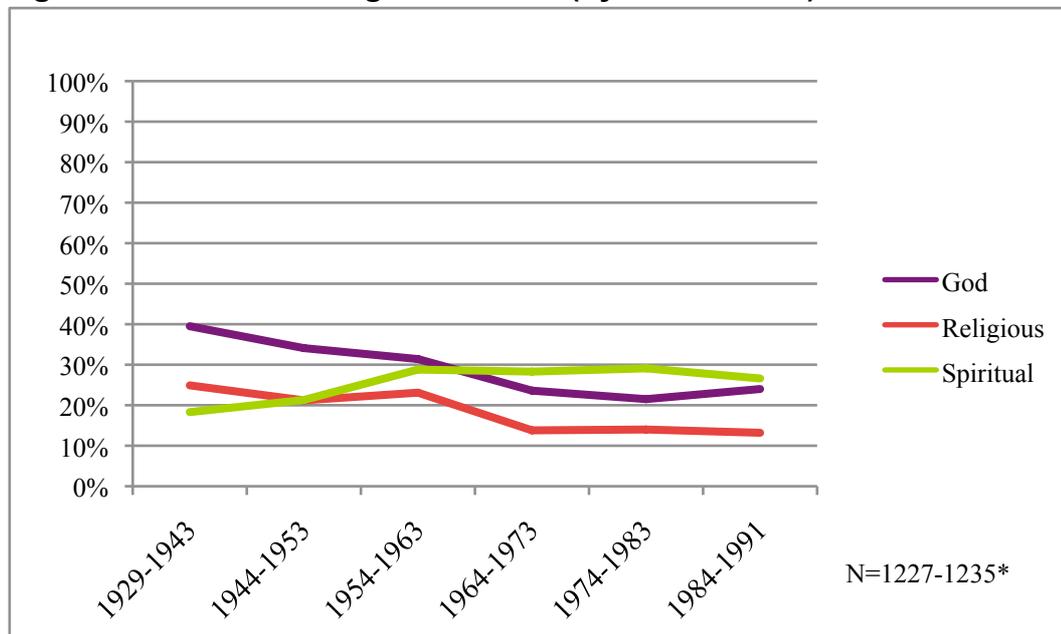
between 1955 and 1970, suggesting that, Stark and Finke's position cannot readily be applied to the Swedish case.

Figure 5.2: Scottish religious beliefs (by birth cohort)



*N for individual cohorts ranges from 205 to 334. Data source: *Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2001*

Figure 5.3: Swedish religious beliefs (by birth cohort)



*N for individual cohorts ranges from 128 to 253. Data source: *International Social Survey Programme, 2008*

In the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (2001), a more detailed question was asked about respondents' beliefs about the supernatural. The results are presented in Table 5.1, which shows that 27.3 percent of Scots believe in a personal god, 28.6 percent believe that there is some sort of power or life force, and 25.8 percent that there is "something there." About 1 in 10 are unsure, and only around 7 percent state that they do not believe in a god, spirit, or life force. While these figures are interesting, they do not show what these statements really mean to the respondents. The option of "there is something there," is particularly unclear, especially given that this is a different category to "some sort of spirit or life force." It is questionable whether the individuals who believe "that there is something there" but who do not believe in a "spirit or a life force" really *believe* in any *religious* sense.

Table 5.1: Beliefs of Scots

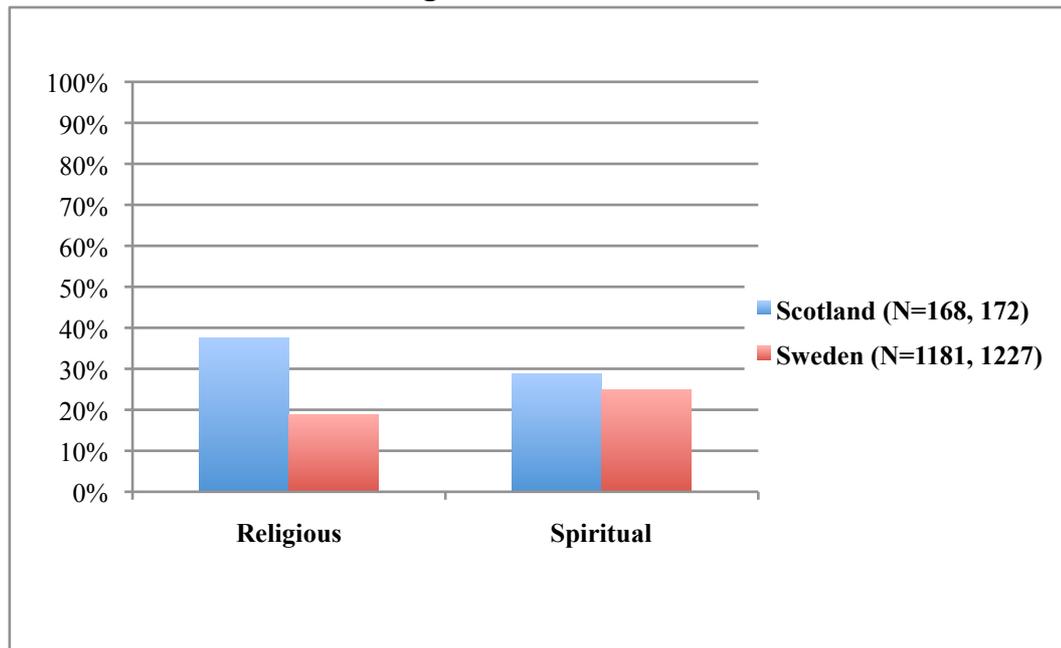
There is a personal god	27.3%
There is some sort of spirit or life force	28.6%
There is something there	25.8%
I don't really know what to think	11.3%
I don't really think there is any sort of god, spirit or life force	6.9%
N	1517

Data source: Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2001

Similar questions arise from an examination of religiosity and spirituality in the two nations. As seen in Figure 5.4 below, only 37.5 percent of Scots and 18.8 percent of Swedes would call themselves at least *somewhat religious*. The difference between the two nations is considerably smaller on the question of spirituality. In Scotland, 28.9 percent claim to be spiritual, while the same figure in Sweden is 25.0 percent.¹²¹ Again, Swedes are less likely to be "traditionally religious" but spirituality is virtually equally common in the two nations.

¹²¹ 15.6% of Swedish sample and 14.0% of Scots "can't choose" on the question on spirituality.

Figure 5.4: Percentage of Scots and Swedes who identify as spiritual and “at least somewhat religious”



Data source: International Social Survey Programme, 2008

Table 5.2: Scottish beliefs: Religious, spiritual, or neither

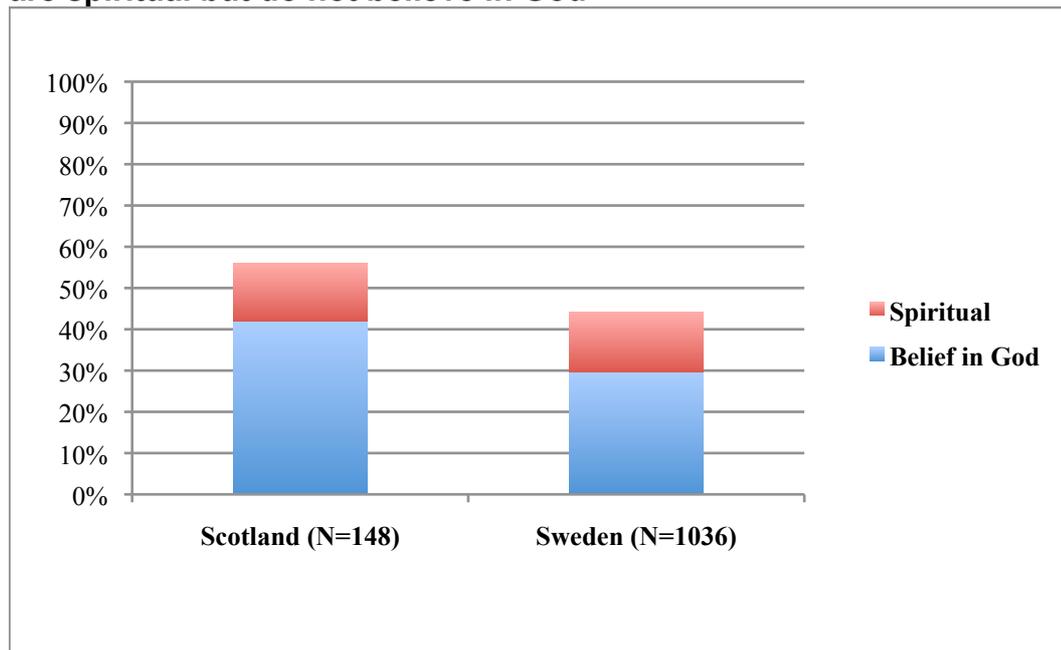
Religious	35.5%
Spiritual	16.4%
Neither	48.1%
N	1541

Data source: Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2001

There are a number of problems with Davie’s (1990, 1994, 2002a, 2004, 2007) assertion that a vast majority of Northern Europeans *believe*. First of all, as seen above, many measures of religiosity, particularly in Sweden, are relatively low. In other words, if *most* individuals hold some kind of supernatural beliefs, it does not come across in surveys. Second, claiming that a majority of Europeans hold on to religious beliefs by looking at such vague concepts as “there is something there,” ignores the fact that half of Scots, and even more Swedes, are neither religious nor spiritual when asked. Third of all, as Davie argues that even those who do not claim to believe in God hold some form of alternative religious beliefs, Figure 5.5 shows

that 14.2 percent of Scots and 14.6 percent of Swedes are spiritual while they do not believe (or are unsure whether they believe) in God. This suggests that few Scots and Swedes who do not believe in God (or who are unsure) are explicitly *spiritual*. Furthermore, a crucial question that is not considered by Davie is what *spirituality* actually means to the respondents, and whether or not this is in fact a form of *religious* beliefs. This is consequently explored further in the next section.

Figure 5.5: Percentage of Scots and Swedes who believe in God or who are spiritual but do not believe in God



Data source: International Social Survey Programme, 2008

5.2.2 The Meaning of Spirituality

When discussing spirituality, interview participants in both nations expressed very similar sentiments. Only 5 out of 32 participants in Sweden and 11 of the 32 in Scotland believe in God. However, some participants would say that they are *spiritual*. Given the low figures of attendance in Chapter 6, and the fact that none of the Swedish and only a handful of the Scottish interviewees attend church regularly, this finding is in line with Davie's claim of *privatised religion*. However, when asked to describe this belief, it becomes clear that the meaning of *spirituality* is more complex than simply a belief in a supernatural power or force other than a god. In many cases, it is questionable whether spirituality is actually a *religious* belief at all.

Intriguingly, many of the participants did not make a connection between spirituality and a belief in the supernatural. Instead, they mentioned that it meant an awareness of one's inner strengths or emotions, an appreciation of music, culture, or art, or a connection to nature. Helen, 31 is an archivist in Edinburgh and married to Chris, a 33-year-old postdoctoral researcher. She came across as the most outspoken atheist among all the Scottish participants and conveyed a very secular take on spirituality.

Helen: I like our connection to the earth. That's my only spiritual thing... About us being connected because we evolved from it... I love being out in the country and feel a connection to the world. To me that is a very nice spiritual feeling if you want to call it that.¹²²

Jonas is a 33-year-old opera singer, married to Gabriella, 32, a violin teacher. They are both Swedes, but reside in Glasgow. They married in a Scottish humanist ceremony and are both atheists and active humanists. They were nevertheless of the opinion that most people are spiritual simply for the reason that if you say that you are not spiritual, you sound a bit *cold or shallow*.

Isabella: What does it mean when people say that they are spiritual?

Jonas: I think it is difficult to find someone who says that they are *not* spiritual, because they think it sounds so negative: "I don't believe in anything at all."

Gabriella: Yes as if you are so flat. So cold. I think being spiritual can mean being touched by things. That you have deeper feelings.

Jonas: Yes, I'm a musician. Of course I'm spiritual. That you are able to get carried away by a feeling.

Alice is a 28-year-old librarian who married Ludvig, 31, an office manager, in a Church of Sweden ceremony. She is a non-believer who, in line with Jonas and Gabriella, expressed that spirituality is about finding meaning in your life, and that some people find that meaning in religion, while others have other outlets.

Alice: I think spirituality is... I believe in people's need to create meaning. We are so complicated with all the feelings. I think we create the feeling that something is bigger than ourselves. For some people that's God. It's more within us humans, but what it is, it doesn't really matter, as long as it works for each person.

¹²² Full information about interview participants and date and place of interview are found in Appendix III (pp. 279-283).

Just like Alice indicates, a common impression from the interviews was that this sense of “something bigger” oftentimes refers entirely to a power or strength that can be found within each person. Natalie, 48, a science teacher, and Per, 40, an engineer, were married in their garden by a minister from the Church of Sweden. Natalie expressed a similar mindset to Alice, while her husband was more sceptical.

Isabella: Could you describe your faith? Do you believe in God?

Natalie: I have one of those “spiritual feelings.” That I do. But I can’t say I believe because that would be a lie because I don’t know... There has to be something within me that can keep me calm. I would love to go to India. Maybe I’m a Buddhist.

Per: They are Hindus there...

Natalie: Oh, okay. Maybe I can go to Nepal? Where are they Buddhist? I feel like there is something there, something that is a little beautiful.

Isabella: But you don’t know what this is?

Natalie: Around Easter I saw this TV programme about the Gospel of Thomas, that God is *us*. Maybe that’s what it is? It is the *belief in ourselves*.

Lucy, 34, is a physiotherapist from Glasgow. She married Simon, 36, a police officer, in a humanist ceremony. She does not believe in God but is open to the idea that there are *human* powers that we might not be aware of.

Lucy: Well I don’t think that there is a god but I think there is a lot that we don’t know. I mean there might be other things out there, and a universe that we don’t know about. For example, how some people say they’re telepathic and things like that, I wouldn’t say something like that doesn’t exist. I do think that there’s more things that we don’t realize about ourselves, so I’m not sure, I wouldn’t bet all my money that there is nothing out there.

Isabella: Okay, so would you call yourself spiritual?

Lucy: Yeah I think I’m spiritual but I wouldn’t say I’m religious.

Nonetheless, some participants describe spirituality as a sense that there is more to the world than what we can see. Malin, 32, and Lucas, 35 married in a civil ceremony in Norrköping. Malin is an English teacher and Lucas, who is from England, works for a recruitment firm. Malin mentioned that there is “something out there that we can’t explain,” that “things just fall into place,” and “that there has to be a little spark of something else.” Yet, she does not believe in God or an afterlife.

She does not attend church and would not call herself religious. Several other participants expressed similar ideas. Unlike his wife Alice, Ludvig came across as open to the idea that there may be some kind of external powers.

Ludvig: I believe in fate or something that makes things happen, but I don't think it has a name. And 2000 years ago you didn't know why things happened and maybe they needed a God to explain things. But now there are more complex explanations. Still, there is something to it. Why would the phone ring right when you're about to step out into the street and get run over by a car? I don't think there's just two dice thrown again and again.

The Swedish musician Magnus, 42, had a similar idea, while his wife Caroline, 42, who works in clothing sales, disagreed.

Isabella: But do you think there is something somewhere that can't be explained?

Caroline: Nah...

Magnus: Well, yes I do. Somehow.

Caroline: But what would that be? I can't wrap my head around it.

Magnus: Yes, but you're not supposed to. As we said, it can't be explained.

Caroline: No I don't believe in anything supernatural that has power over me.

Magnus: But sometimes it feels like things just fall into place. In a way.

Caroline: And very often they don't fall into place.

Magnus: No but I believe, like you said, in... something.

It is clear that spirituality means largely different things to the interview participants, but what is interesting is that for most of them, spirituality is not necessarily a religious matter. Individuals who see spirituality as a connection to nature, music, art, or deeper emotions clearly do not *believe* just because they identify as spiritual. Most importantly, it is also questionable whether the other interpretation, namely spirituality as fate, is in fact a convincing indicator of *belief*. Not a single interview participant who said they were spiritual simultaneously expressed that this vague "belief" in any way influenced their life, as one would imagine would be a criteria even for *privatised religion*. These individuals do not worship, they do not pray, they do not regularly think about this *possible* external power or why things play out the way they do. This sentiment was expressed by

Martin, 37, a draughtsman, who is married to Sharon, 35, an accountant. He states that, “I’m open to the idea that there is something out there. I just don’t ever think about it. I don’t worry about it. If it’s there, it’s there, but I just get on with my life.”

The question is whether the fact that these individuals do not entirely want to dismiss the idea that there *might* be something out there means that they *believe*? If so, then Davie (e.g. 1994, 2002a, 2007) may be right that spirituality is an indicator of belief, but to present this as *belief* without a proper conceptualisation is, nevertheless, misleading. Furthermore, it is questionable whether a typology based on this dimension of belief is actually a useful refutation of secularisation. Her notion of *believing* includes virtually everyone but the most outspoken atheists. Instead, spirituality may in fact be a sign of decreasing social significance of religion given that it is highly individualised and removed from daily life (e.g. Bruce, 2002a; Wallis and Bruce, 1992).

5.3 National Church and Religiosity

Relative to other denominations, the Church of Scotland and the Church of Sweden are experiencing great difficulties attracting participants to their services.¹²³ Additionally, the struggle, to some extent, also involves convincing those who identify with the church to adhere to fundamental Christian beliefs. In line with this, several scholars make the connection between the introduction of national churches in favour of a collective consciousness and the unintended consequence of *disenchantment* (Taylor, 2007), and *demythification* (Anderson, 2006). In other words, they suggest that there is a link between the functions of national churches and secularisation.

As considered further below, interview participants in both Scotland and Sweden were of the opinion that the National Church is less strict about doctrine than other denominations. Yet, the Church of Scotland came across as more concerned about faith of their adherents than its Swedish counterpart, where the interviewees perceived the church not to have an interest in personal beliefs of its members. This connection between religious beliefs, the national churches, and their adherents is

¹²³ See section 6.4.4 (pp. 181-184).

discussed in depth in the following four sections. This begins with an overview of the religious beliefs of those who identify with the national churches, other denominations, or no religion, followed by a further examination of the relationship between national church identification and religiosity through logistic regression modelling, and finally, a discussion of individual perceptions of beliefs in relation to national churches and other denominations.

5.3.1 Religious Identification and Beliefs

An examination of the relationship between religiosity and religious identification suggests that those who identify with the national churches are generally less religious than those who identify with *other religious denominations*.¹²⁴ As presented in Figure 5.6, 83.4 percent of Swedes who identify with the Church of Sweden were at the same time *extremely non-religious, very non-religious, somewhat non-religious, or neither religious nor non-religious*. In other words, only 16.6 percent of those who identify with the Church of Sweden would call themselves at least *somewhat religious*. The highest levels of religiosity can be seen among the very small number of Swedes who belong to *other religion*, of which 76.9 percent are at least *somewhat religious*. Looking at belief in God (Figure 5.7), less than half (42.8 percent) of those who identify with the Church of Sweden believe in God, compared to 24.3 percent for *no religion* and 96.1 percent for *other religion*. This again illustrates that people may not necessarily belong to the Church of Sweden for religious reasons, while this seems to be the case for other religions.

As presented in Figure 5.6, 44.5 percent of Scots who identify with the Church of Scotland are *extremely non-religious, very non-religious, somewhat non-religious, or neither religious nor non-religious*. This suggests that a small majority of those who identify with the Church of Scotland are at least somewhat religious.

¹²⁴ “Other religions” in the ISSP (2008) for Sweden include Christian Free Church (2.8 percent of sample) Roman Catholics (1.1 percent), Islam (1.1 percent), Other Christian (0.2 percent), Buddhism (0.2 percent), Hinduism (0.1 percent), Judaism (0.1 percent), and other religions (0.2 percent) with a total of 44 individuals in the sample belonging to these religions.

“Other religions” in the ISSP (2008) for Scotland include Roman Catholic (11 percent of sample), Anglican/Church of England (6 percent), Other Protestant (1.8 percent), Other and Unspecified Christian (4.6 percent), and Other Religions (0.6 percent).

When comparing religious identification and belief in God (Figure 5.7), 90.2 percent of those who belong to the Church of Scotland believe in God, compared to 48.7 percent for no religion and 92.6 percent for *other religions*.¹²⁵ In other words, the results are relatively similar between the two nations in regards to the groups with *no religion* and *other religion*, but there is a considerable difference in beliefs between those who identify with the Church of Scotland and the Church of Sweden.

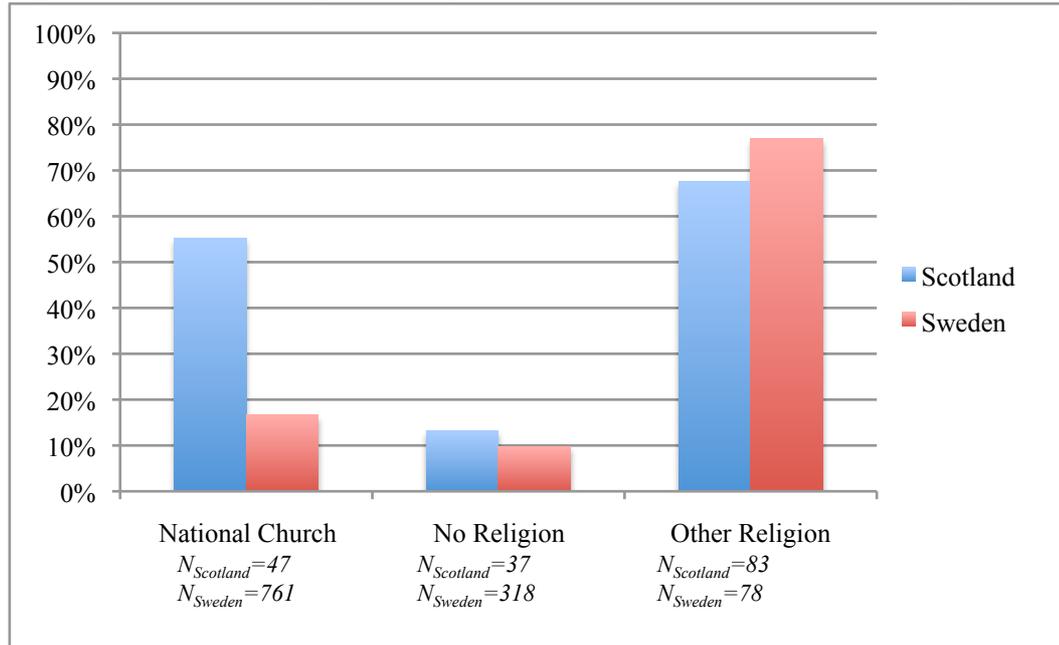
The Scottish findings are confirmed with additional analysis of the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (2001). As seen in Figure 5.8, individuals who identify with the Church of Scotland are only slightly less likely to be religious or spiritual than those who identify with *other religious denominations*,¹²⁶ and much more likely to be religious or spiritual than those with *no religion*. In other words, those who belong to the Church of Scotland are relatively similar to those of other religious denominations, while individuals who identify with the Church of Sweden more closely compare to those with *no religion*. This suggests that those who identify with the Church of Scotland may still do so primarily for religious beliefs, while a majority of Swedes who identify with the Church of Sweden do so for other, non-religious, reasons. Identification with the Church may instead be a form of *cultural religion*, where individuals belong in the name of culture and tradition (e.g. Demerath, 2000; Zuckerman, 2008).¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Same analysis with the more limited Scottish sample from the ISSP (2008) suggest 80.6 percent of those who identify with the National Church, as opposed to 85.3 percent for *other religion* and 27.9 percent for *no religion*.

¹²⁶ “Other religions” in the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (2001) include Roman Catholic (14 percent of sample), Anglican/Church of England (2.7 percent), Other Protestant (3 percent), Other and Unspecified Christian (4.6 percent), and Other Religions (0.7 percent).

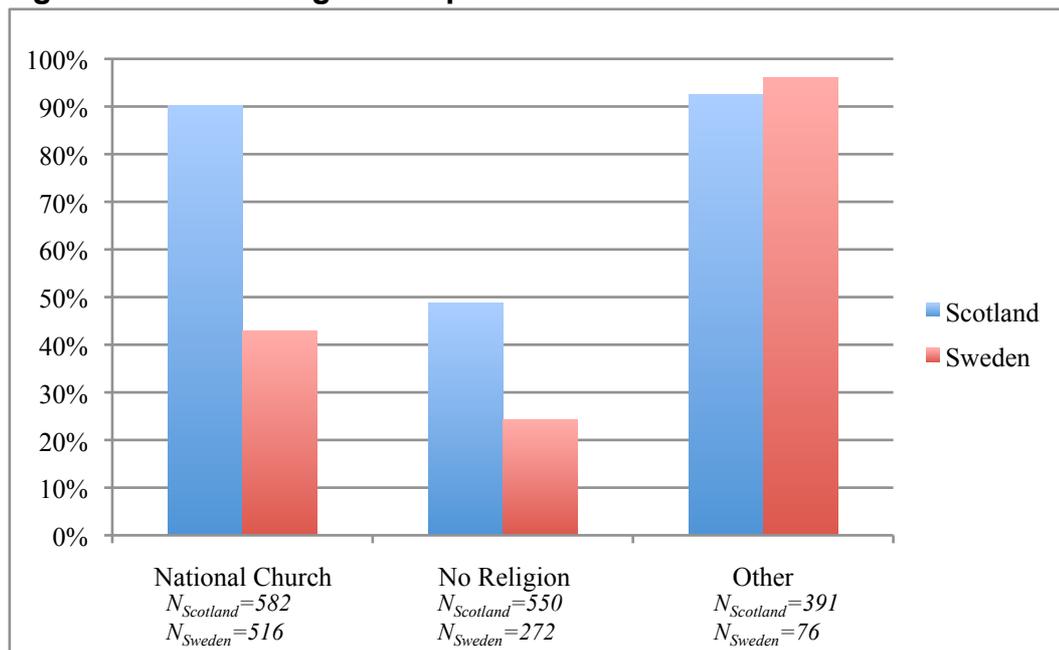
¹²⁷ For more on cultural religion, see section 3.7.3 (pp. 77-79).

Figure 5.6: Percentage of respondents at least “somewhat religious”



Data source: International Social Survey Programme, 2008

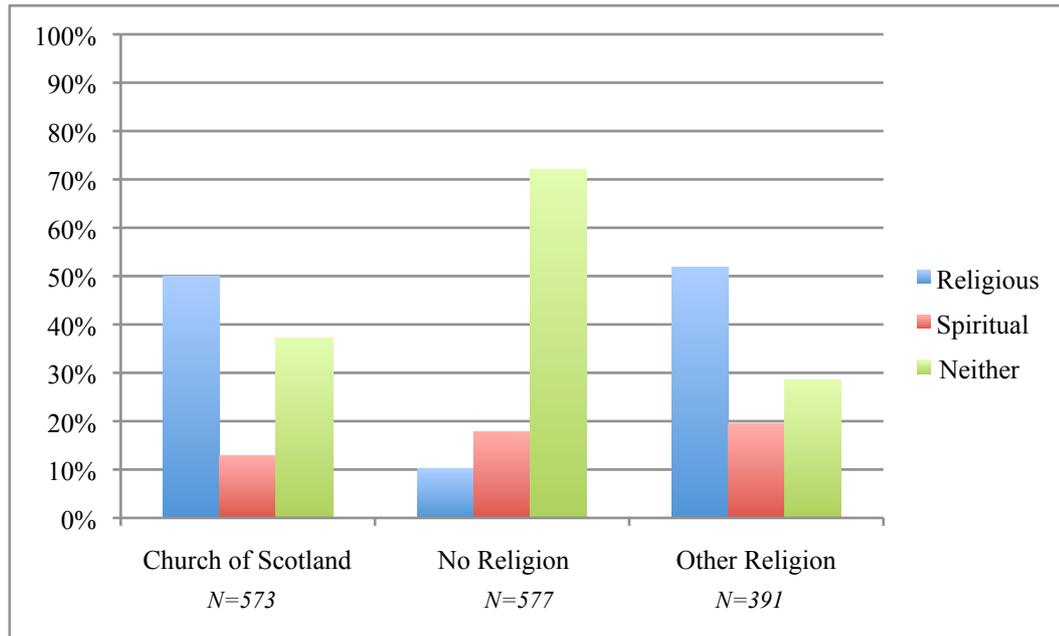
Figure 5.7: Percentage of respondents who believe in God¹²⁸



Data source: International Social Survey Programme, 2008 (Sweden) and Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2001 (Scotland)

¹²⁸ 28.4 percent of Swedish respondents “can’t choose” and 4.7 percent of Scottish respondents “don’t know.” These respondents have been excluded from the analysis. In the ISSP for Scotland, 23.7 percent “can’t choose.”

Figure 5.8: Religious beliefs by religious identification in Scotland



Data source: Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2001

Given that Swedes were automatically members of the Church of Sweden until fairly recently (see Chapter 2), it is possible that a majority of those who identify with the Church have not made an active choice to belong, while those who identify with other religious denominations are likely to be more committed as they either have actively exited the Church of Sweden or are immigrants with religious backgrounds. While there seems to be some levels of non-religious identification with the Church of Scotland, this is much more limited. The more religious emphasis on the Church of Scotland is likely a result of the Kirk's very limited role as a national church compared to the Church of Sweden. Furthermore, the fact that Scots, to a further extent than Swedes, make an active choice to belong to the former national church, a church that is simply one choice among several, may suggest that Scots are more likely to identify with a denomination for religious purposes. This complex relationship is further explored with binary logistic regression modelling below.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ A full discussion on religious identification is found in Chapter 7 (pp. 193-232).

5.3.2 Modelling Subjective Religiosity

Using data from the International Social Survey Programme (2008) for Sweden and the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (2001) for Scotland, two binary logistic regression models were created with the aim to further explore the relationship between subjective religiosity, religious identification, and church attendance, while controlling for various other variables. In the two models, different measures were used for the dependent variable of *subjective religiosity*. In the Swedish data, respondents were asked to rate their level of religiosity as either *extremely non-religious*, *very non-religious*, *somewhat non-religious*, *neither religious nor non-religious*, *somewhat religious*, *very religious*, or *extremely religious*. The dependent variable is coded as 1 for *at least somewhat religious* and 0 for less religious. Scots were asked to state whether or not they were religious, spiritual, or neither. The dependent variable for the Scottish model is thus coded as 1 for *religious or spiritual* and 0 for neither. While current church attendance and attendance at age 11 or 12 are at the ordinal level of measurement, with seven categories for the Swedish model and eight for the Scottish, they were treated as continuous.

The following independent variables were included in the *Swedish Model*:

- National Church Identification: 1 for yes, 0 for no
- Other Religion: 1 for yes, 0 for no
- Church Attendance: Scale from 0 (never) to 6 (once a week or more)
- Attendance at age 11 or 12: Scale from 0 (never) to 6 (once a week or more)
- Age
- Female: 1 for female, 0 for male
- Urban: 1 for town, small city, suburb, or larger city, 0 for small village or countryside
- Household Income (in thousand kronor)

Table 5.3: Determinants of subjective religiosity in Sweden

DV: Subj. Religiosity ⁺	B	Significance	Exp (B)	Effect
Constant (a)	-4.223	0.000***	0.015	Negative
National Church	-0.125	0.602	0.883	-
Other Religion	1.766	0.001***	5.848	Positive
Church Attendance	0.724	0.000***	2.063	Positive
Attendance as Child	0.724	0.000***	1.229	Positive
Female	0.197	0.337	1.217	-
Age	0.011	0.092*	1.011	Positive
Household Income	0.001	0.411	1.001	-
Urban	0.334	0.124	1.397	-
N	985			
Cox and Snell	0.207			

⁺: At least “somewhat religious”. * p<0.1 (marginally significant), ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Data source: *International Social Survey Programme, 2008*

The following variables were included in the *Scottish model*:

- National Church Identification: 1 for yes, 0 for no
- Other Religion: 1 for yes, 0 for no
- Church Attendance: Scale from 0 (never or practically never) to 7 (once a week or more)
- Ever Attend Regularly: 1 for yes, 0 for no
- Age
- Female: 1 for female, 0 for male
- Population Density: Persons per hectare
- Household Income (20-point scale)

Marital Status, Education, and Ethnicity were considered as control variables in both models but not included in the final models due to insignificance.

Table 5.4: Determinants of subjective religiosity in Scotland

DV: Subj. Religiosity ⁺	B	Significance	Exp (B)	Effect
Constant (a)	-3.004	0.000***	0.050	Negative
National Church	0.319	0.049**	1.376	Positive
Other Religion	0.749	0.000***	2.115	Positive
Church Attendance	0.242	0.000***	1.274	Positive
Ever Attend Regularly	0.784	0.000***	2.190	Positive
Female	0.166	0.376	1.123	-
Age	0.030	0.000***	1.030	Positive
Household Income	-0.007	0.577	0.993	-
Population Density	0.006	0.020**	1.006	Positive
N	1354			
Cox and Snell	0.257			

⁺: Religious or spiritual (as opposed to neither). *p<0.1 (marginally significant), **p<0.05, ***p<0.01. Data source: Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2001

The findings in Table 5.3 and 5.4 are intriguing. In Sweden, *national church* is insignificant and *other religion* is positive, with the reference category of *no religion*. This suggests that those who identify with the Church of Sweden are just as likely or unlikely to be religious as those with no religion. I re-tested the findings with dependent variables of *belief in heaven*, *belief in God*, and *belief in an afterlife*, and for all three variables, identification with the Church of Sweden was insignificant clearly illustrating that identification with the Church of Sweden is, for most people, not a religious form of belonging, but instead a form of *cultural religion*,¹³⁰ to which Swedes feel a sense of belonging as well as take part in life cycle ceremonies, regardless of personal beliefs. In Scotland, on the other hand, identification with the national church has a significant, positive, relationship with subjective religiosity. While *cultural religion* is not non-existent in Scotland (as seen in figures 5.6-5.8) it is clearly much more limited, possibly as those who identify with the Kirk to a lesser extent see this as a default option, and are more likely to

¹³⁰ See section 3.7.3 (pp. 83-85).

have made an active decision in relation to religious identification.¹³¹ Furthermore, odds ratios of 5.848 for Sweden and 2.115 for Scotland mean that, compared to *no religion*, *other religion* is a positive predictor of religiosity in both nations.¹³²

In line with Bruce's (2002a:148) notion that sustained belief requires religious socialisation through church attendance or family background, two variables on church attendance were included in each model: *current attendance* and *attendance at age 11 or 12* in the Swedish model and *current attendance* and whether or not the respondent had *ever attended regularly* for Scotland. The findings show that both current church attendance and attendance at age 11 or 12 in Sweden or whether respondent had ever attended regularly in Scotland are, as expected, positively associated with subjective religiosity.

No relationship exists between sex and subjective religiosity in either of the two nations. This is likely due to the fact that the model controls for church attendance.¹³³ This is in contrast to Berger et al's assertion that "women are consistently more religious than men on whatever measure is used" (2008:99). Consistent with a vast range of literature and theory on the topic (e.g. Davie, 1994; Iannaccone, 1998; Stark and Finke, 2000) age is a significant and positive predictor of self-assessed religiosity in both nations. However, the relationship is only marginally significant in Sweden, in line with the notion that there are relatively small age differences on measures of religious beliefs and belonging. Moreover, as mentioned previously, it is unlikely that religiosity is a result of a causal relationship with ageing and it is much more likely that the effect of age is due to generational differences.¹³⁴ Given that church attendance is accounted for in the model, an insignificant relationship is predicted between living in an urban area (for Sweden) or population density (for Scotland) and subjective religiosity. This was the case for Sweden, while there appears to be a positive association in Scotland. Nonetheless, this may be due to higher degree of ethnic diversity in urban areas. However,

¹³¹ This is discussed further in Chapter 7 (pp. 193-232).

¹³² An Exp (B) (odds-ratio) of 1 means no effect, below 1 suggests a negative effect, and above 1 a positive effect.

¹³³ A crosstabulation between sex and subjective religiosity suggests that more women than men are religious, a relationship that changes when control variables are introduced.

¹³⁴ See section 5.2 (pp. 124-135).

ethnicity was included as a control variable at the initial stage, but was found to be insignificant, and the results hold in a national church only model.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, previous research (e.g. Glock et al, 1967; Rice, 2003) use *deprivation theories*¹³⁵ to explain higher religiosity for lower social classes at the individual level in the United States. Further research on the macro level (e.g. Gill and Lundsgaarde, 2004) argues that nations that have a high level of welfare spending are less religious. Given the high level of social security in both Sweden¹³⁶ and Scotland one would therefore not expect a significant relationship between household income and religiosity, which the findings in Table 5.3 and Table 5.4 confirm. However, it is important to note that household income is a somewhat problematic indicator of financial stability. As is often the case with variables on income, it has a substantial amount of missing data.¹³⁷ Additionally, personal income is a less than ideal measure of social security given that it does not account for large differences in living costs (due to e.g. household composition). Nonetheless, while these findings indeed have limitations, similar ideas were expressed in the interviews. Several participants speculated that one of the most important reasons for why Sweden is so non-religious is the fact that Swedes can fall back on the state for material needs. Magnus and Caroline share this sentiment.

Magnus: In Sweden it's like, when *folkhemmet* was built up, I think it's about that.

Caroline: Yes, it's political.

Magnus: Yes, it is. Maybe it turned out that people don't need so much faith. Everyone was doing well anyway. I grew up in the 70s and 80s when everything was great. You were so taken care of. When I was little, there were only two different kinds of cheese to choose from. They had it sorted for you.

Caroline: You didn't need the faith because you were taken care of.

Magnus: It's so incredibly safe.

Keith, 37, who works with community development and as an elder in the Church of Scotland is married to Amy, 32, an environmental consultant. When I asked him why

¹³⁵ See section 3.6 (pp. 75-78).

¹³⁶ With *folkhemmet*. See section 2.3 (pp. 27-40).

¹³⁷ However, there were no noticeable patterns among the 187 missing cases in Sweden and 234 missing cases in Scotland.

Scotland seems to be secularising, he, along with Magnus and Caroline, mentioned that there is little to fear in today's society.

Keith: I think because Britain is quite a wealthy country people are able to kind of fend for themselves, you know, even with advancements in medicines and things like that...It's a bit safer maybe and there is not so much of a reliance on God.

Despite the fact that the regression findings on income and religiosity have to be very cautiously interpreted, it does bring to light the potential relationship between financial and social security and secularisation, an aspect that, nonetheless, needs further attention.

5.3.3 Sweden: "In the Church of Sweden you're not expected to believe"

All of the interview participants who married in the Church of Sweden, despite a lack of religious beliefs, felt entirely comfortable with their decision. When I asked how they felt being part of a religious organisation when they do not believe in God, they looked at me as if I was asking a question with an obvious answer. They expressed that the norm is to not believe *and* to marry in the church. Most importantly, they were under the impression that the Church does not expect them to believe unless they attend on Sundays. Several interviewees, such as Alva, 30, were of the opinion that this is true only for the Church of Sweden, while other denominations require a religious commitment from its adherents. Alva is a teacher and married her husband Viktor in the Church of Sweden although she has a Pentecostal background. She highlighted key differences between the National Church and other denominations in terms of their role in today's society.

Alva: It depends on what position you are in. The Church of Sweden will always be that safety net to turn to when you are in need. I think that if you go to a free church you are expected to give something in return. It is more of a focus on personal faith. But in the Church of Sweden you're not expected to ... not expected to believe.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the fact that the Church of Sweden is viewed as a government institution to turn to for needs, but which nevertheless does not require personal beliefs nor an active commitment in return, clearly demonstrates the special

role of the former state church as a crucial component of the Swedish welfare state. After a century of being governed under secular leaders, the Church of Sweden has developed into something quite different from other religious denominations in Sweden.

Several participants, most of whom had a non-religious wedding ceremony, were of the opinion that the Church of Sweden is “weak” for gladly marrying more or less anyone, regardless of whether or not they even believe in God. Filippa, 27 is a nursery worker who married her husband Nils, 31, a student, in a civil ceremony. While they made the active decision to not marry in the church, they still understand why others would.

Isabella: Do you know of anyone who married in the Church of Sweden even though they don't believe?

Nils: Yes, most people we know who are married.

Filippa: I understand their choice. It's so beautiful. And it's a tradition.

Nils: A lot of people say afterwards “It was great because the minister didn't talk a lot about God.” But why use their building then?

Filippa: It is always like that. But they still want to have the ceremony there.

Isabella: But you always go to the Church of Sweden for weddings, not to a free church?

Nils: If you go to a free church I think you have to be religious.

Isabella: So people know that in the Church of Sweden it is okay to not be religious?

Nils: Yes, exactly. Everyone knows the deal.

While there was a widespread consensus among the interview participants that the Church of Sweden is not an institution primarily associated with religious beliefs, some of the participants, above all those who married in a non-religious ceremony, were less pleased with this arrangement. They expressed the opinion that the Church should stand up for its fundamental religious principles instead of providing effectively secular ceremonies. As an active humanist, Jonas holds strong opinions about the former Swedish state church.

Jonas: To be honest, morally, I think the Church of Sweden are cowards. If you are a church shouldn't you act like one? Should you really stretch that far just to have better statistics and to be able to say that “we're still marrying people?” Above all, I think it is wrong of people

to marry there and not want God involved in the ceremony... and still go to a minister. But most people think it's "whatever, it doesn't matter."

Jonas' idea of the church removing the fundamental aspects of their religion to sustain themselves illustrates what may be the ultimate crisis of the church. At a time of rapid decline in attendance and affiliation,¹³⁸ it is possible that the national churches are aware that they cannot afford to refuse someone who claims to identify with their faith and certainly wishes to acknowledge this through taking part in certain rituals or ceremonies, regardless of what their actual beliefs are.¹³⁹ They may also feel bound by their official role (despite disestablishment) to serve the entire nation and to be open for all.¹⁴⁰ To some extent, Scots expressed similar views about the Kirk. While it came across as far less secular than the Church of Sweden, several interview participants spoke about the strictness of the Catholic Church in relation to the Church of Scotland, an impression that is further discussed in the following section.

5.3.4 Scotland: "Most people can marry in the Church of Scotland. In the Catholic Church you would have to say you believe in God"

In terms of the emphasis on religious beliefs, the Church of Scotland came across as much stricter than the Church of Sweden. While some Swedish ministers required readings from the bible and hymns at the wedding, they never asked about personal faith or church attendance. In Scotland, on the other hand, churches commonly asked the bride and groom to attend church for a period of time before the wedding. Olivia, 31, a photographer, and Connor, 31, an architect, married in a humanist ceremony. They perceived some ministers within the Church of Scotland as rather strict regarding religious principles. While Olivia's family would have preferred that she married in a religious ceremony, she could not bring herself to attend when she does not believe.

¹³⁸ See chapters 6 (pp. 159-192) and 7 (pp. 193-232).

¹³⁹ Ironically, Stark and Finke (2000) argue that it is precisely the church's acceptance of secular practices and less committed individuals that leads to its downfall.

¹⁴⁰ See section 2.3.7 (pp. 38-40).

Olivia: They can be quite strict here, I have a friend whose sister was asked to be a god parent to her friend's daughter, and the minister wouldn't do it cause she wasn't active in church, so they are really strict. So we would have had to start going to church, and because I don't believe in it... It was just a family thing, and some things I just don't really...

Nevertheless, several participants mentioned that the Church of Scotland has in fact become less strict, and some ministers were more than happy to marry non-religious couples as long as they had some form of family connection to the church. Two such individuals were Ben, 47, who works with property rentals, and his wife Pamela, 36, an optometrist. They are both non-believers but married in the Church of Scotland to honour the wishes of Pamela's mother. I asked them what the Church thought about marrying them given their level of religious commitment, and Pamela answered:

Pamela: Yeah, they were okay with it, as long as the minister got the message across. She would have liked for us to attend the church but as long as we married for the right reasons, that we love each other, and that we bring children up the right way, then it was fine.

Similar to what has happened in Sweden, the Church of Scotland has had to adjust its principles to keep up with changing norms and customs in a secularising society, even if it means serving both religious and non-religious individuals. In line with this, Susan and John, both 38 years old and both lawyers, were of the opinion that the Church is indeed showing signs of desperation.

Isabella: Why do you think it is that the Church of Scotland is not seen as very strictly religious in some cases?

John: It might be because they just take anyone.

Susan: You would say it as a form of weakness.

John: It's just that they are happy to have people and hope that it might turn into something later. And that saying no to people doesn't help, which is true. The ministers are very practical I think. They know that as long as you get people in it doesn't matter.

Furthermore, in relation to the Catholic Church, the interviewees perceived the Kirk as more relaxed about religious commitment of its adherents. Joanne, 25, a lawyer and non-believer, married Eric, 31, an assistant bank manager and Catholic in a humanist ceremony. Joanne states that "Most people can marry in the Church of Scotland if they wish to do so. In the Catholic Church, you would have to attend

counselling sessions and say you believe in God.” The fact that the Church of Scotland is less strict was further discussed in my interview with Susan and John. Susan spoke about her brother and his wife, both non-believers, who christened their children in the Church of Scotland to “fend off Catholic relatives.”

Susan: My brother and his wife had a dilemma when it came to christening their children. There is an expectation on her side of the family, who are Catholic... And they didn't particularly want a Catholic christening because they aren't particularly religious... and that leads on to the first communion, so there is a whole separate list of things done from there. So as a compromise they asked if my parents' Church of Scotland minister would christen their children instead.

Sharon and Martin had a similar experience. As Sharon is a devout Catholic and Martin an atheist, her Catholic Church would not give them a full service. So instead they had a Church of Scotland ceremony as she still wanted a religious ceremony and he was not “too bothered either way.”

Sharon: The Catholic Church wouldn't give us a full service because Martin isn't baptised. But the Church of Scotland... It felt the right thing to do. I wanted it to be recognized in the church in some way.

Isabella: So was it a problem for the Church of Scotland minister? That you were Catholic, Sharon? And that you are not religious, Martin?

Sharon: No, it wasn't a problem because I believed in God and that I wanted our marriage to symbolise God.

Isabella: So would you say that the Catholic Church is a bit stricter when it comes to...

Martin: They're a bit snooty and you got to be a saint. The Church of Scotland isn't bothered by that stuff.

The findings in this section suggest that the Church of Scotland is still an organisation that individuals mostly turn to for religious beliefs. In Sweden, on the other hand, the National Church has had to adjust to a decreasing public interest in religion and instead embrace their role as a carrier of cultural traditions and practices. While the social significance of religion is arguably declining in Scotland, religion still has a more prominent role in Scottish than in Swedish society. This is consequently the focus of the final section of this chapter.

5.4 Atheism and Social Significance of Religion

The perceived importance of religion in people's lives can reveal a lot about contemporary secularisation. One of the reasons that Davie (1994:2) uses to support her claim against secularisation is the fact that few people are atheists or have "opted out of religion altogether." On the contrary, I would argue that the lack of the *need* to define as atheist is instead an indicator of advanced secularisation, in line with Bruce's (2002a:235) claim that "Most people didn't give up being committed Christians because they claimed religion was false. It simply ceased to be of any great importance to them. They became indifferent." This relationship between secularisation, indifference, and atheism indicates key differences in the state of religion in Scotland and Sweden.

5.4.1 Sweden: "I don't care enough about religion to call myself an atheist"

Prior to conducting my research, I had a conversation with two relatives of mine, a couple who had been married for 60 years. I discussed my interest in researching religion and as the conversation carried on, the wife, who believed in God, for the first time realised that her husband did not. After all these years together, they had not once discussed religious beliefs. Interestingly, this complete unawareness of fundamental religious beliefs of their spouse came across in several of my interviews.

Bertil, 77, a retired chief of finance, and Birgitta, 75, a retired chef, married in a civil ceremony, but are both members of the Church of Sweden. Neither Bertil nor Birgitta believe in God, but this lack of belief is not something they think or talk about. Bertil explained that prior to the interview, they had never discussed religious beliefs with each other. I was eager to find out why and asked them if they saw it as a deeply private matter. Bertil answered that, "Religion never comes up. It is not because it is private. You just don't think about it. It is not interesting."

In line with this, Zuckerman (2008:102) speaks of religion in Sweden as a *non-issue*, as unimportant and uninteresting. This sentiment characterised every one of my interviews in Sweden, but rarely came up in Scotland. Nevertheless, my

impression was that it is not necessarily that religion itself is an uninteresting topic. This was illustrated by Noah, a 24 year-old university student who married his wife, 29-year-old speech therapist, Lydia, in a civil ceremony at the registrar's office. He states that, "I don't ever talk about religion with friends and family. It doesn't come up. There is nothing to discuss because everyone believes in exactly the same thing, or I should say don't believe. What is there to talk about?" In other words, religion comes across as an uninteresting topic because almost everyone has the same attitudes about it and you typically do not debate a topic on which most people are in consensus. Zuckerman (2008:7) quotes Riis who describes this attitude as "lukewarm and sceptical." Most Swedes come across as rather indifferent about religion and it typically does not bring up any strong feelings one way or the other. Even those who do not believe generally have good things to say about the church and religion.

Nevertheless, most interview participants are under the impression that the norm is to *not* believe. Openly religious Swedes are described as "odd" (Noah) or "unique" (Lydia). Elisabeth, 29, is a religious studies teacher who is married to Markus, 28, a bank advisor. She is one of five interview participants in Sweden who believe in God. She describes the general attitudes she is faced with when talking about religious faith.

Elisabeth: People think you're daft if you talk about religion. Since I teach religion and since I'm interested in it, I can talk a bit more about it, at least the factual stuff. But my personal beliefs I can't talk about with many people, maybe not even with Markus. No one understands, because few people believe.

Interestingly, it is not only the openly religious individuals who are seen as different. While religious people are seen as somewhat deviant in Swedish society, so are those who express their atheism. Jonas and Gabriella explain this as they talk about their Swedish families and about their thoughts on the differences between Scotland and Sweden.

Gabriella: It's interesting that even though both sides of our families are all atheists, no one is comfortable speaking about it or calling themselves humanist. And when we had our wedding celebration in Sweden, we arranged for some humanist pamphlets to be handed out to anyone who might be interested but of course our families who were supposed to bring them "forgot them at home."

Jonas: Yes, they think we are aggressive in a way. It is so Swedish. The idea that you're not supposed to be anything at all.

Isabella: So it feels like it's more okay to be humanist in Scotland?

Jonas: Yes. Here people expect you to take a side. And humanist sounds better. Atheist has a bad pitch to it.

As expressed by Jonas and Gabriella, just because many Swedes lack religious beliefs, it does not mean that self-identified atheism is any more common in Sweden than elsewhere. Few participants would call themselves atheist even though many of them recognise that, technically speaking, they *are* atheists. Alice was one of these individuals who hold no supernatural beliefs whatsoever but who would not call herself atheist.

Isabella: Would you call yourself atheist?

Alice: No it sounds so...

Ludvig: But you are!

Alice: Yes...

Isabella: So what does that mean to you then? When someone says they are atheist?

Alice: I think of someone who is against religion. I know it isn't like that but... It's not like I don't think religion should exist. And that's what I think when I hear atheist.

Similar to Alice, Lydia has no religious beliefs. She agrees with Alice that the word atheism holds a different meaning than simply a belief that there is no god.

Isabella: Since you don't believe, would you call yourself atheist?

After a long pause:

Lydia: It sounds so harsh. I know you can select it on Facebook, but I have chosen to not do that.

Isabella: Why is that?

Lydia: I feel that when you meet people who say that they are atheists, they're typically not very sympathetic people. And to be honest, I hope I will start believing one day. But I don't know.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ Lydia's wish to "one day believe" is possibly a result of her strong connection to the Church as a childhood memory, further explored in section 7.4.1 (pp. 225-226).

Atheism is a poor measure of non-belief since, as explained above, it drastically underestimates levels of non-belief. Furthermore, rather than being a requisite for secularisation as argued by Davie (1994), a need to identify as atheist indicates that religion still has a prominent role in social life. Sweden is thus a leading example of Bruce's (2002:41) argument that secularisation does not lead to atheism but to the declining social importance of religion. This is also why non-religious Swedes at the same time have relatively positive feelings about religion, in line with Zuckerman's (2008:106) idea that "in a society where most non-religious people are simultaneously anti-religious...that indicates that religion is still a social or cultural force to be reckoned with."

5.4.2 Scotland: "Atheism is a proactive statement"

The interviews gave the impression that there is a relatively more prominent social significance of religion in Scotland, suggesting a later stage of secularisation in Sweden.¹⁴² As Swedes who live in Scotland, Jonas and Gabriella had an insightful perception about the differences between the two nations.

Jonas: Here in Scotland people are aware of religion in a whole different way. Our social life involves a liberal circle of friends but it is clear that it is still very important if you are Catholic or Protestant. Religion has a much bigger influence here with same sex marriage and other things. Religious figures are heard in media and things like that. They say, "this is awful." That would never happen in Sweden.

Gabriella: Exactly. If you are a religious figure here you are somewhat of an official spokesperson. Your voice counts just because you come from the church.

That religion has, compared to Sweden, a more important place in Scottish society was illustrated by the fact that many of the Scottish interview participants discuss religion relatively often with friends and family and thereby come across as much less indifferent about the topic. Lucy and Simon from Glasgow describe this.

Isabella: When you meet friends and family, are you open about your belief? Or is it something that never comes up?

Lucy: Yes, we talk about it quite a bit. I think I'm probably more open about it now, more than I used to be, because at work people often talk about things to do with religion. I'll be

¹⁴² This is examined further with church attendance trends in Chapter 6 (pp. 159-192).

open about the fact that I'm not religious if they ask, or if they assume that I am, I'll just say that I'm not.

Simon: I think you need to debate about it every now and again with friends but at the same time you don't want to offend people.

Perhaps as a result of the relatively high religious diversity, Scots are more likely to take a stand and make more or less of an active choice among several options. This means that in terms of religion, Scots are less homogeneous than Swedes, and religion becomes a topic of discussion among those of different views and beliefs. David, 26, a P.E teacher, and Gill, 26, a career advisor, discuss this. They married in a Church of Scotland ceremony and are active participants in their local church.

Isabella: Do you discuss religion with friends and family?

Gill: It would come up a lot actually.

David: Yes it would come up quite a lot.

Isabella: Both with people who are and aren't Christian, or is it...?

Gill: Yeah, I think especially with people that know we are Christians and who are not Christian themselves. I think they like to bring things up at times.

David: They will ask things about what we think of this issue or that...

Isabella: Does it ever become sort of a heated discussion, or is it usually...?

Gill: I think it has once with your friend Angus.

David: Umm, yeah it has occasionally. I mean we obviously would be disagreeing.

Gill: But there is never a big argument.

Religious diversity may likewise be a reason for why there is not a similar norm in Scotland to be non-religious, and for why being openly religious is not perceived as "odd" or "embarrassing" as was the impression from the Swedish interviews.

Similar to the Swedish interviews, there was a sense that Scots perceived the word atheist as rather confrontational. Many Scots are theoretically speaking atheists in that they believe that there is no god, but at the same time do not define themselves as such. As mentioned above, this suggests that levels of atheism are less useful measures of non-religiosity in line with Bruce' (2002a) assertion that atheism often has a negative connotation. Olivia expressed this as she states that, "I think

atheist is a bit hard lined. They seem a bit anti-God rather than... I would prefer to accept other people with their own god or faith. On the other hand, I'm not confused about it. I don't think there is any form of god." Ellie, 29, a research assistant, and Henry, 29, a househusband, were of the same opinion.

Henry: People used to think that atheist is someone who strongly believes there is no god, as opposed to agnostic where you don't know. But I think now because of Dawkins, and Hitchens, and people like that, I think people now think that atheists have got a problem with religion. And they are intolerant, and...

Ellie: I think that's why I'm so reluctant to say I am an atheist, and even when I hear the word I picture Christopher Hitchens, and just aggressive... I just prefer to say that I don't believe in God rather than the word atheist.

Similarly, even though he is a non-believer, Ben dislikes atheism and he perceives it to be an active form of disbelief.

Ben: To me, atheism is no different than religion. It's just a belief in something else. As soon as you put a name on it, it's going to become something. I don't have a name for what I am. To me, atheism is more a proactive thing... about stating your case. Rather than not saying anything, you're instead saying "yeah I am an atheist" and in that case you are just religious but in a different way. Atheism is attention seeking. It's just like naming religion – like you want to have a conversation about it.

Nevertheless, the interviews gave the impression that while most participants relate atheism to an active standpoint, Scots felt more comfortable defining themselves as atheists, and displayed a much stronger awareness of their non-religiosity than Swedes. It most often came across as something they had contemplated at length. This was clearly portrayed by Helen.

Helen: Atheism is not a lack of belief. It is a strong belief that there is no god. That's why I don't say, "I'm not religious." I am an atheist because I actively believe in not believing in God. It is an active statement. I initially called myself agnostic because same as Chris said, I thought it was quite arrogant to say you're atheist, that you don't believe in God, because humans don't know everything. There is a chance there is a god that we're not aware of. I don't think it's very likely but it might be. And if there was, then of course, fine. Grand! More recently I started calling myself atheist because that's what I am.

Nevertheless, some of the interviewees were of the opinion that especially the younger generation has no interest in religion and that it no longer stirs up quite as strong emotion. This was described by Pamela as she states that "I don't think there is anyone with strong enough views really." In other words, despite the fact that

religion generally seems to have a more prominent role in Scottish society, it is likely that as Scotland secularises, Scots will display a weaker and weaker interest in religion similar to what has happened in Sweden.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the complex relation between subjective religiosity, national churches, and secularisation. Attempts made by Davie (1990, 1994, 2002a, 2004, 2007) to categorise Europeans as *believing and belonging* have limited value in part due to the fact that broad measures of belief alone do not offer a comprehensive understanding of meanings and interpretations of diverse forms of religious beliefs in Scotland and Sweden.

The first part of the chapter presented measures of subjective religiosity that suggest that religious beliefs are more common in Scotland than in Sweden and that there is a particularly large difference in traditional Christian beliefs. Here, I argued that while far from *most* Scots and Swedes believe, even if *spirituality* is on the rise as argued by Davie, this development is not incompatible with secularisation. In fact, a decline in traditionally religious beliefs in favour for individual interpretations of spirituality, many of which are not religious in nature, convincingly illustrates a declining significance of religion in contemporary society.

The second part of the chapter examined the relationship between church affiliation and subjective religiosity. Despite the fact that both the Church of Scotland and the Church of Sweden are former national churches in Protestant Europe, descriptive analysis and binary logistic regression findings revealed crucial differences. Those who belong to the Church of Sweden are not significantly more likely than those with no religious identification to call themselves religious. As a former integral part of the Swedish welfare state, the Church of Sweden serves as a main provider of life cycle ceremonies while it is perceived to have only limited association to the supernatural. As a contrast, the Church of Scotland communicates religious doctrine alongside other religious denominations, arguably as a result of a weaker role as a national church in a religious landscape with higher levels of diversity.

The final part of the chapter offered an examination of social significance of religion as presented with meanings of atheism and individual perceptions on religion as a topic of conversation. Here, I argued the inaccuracy of Davie's assertion that secularisation may be refuted due to low levels of atheism. Instead, the *need* to define oneself in terms of religion diminishes as a society gradually secularises. In relation to this, Sweden may serve as a key example of a highly secularised society where religion simply does not evoke strong feelings one way or another. Arguably, Scotland may be going down a similar path considering lower levels of belief as well as perceived declining interest in religion among younger generations.

This chapter showed that *believing* is a complex issue as various measures and interpretations of subjective religiosity generate diverse conclusions. In line with this, I argued that certain measures of religious beliefs, in particular as related to spirituality, often hold secular interpretations making it difficult to judge whether Scots and Swedes *believe* without clearly defining the concept. However, it is not just the concept of *believing* that is problematic. With the aim to offer a new interpretation of religious *belonging*, the next three chapters explore church attendance, church membership and identification, and participation in rituals as distinct concepts that do not necessarily correlate with one another. This begins with church attendance in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6: Belonging as Church Attendance

6.1 Introduction

There is a widespread consensus in the field of sociology of religion that contemporary levels of church attendance in Europe are at a historically low level (e.g. Berger et al, 2008; Bruce, 1996, 2002; Davie, 2000, 2002a, 2007; Stark and Finke, 2000; Warner, 2010) and the phenomenon has been described as considerably more severe in Protestant European countries (Berger et al, 2008:11; Davie, 2002:6; 2000:9; Martin, 1978). As discussed in Chapter 3, Davie (1990, 1994, 2002a, 2004, 2007) uses this perceived crisis in organised religion as evidence for her claim that Europe can be categorised as *believing without belonging*.

This chapter examines church attendance as a key dimension of religious *belonging*. It appears to be distinctly different from identification or membership (Chapter 7) and participation in rituals (Chapter 8). A focus on church attendance illuminates patterns and individual experiences of what is a public, and active, expression of religious beliefs and community. Identification or membership may be, to a further extent a passive sense of being part of a social group, and ritual participation can be described as the act of celebrating this sense of belonging to this group. The latter two forms of belonging carry non-religious sentiments to a further extent than church attendance. As is seen in the next three chapters, to subsume all three of these dimensions under *belonging* highly limits the possibility of understanding religious decline and the changing functions of national churches in Scotland and Sweden.

The first part of the chapter focuses on how church attendance habits have changed over the course of respondents' lives. This sheds light on crucial and diverse patterns of secularisation. Here, key differences in rates of decline in religious activity are presented in the two nations, findings that are further highlighted and contextualised with interview data on generational differences.

Building on this, the second part discusses *patterns and levels of* contemporary religious participation, including an examination of attendance by age, religious denomination, and belief in god. Non-attendance is studied with regression

analysis and descriptive statistics. Interview data further explore non-religious reasons for attending church. This part examines how Swedes and Scots compare in terms of levels of, reasons for, and experiences of attending church.

Overall, the chapter describes contextual similarities and differences in church attendance. Examining changes in objective religious participation uniquely contributes to the understanding of the changing role of the church in everyday life of Scots and Swedes. Together with religious beliefs in Chapter 5, identification and membership in Chapter 7, and participation in rituals in Chapter 8, the aim of this chapter is to offer a better understanding of the complex phenomenon of secularisation and the role of religion in secularising societies.

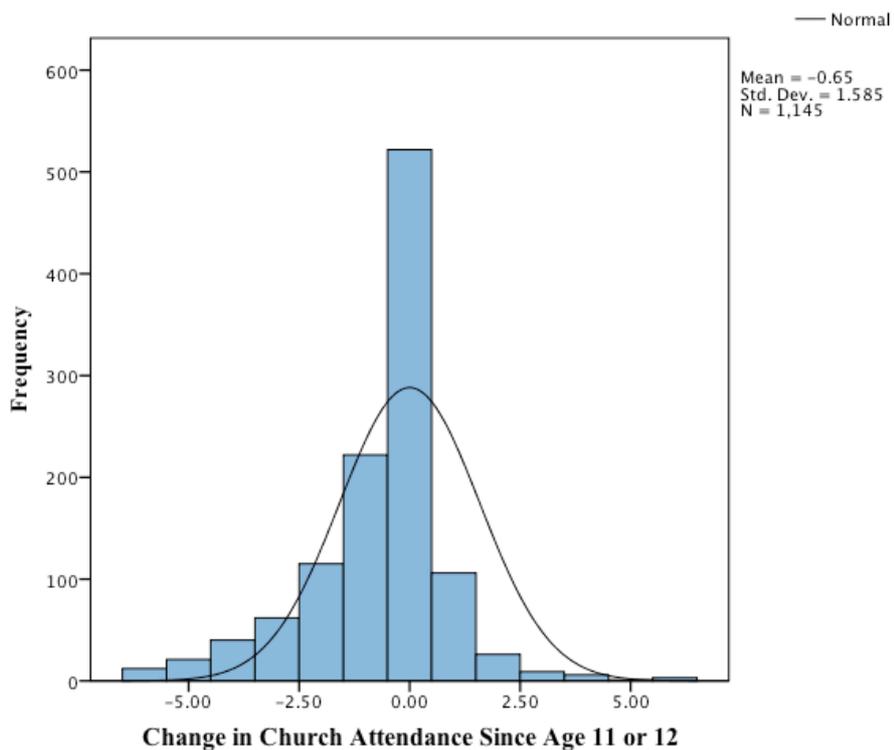
6.2 Changes in Church Attendance

6.2.1 Decline in Church Attendance

The International Social Survey Programme's 2008 survey includes a number of questions on church attendance. One asks how often the respondent attended religious services at age 11 or 12 and another asks about current attendance. Combining these two survey items created a variable called "change in church attendance" used to grasp the decline in religious participation over the past century. The two variables were coded from 0 to 6 where 0 means *never attending church* and 6 represents *once a week or more*.¹⁴³ The new variable is made up of *current attendance minus attendance at age 11 or 12*. This means that a negative value represents individuals who attend less now than when they were 11 or 12, a positive number means they attend more often now, and a zero corresponds to no change in church attendance frequency. A value of -6, for example, means that the respondent attended church *once a week or more* when they were 11 or 12 and that they *never* attend today.

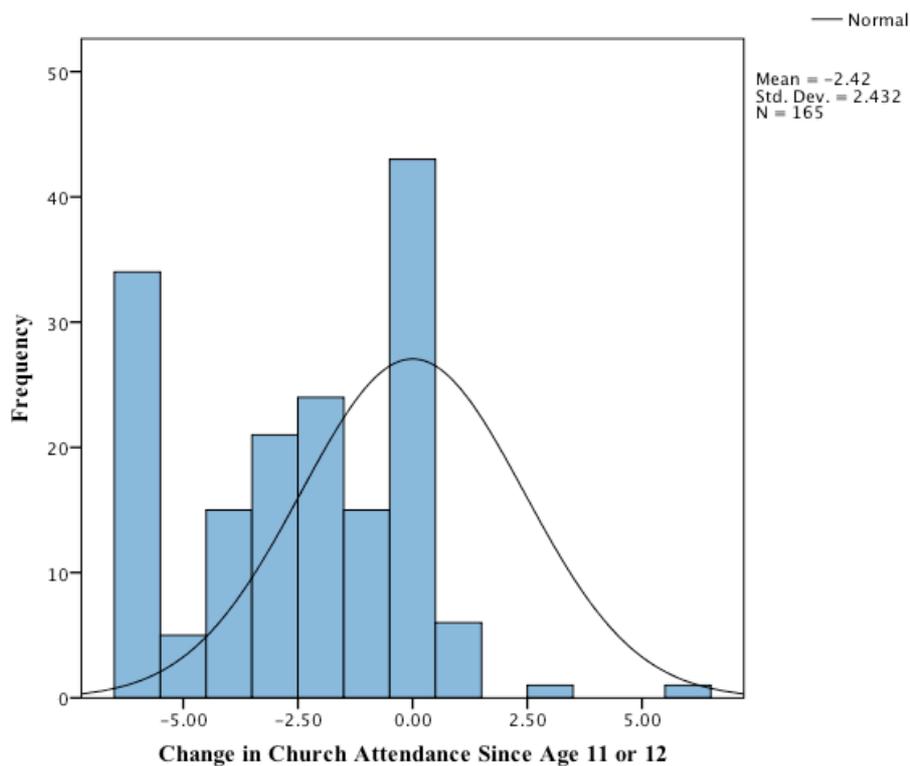
¹⁴³ 0=Never, 1= Less than once a year, 2=Once or twice a year, 3=Several times a year, 4= Once a month, 5= Several times a month, 6= Once a week or more.

Figure 6.1: Change in Swedish church attendance



Data source: International Social Survey Programme, 2008

Figure 6.2: Change in Scottish church attendance



Data source: International Social Survey Programme, 2008

As is presented in Figure 6.1, the pattern of change in Sweden's church attendance resembles a normal curve, suggesting that, overall, there has not been a sudden change in attendance over the course of the respondents' lives (i.e. the past 10-70 years) The lack of major change is also illustrated by the fact that close to half of the sample attend as much or little now as they did when they were 11 or 12. However, it is important to highlight that this figure only displays changes in church attendance and that a zero merely represents *no change*, including everything from "never attending in the past and never attending now" to "attending weekly in the past to attending weekly now."

The Scottish data present a different case. As seen in Figure 6.2, only four percent attend church more often now than they did when they were 11 or 12, about 26 percent claim no change, and close to 70 percent attend less often now than when they were 11 or 12. Interestingly, a full 20 percent of those who attended church *weekly or more* as children now claim to *never* attend church. Even more intriguing is the fact that the corresponding statistic for Sweden is 1 percent. In other words, there has been a drastic decline in the Scottish case, where as in the same time period in Sweden, the negative change in church attendance has not been as dramatic. This suggests that a major decline in Swedish church attendance took place at a historically earlier time period in Sweden. However, it is important to note that with a small Scottish sample size of 165, these findings need to be cautiously interpreted. Nonetheless, it follows similar patterns to interview findings and literature discussed below as well as to further survey data from the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey discussed in section 6.2.2.

It is crucial to highlight that specific contexts influence responses that are given to a certain question. The discussion in section 4.2.3 mentioned that figures of church attendance differ according to social norms. For example, Americans tend to exaggerate how often they attend church (e.g. Berger et al, 2008:12; Bruce, 2002:206; Hadaway et al, 1993:742), suggesting that church attendance data need to be cautiously interpreted between and within contexts of study. As seen in Chapter 5, relative to Sweden, religion appears to have a more prominent role in Scottish society, suggesting that it is possible that Scots, to some extent, inflate their

attendance while Swedes do not. However, along with Chapter 5, it is important to note that Scotland also seems to experience a continuously declining social significance of religion, meaning that possible differences will likely shrink, and Field (2001:162) suggests that the disparity between estimated and claimed attendance is relatively low in Scotland. Additionally, given the relatively low level of interest and passion that religion and the Church evoke in Sweden, it is highly unlikely that Swedes under-report how often they attend. Nevertheless, it is important to cautiously interpret the results above and to distinguish figures of claimed and counted church attendance, also in relation to the fact that it is likely that many will fail to accurately recall how often they went to church at age 11 or 12.

Along with the findings above, prior literature has noted a steady decline in church attendance in both Scotland and Sweden. Martin (1978:65) states that Swedish attendance decreased steadily between 1927 and 1952, going from 2.4 to 1 percent in the Stockholm region, and from 13.1 to 4.9 percent in Gothenburg. In Hamberg's (1991) longitudinal study, all measures of religiosity *except* claimed church attendance saw a decrease between 1955 and 1970. The lack of change in attendance, similar to what is seen in Figure 6.1 was partially explained by a floor effect, since the respondents could not possibly attend less often than "never." Bäckström et al (2004:43) present a steady decline in the average count of weekly church attendance, going from an average of 2.6 percent of the population in 1970 to 1.3 percent in 2002. Data from the ISSP suggest that claimed regular church attendance (i.e. attending monthly or more) has decreased from 7.9 percent in 1998 to 5.5 percent in 2008.

Furthermore, Field (2001:163) shows that Scottish claimed church activity decreased from 24 percent weekly attendance in 1972 to 17 percent in 1997. Rosie (2002:25) presents levels of current regular and past regular attendance indicating that for all birth cohorts, between 3 and 4 out of 10 people *used to* attend regularly but no longer do so. He further shows that among those that used to attend regularly in the past but no longer do so, only a very small percentage has considered returning (Rosie, 2002:26) Brown (2012:78) presents figures from the Scottish Church Attendance Census showing that a headcount of church visitors on an average Sunday in 1984 corresponded to 17 percent of the population, a figure that had

declined to 14 percent in 1994, and 11.2 percent in 2002. Additionally, more recent data from the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey suggest that claimed regular attendance (i.e. monthly or more often) has gone down from 27.2 percent in 1999 to 20.2 percent in 2011.

6.2.2 Scotland: Generational Shifts

Because of the wide age range in the sample, the time range between current and age 11 or 12 attendance varies considerably in Figure 6.1 and 6.2. This data therefore represent individuals who were aged 11 or 12 over 70 years ago as well as those who were aged 11 or 12 ten years ago. Examining cohort effects may generate a clearer picture of changes taken place over time. Here, the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2001 is a more suitable data source given the limitations to using a small sample in studying differences in various age groups.

As seen in Figure 6.1 and 6.2, there has been a drastic decline in claimed church attendance in Scotland. Figures presented in Table 6.1 show that older cohorts are much more likely than younger to attend regularly.¹⁴⁴ It is difficult to pinpoint precisely when the most significant decline took place. Nevertheless, more than half of Scots born in the 1960s and later have *never* attended regularly, a figure that is just below a third in the previous cohort. Using the same data set, Bruce and Glendinning (2010:117-118) show that 44 percent of those born in the 1920s who were previously regular attendees have since stopped going. For those born in the 1960s, the corresponding figure is 68 percent. Bruce and Glendinning (2010) assert that a decline in attendance among Scots born in the 1960s can be explained by changing attitudes in their parents' generation, pointing towards the 1930s and 1940s. They attribute this decline to changing family structure and its effect on religious socialisation as a result of World War II (Bruce and Glendinning, 2010:115-117). This is in contrast to Brown (1997, 2001), who emphasises socio-cultural and political changes of the 1950s and 1960s¹⁴⁵ as more direct causes of religious decline.

¹⁴⁴ This is explored further in section 6.3 (pp. 172-175).

¹⁴⁵ See sections 2.4.7 and 2.4.8 (pp. 48-52).

Table 6.1: Percentage of Scots who attend regularly, who attended regularly in the past, and who have never attended regularly

	1901- 1930	1931- 1940	1941- 1950	1951- 1960	1961- 1970	1971- 1983
Regular Attendee	46.0%	36.6%	23.7%	23.1%	14.2%	9.3%
Former	36.1%	34.4%	43.7%	44.7%	35.5%	32.3%
Never	17.9%	29.1%	32.6%	32.2%	50.3%	58.4%
N	263	227	215	273	332	279

This table is adapted from Rosie (2002:25) (using different age cut-offs). *Data source: Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2001*

Table 6.2: Age at which past regular attendees ceased to attend regularly (by birth cohort)¹⁴⁶

	1901- 1930	1931- 1940	1941- 1950	1951- 1960	1961- 1970	1971- 1983
25th Percentile	17	18	14	14	12	11
50th Percentile	35	30	20	17	16	13
75th Percentile	70	50	32	33	23	16
N	95	78	94	112	118	90

Data source: Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2001

Figures presented in Table 6.1 are in line with Bruce and Glendinning's (2010) idea of generational religious decline given that the percentage of Scots who have never attended regularly increases by cohort. Furthermore, Table 6.2 shows that, for each cohort, previous regular attendees stopped going to church regularly at a younger and younger age. For both cohorts born before 1941, 75 percent of past attendees ceased to attend regularly in adulthood (over age 17). A clear difference is observed in subsequent cohorts where more than half of past attendees left before the age of 20, in line with Bruce and Glendinning's (2010) notion of unsuccessful religious socialisation of children born after the wars. This is further examined in

¹⁴⁶ It is important to note that the different age ranges between cohorts could affect the median. For example, all individuals in the youngest cohort who have stopped attending regularly have done this at or before age 30. If current attendees cease to go to church regularly later in life, the median will thus increase. However, given that only 9 percent in the youngest cohort currently attend regularly, the median age of stopping cannot go above 15 even if all current attendees cease to attend regularly.

Table 6.3, which shows that a large number of previous regular churchgoers in fact ceased to attend regularly in the 1950s and 1960s as argued by Brown (1997, 2001). However, Brown's (1997:162) notion of a relatively stable level of attendance in the first half of the 20th century can be challenged with the fact that over 4 in 10 Scots in the oldest cohort who previously attended regularly stopped doing so before 1950.

Table 6.3: Year in which past regular attendees ceased to attend regularly (by birth cohort)

	1901-1930	1931-1940	1941-1950	1951-1960
Stopped before 1950	41.1%	11.5%	1.1%	0.0%
1950-1969	14.7%	44.9%	61.7%	29.5%
After 1969	44.2%	43.6%	37.2%	70.5%
N	95	78	94	122

Data source: Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2001

As is presented in Table 6.1, approximately a third of respondents born in 1971 and later claim to have attended church regularly in the past while they no longer do so. All but three of the 32 Scottish interview participants were part of this age group. Many of these individuals expressed that they went to church fairly regularly as children and took part in activities such as Sunday school.¹⁴⁷ In several cases, their parents have remained active within their local church, while others mention that their parents have also stopped attending.

A common theme throughout the Scottish interviews was a noticeable generational decline in levels of participation, where grandparents are seen as more religious and more active in the church than parents, who are, in turn, more active than the interviewees themselves. Olivia describes the strong role her grandparents played in encouraging her family to attend church:

Olivia: I went to church every Sunday. We would go to church and then granny and grandpa would come to lunch. My mum would put the chicken on and then we would all leave for church. And then granny and grandpa would come to lunch after.

Isabella: For how many years did you go to church? Throughout your childhood?

Olivia: Yes, until I was 12 or 13.

¹⁴⁷ Brown (1997:1, 64) states that Presbyterian Sunday school enrolment has plummeted from 52 percent of Scots aged 5-15 in 1890s to 13 percent in 1981, and less than 10 percent in 1990.

Isabella: What happened then?

Olivia: My grandparents moved away.

Regardless of their own levels of participation, parents of the interviewees were seemingly indifferent to their children's choice to no longer attend. Pamela explains that she had a religious upbringing. Nevertheless, her parents never pushed her to attend once she was old enough to make her own decision, suggesting a change in attitudes has taken place where the church is no longer seen as an obligation. Scots are not *expected* to go to church, and even active participants see it as acceptable to choose otherwise.

Pamela: I was christened in that church. The primary school that I went to, we used to have services in that church for the end of term. I went to Sunday school there as well. I had that upbringing, but we were never dragged there. Once the Sunday school was finished that's when I left.

Isabella: So your parents went to church every Sunday or ...?

Pamela: They still go. Not religiously every Sunday, but maybe a couple of times a month.

Isabella: When you were a child you came along sometimes, or ...?

Pamela: We were never made to go... I probably didn't go very often, so when Sunday school finished when I was like 10 or 11, then I could just come along if I wanted to.

Isabella: And you didn't feel like it?

Pamela: No... I suppose I thought it was quite boring. I just thought there were better things to do.

In addition to Pamela, several other interview participants mentioned that there are plenty of more exciting activities to engage in. Owen, 26, a nursery teacher expresses this sentiment despite the fact that he married his wife Jessica, 25, a dance teacher, in a Church of Scotland ceremony. He states that "I went to church once before the wedding, but nah, I golf every Sunday morning." A similar sentiment was expressed by Nicole and Samuel, both 46, who work in banking and trucking respectively.

Nicole states that:

Nicole: There is so much now on a Sunday, you know it used to be that going to church would be the social event of the week, but now... Sunday mornings were never good for us

anyways because my son would play football and some games are on a Sunday. And now there are so many other things to do on a Sunday.

This is in line with Brown's (1997:168) assertion that the Church of Scotland lost participants as a result of its inability to compete as a provider of leisure activities,¹⁴⁸ which may indeed serve as an explanation for the decline in church attendance as presented above.

Moreover, Eric, 31, relates this decline in church attendance and increasing interest in other activities to social structural changes: "It used to be a lot stricter where you would have to go to church every Sunday. But now people don't really see it as a holy day anymore. There is football on Sunday mornings, and life is different now." This suggests that it is equally possible that both secularisation in terms of modernisation¹⁴⁹ (e.g. Bruce, 2002a; Wallis and Bruce, 1992; Wilson, 1982) as well as the diminishing need for social involvement¹⁵⁰ (e.g. Putnam, 2000) have contributed to the large drop in church attendance among all generations in the sample (see Table 6.1). While these theories may likewise serve as plausible explanations for church attendance decline in Sweden, as is presented in the next section, the two nations are unmistakably experiencing two different paths of religious decline.

6.2.3 Sweden: A Century of Non-Attendance

While Swedes are generally very supportive of the church, its cultural heritage, and its provision of life cycle ceremonies,¹⁵¹ it has failed to attract participants to its services for several generations. Few of the Swedish interview participants have parents or even grandparents who attended church regularly. Birgitta, born in 1937, illustrates this:

Birgitta: My parents and grandparents weren't religious and did not attend church, but they were members of the Church of Sweden. We went on Christmas once or twice. It was the atmosphere. We walked with torches through the forest and the snow to get to the church. It

¹⁴⁸ See section 2.4.8 (pp. 51-52).

¹⁴⁹ See section 3.3 (pp. 62-68).

¹⁵⁰ Described in full in section 3.8 (pp. 85-89).

¹⁵¹ See chapters 7 (pp. 193-232) and 8 (pp. 233-262).

was an experience. But it only happened once every year, if that.

The entire 20th century seems to have been characterised by a widespread Swedish apathy towards church attendance. The highest percentage of regular attendees at age 11 or 12 can be observed for those born between 1929 and 1943 (see Table 6.4). Since then, there has been a steady decline from the already low level. This suggests that in the Swedish case, secularisation, at least in terms of church attendance, happened before the early 20th century. This is in line with the very low levels of participation in the Holy Communion at the end of the 19th century (e.g. Martling, 2008:260). If a majority of those who were born between 1929 and 1943 only attended church a few times per year or less when they were 11 or 12, this also suggests that parents of this generation did not attend regularly as it is unlikely that they would attend without bringing their children. This is confirmed by a three-way crosstabulation between mother's and father's attendance when respondent was a child, respondent's attendance at age 11 or 12, and age group. The results show that only a handful of parents whose children never or occasionally went to church attended regularly themselves. Along with this, 79.3 percent of mothers and 81.7 percent of fathers of the oldest cohort attended church a few times per year or less when the respondent was 11 or 12. This is in line with the notion that even Swedes born around the turn of the 20th century were, over all, not active church participants as adults.

Table 6.4: Swedish church attendance at age 11 or 12 (by birth cohort)

	1929- 1943	1944- 1953	1954- 1963	1964- 1973	1974- 1983	1984- 1991
Regularly	21.2%	17.9%	20.4%	11.7%	9.6%	14.4%
Occasionally	63.5%	61.3%	52.8%	59.9%	64.5%	47.2%
Never	16.3%	20.8%	26.9%	28.4%	25.9%	38.4%
N	208	240	216	222	166	125

Data source: International Social Survey Programme, 2008

As is presented in Table 6.4, for all cohorts except those aged 65 and older, it is more common to never have attended church at age 11 or 12 than to have done so regularly. At age 11 or 12, between 9.6 and 21.2 percent of the respondents attended regularly, where the highest percentage can, not surprisingly, be found in the oldest age group. Among the 21.2 percent, 5.8 percent attended monthly, 5.3 percent attended 2-3 times a month, and 10.1 percent weekly. In line with a decline in church attendance, these figures are considerably higher than current attendance.¹⁵²

Table 6.5 presents changes in church attendance from when the respondent was aged 11 or 12 to now. Just as is observed in Figure 6.1, respondents rarely attend more often today, with the highest percentages of 16.7 and 16.1 for the two oldest age groups. Nevertheless, a considerable number of respondents in these age groups (43-44 percent) have become less frequent church participants since childhood. For all six cohorts, around 4 out of 10 people say they attend less frequently, between 4 and 5 out of 10 report no change, and only between 1 and 2 attend more often. Just as is argued previously, the small differences between the cohorts suggest that Sweden has had a slow but gradual, and presumably earlier, decline rather than a sudden generational shift in church attendance over the 20th century. This was confirmed when conducting Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on change in church attendance for different age groups.¹⁵³ While a negative change can be observed for all age groups, the differences between the birth cohorts are, in fact, not statistically significant.¹⁵⁴

Table 6.5: Change in Swedish attendance (by birth cohort)

	1929- 1943	1944- 1953	1954- 1963	1964- 1973	1974- 1983	1984- 1991
Increase	16.1%	16.7%	10.3%	15.1%	10.9%	6.6%
No Change	39.9%	41.2%	46.3%	44.7%	52.1%	54.5%
Decrease	44.0%	43.2%	43.5%	40.2%	37.0%	38.8%
N	193	233	214	219	165	121

Data source: International Social Survey Programme, 2008

¹⁵² See section 6.3 (pp. 172-175).

¹⁵³ Using the 2008 ISSP data.

¹⁵⁴ $p=0.44$

To add an additional decade to the analyses, the above findings were compared with similar analyses of the ISSP data on religion from 1998. As is presented in Table 6.6, the percentages of Swedes who attend regularly by cohort are very similar in the two data sets. Here, figures show that the last 80 years have seen a decline in claimed regular (at least monthly) church attendance at age 11 or 12 from an already relatively low level of 27 percent among those born between 1921 and 1933. While the Scottish data proposes a critical drop in church attendance in the 1960s, these findings suggest a longer-term decline predating the current data.

Table 6.6: Swedish regular attendance (at least monthly) at age 11 or 12 (by birth cohort)

Year of Birth	Attend. Age 11-12 (1998)	Attend. Age 11-12 (2008)
1921- 1933	27.0%	
1934-1943/1929-1943	28.0%	21.2%
1944-1953	19.3%	17.9%
1954-1963	20.3%	20.4%
1964-1973	14.3%	11.7%
1974-1980/1974-1983	14.8%	9.6%
1984 -1991		14.4%
N	1119	1177

Data source: International Social Survey Programme, 1998 and 2008

There are contextual differences that can explain why this seems to have happened considerably earlier in the Swedish case. Chapter 2 discusses potential reasons for early secularisation in Sweden, where Zuckerman (2008:122) suggests that Swedes never truly became Christian in the supernatural sense. It is therefore possible that once they no longer were required to attend, they stopped going regularly, again suggested by the fact that in 1890, only 5 percent of Swedes participated at least once a year in what used to be a mandatory holy communion (Martling, 2008:260).

Bäckström et al (2004) and Tomasson (2002) pinpoint the 19th century as the time of rapid secularisation in Sweden primarily due to industrialisation and the Church's newfound role as a welfare provider. The Church of Sweden's connection to the welfare state is arguably the single most important factor in explaining the differences between Scottish and Swedish church attendance patterns. This does not deny the effects of a state monopoly of religion on religious vitality as argued by Stark and Finke (2000), but rather complements it. To a Swede, regular attendance is not seen as a vital component of a successful church. In line with Bäckström et al (2004:121), the role of the Church as a welfare provider is to carry out key ceremonies and to be open to any one individual at time of need rather than to serve as a social activity or a place to connect with others.¹⁵⁵ Because of this and the continuous funding from the state, the church has little incentive to attempt to attract more active participants.

While both Scotland and Sweden have experienced declining church attendance, data suggest very different trajectories of secularisation. This has unquestionably influenced contemporary variations in levels and experiences of church attendance in Scotland and Sweden. This is consequently the focus of the remainder of the chapter, beginning with an overview of key differences between Scotland and Sweden in terms of frequency of current church attendance.

6.3 Current Trends in Scotland and Sweden

While churches throughout Europe are experiencing low levels of frequent attendance, patterns differ largely between and within various Protestant European regions. Davie (2002a:6) shows that European church activity is least frequent in the Lutheran North and that levels of church attendance in Great Britain fall right in between the Nordic countries and the Catholic South. Sweden is described as the Nordic country with the lowest levels of belief and only 3.8 percent weekly attendance (Davie, 2002a:6). Tomasson (2002:68) presents a similar figure of 2 percent, and Martin (1978:65) calls Sweden the “least practicing of all western societies.” In line with this, data from the ISSP (2008) show that only 5.5 percent of

¹⁵⁵ See section 3.8.2 (pp. 87-89) on religion and social capital.

Swedes claim to attend church at least monthly (see Figure 6.3). Yet, Davie (2002:6) states that only 0.2 percent of the population claim to *never* attend church for any reason.¹⁵⁶

Berger et al (2008:68-69) explain that Scotland has low levels of religious participation, close to the Northern European levels. However, Field (2001:163) shows figures of claimed weekly church attendance for Scotland that are, in 1997, considerably higher at 17 percent, while 57 percent claim to never attend. With data from Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (2011), Figure 6.3 shows that 20.2 percent of Scots claim to attend church at least monthly,¹⁵⁷ of which 13.3 percent claim to attend weekly. Moreover, 65.3 percent of the respondents *never* attend.¹⁵⁸ Similar analysis of data from the ISSP (2008) suggests that 11 percent claim to attend at least once a month.

In other words, while both Scotland and Sweden are relatively secularised on measures of active attendance, there are key differences between the two nations. Both attending *regularly* and *never* are more common in the Scottish case. A typical Swede attends church *occasionally*, while a majority of Scots *never* attend.¹⁵⁹ It also suggests that while it is more common for Scots to attend regularly, organised religion is experiencing considerable problems attracting participants in both nations, with about 1 in 5 Scots and 1 in 20 Swedes claiming to attend at least monthly. Nevertheless, the differences imply that attending church means very different things to Scots and Swedes. That a majority of Swedes attend occasionally can be explained by the overwhelming dominance of the Church of Sweden in the provision of life cycle rituals and other ceremonies such as school graduations,¹⁶⁰ and it is likely that most Swedes who attend occasionally do so for such special occasions rather than for routine religious services. With a higher level of religious diversity in Scotland (as seen in Chapter 2), Scots to a greater extent make active decisions in relation to religious belonging, explaining why they are more likely to attend regularly or not at all. Perhaps as a result of this, Scots have a wider range of choices regarding life

¹⁵⁶ However, the figure for *never* in the ISSP is 33.9%.

¹⁵⁷ This figure was 24.7 percent in 2001, and 27.2 percent in 1999 (Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 1999, 2001).

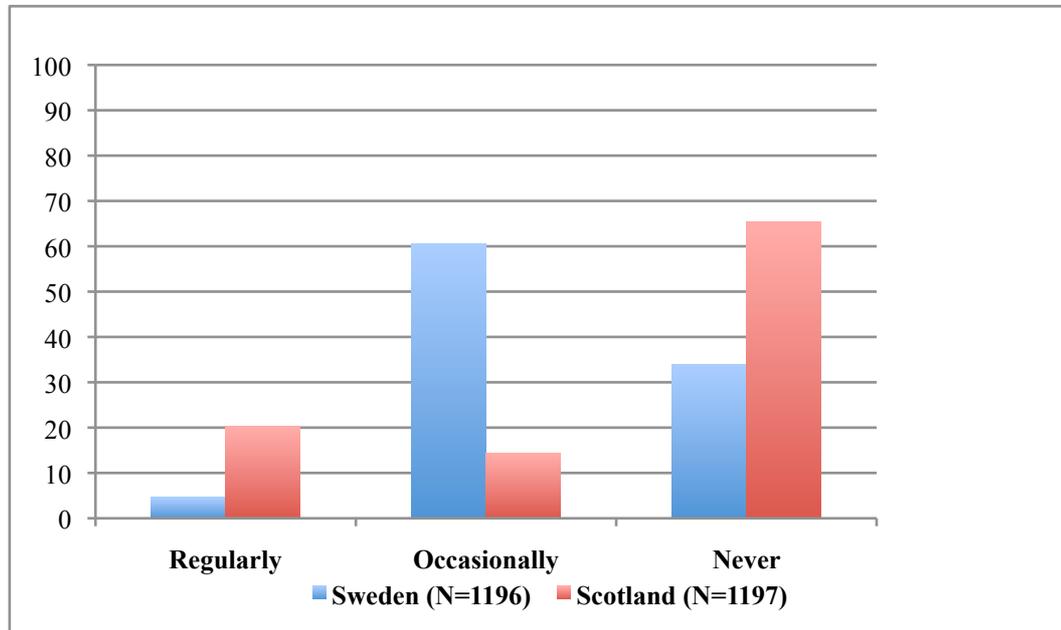
¹⁵⁸ Never attending includes those who stated that do not identify with a religion.

¹⁵⁹ Regularly refers to monthly or more often, and occasionally to a few times per year or less.

¹⁶⁰ See Chapter 8 (pp. 233-262).

cycle ceremonies,¹⁶¹ which consequently means that Scots are less likely than Swedes to have any form of contact with the church.

Figure 6.3: Frequency of church attendance in Scotland and Sweden¹⁶²



Data source: *International Social Survey Programme, 2008 (Sweden) and Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2011 (Scotland)*

From the data presented in Figure 6.3, two key aspects are emphasised. With *low levels of regular attendance* characterising both nations and a majority of Scots *never* attending, the following section discusses *non-attendance*, beginning with a presentation of levels of attendance for different denominations as well as for different age groups in both Scotland and Sweden. Low levels of participation are further explained with interview data. Occasional participation is the most common category for Swedes, and as argued above, such attendance is likely to be for non-religious reasons. This is explored further in the final section of this chapter, which

¹⁶¹ Availability of choices of ceremonies in the two nations is discussed in full in section 8.2.4 (pp. 244-248).

¹⁶² *Never* for Scotland includes those who have *no religion* but who were not asked the question on attendance (34.4 percent of individuals with no religious identification). It is also important to note that Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (2011) asks for attendance *apart from special occasions*, while the ISSP (2008) asks for overall attendance. Nonetheless, a comparison with Scottish data from ISSP suggests that there are only minor differences with 11 percent regularly, 19.9 percent occasionally, and 69 percent never.

focuses on non-religious church attendance. Here, data is presented on the relationship between occasional participation and belief in God. Key findings are illustrated and explained with interview data on non-religious reasons for going to church, highlighting emerging differences between Scotland and Sweden.

6.4 Non-Attendance

6.4.1 Modelling Non-Attendance

Similar to the analyses of *subjective religiosity* in section 5.3.2, two binary logistic regression models were created to examine the determinants of non-attendance. While, as mentioned, regular attendance appears to be strongly linked to religious beliefs, less attention has been given to those who claim to *never* attend or only attend for special occasions. The two models have the dependent variable of *non-attendance*, with 1 for *never attending apart from special occasions* (for Scotland) or between *never and once a year* (for Sweden),¹⁶³ and 0 for attending more often.

The following independent variables were included in the *Swedish Model*:

- No Religion: 1 for yes, 0 for no
- Other Religion: 1 for yes, 0 for no
- Subjective Religiosity: 1 for *at least somewhat religious*, 0 for less religious
- Age
- Female: 1 for female, 0 for male
- Urban: 1 for town, small city, suburb, or larger city, 0 for small village or countryside
- Household Income (in thousand kronor)
- Married: 1 for married, 0 for not married

The following variables were included in the *Scottish model*:

- No religion: 1 for yes, 0 for no

¹⁶³ Making the assumption that *once a year or less* corresponds to attendance for special occasions only.

- Other Religion: 1 for yes, 0 for no
- Subjective religiosity: 1 for religious or spiritual, 0 for neither religious nor spiritual
- Age
- Female: 1 for female, 0 for male
- Population Density: Persons per hectare
- Household Income (20-point scale)
- Married: 1 for married, 0 for not married

Education, and *Ethnicity* were considered as control variables in both models but not included in the final models due to not being statistically significant.

Findings show that, in both nations, those who identify with the National Church are more likely to attend church only for special occasions or never than those with *other religions*, but less likely to do so than those with *no religion*. Those who are *at least somewhat religious* (Sweden) or *religious or spiritual* (Scotland) are more likely to attend more frequently than for special occasions only. In line with Iannaccone's (1998) findings, being *married* has a negative relationship with *non-attendance*, meaning that those who are married tend to go to church more often than for special occasions only. However, this relationship is only marginally significant in Sweden. In contrast to the regressions on subjective religiosity, where sex was insignificant, men are more likely than women to only attend for special occasions or to never attend (along with e.g. Davie, 2007:232; Berger et al, 2008:99). *Household income* and *population density* (Scotland) or *living in a town or city* (Sweden), do not have a significant relationship with church attendance. This suggests that, holding all other variables constant, there are no significant differences in attendance between urban and rural areas.¹⁶⁴ In both nations, younger individuals are more likely to attend occasionally or never, suggesting generational effects of religious decline, and arguably a more prominent role of the church as a community for the older generations. Beginning with age differences, these findings are explored further in the following three sections.

¹⁶⁴ Similar to findings in 5.3.2 (pp. 140-145), this holds even on a sample with National Church only.

Table 6.7: Determinants of non-attendance in Sweden

DV: Non-Attendance ⁺	B	Significance	Exp (B)	Effect
Constant (a)	3.695	0.000***	40.247	Positive
No Religion	1.320	0.000***	3.745	Positive
Other Religion	-1.047	0.030**	0.351	Negative
Subjective Religiosity	-2.111	0.000***	0.121	Negative
Married	-0.412	0.087*	0.662	Negative
Female	-0.612	0.005***	0.542	Negative
Age	-0.027	0.001***	0.973	Negative
Household Income	0.009	0.121	1.009	-
Urban	0.043	0.846	1.044	-
N	977			
Cox and Snell	0.194			

⁺: Never attending and attending once a year. * p<0.1 (marginally significant), ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01
 Data source: International Social Survey Programme, 2008

Table 6.8: Determinants of non-attendance in Scotland

DV: Non-Attendance ⁺	B	Significance	Exp (B)	Effect
Constant (a)	1.831	0.000***	6.242	Positive
No Religion	2.008	0.000**	7.448	Positive
Other Religion	-0.303	0.060*	0.739	Negative
Subjective Religiosity	-1.183	0.000***	0.306	Negative
Married	-0.522	0.001***	0.593	Negative
Female	-0.392	0.006***	0.676	Negative
Age	-0.015	0.001***	0.986	Negative
Household Income	-0.017	0.259	0.984	-
Population Density	0.001	0.725	1.001	-
N	1208			
Cox and Snell	0.278			

⁺: Never attending church (apart from special occasions). *p<0.1 (marginally significant), **p<0.05, *** p<0.01. Data source: Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2001

6.4.2 Scotland: “The church is for the elderly”

A majority of the Scottish interview participants do not attend church frequently. Most of them, both non-believers as well as those who are explicitly religious, mentioned that the last time they went to church, it had been for a funeral, a wedding, or a Christening. When I asked them when they last attended for a Sunday service, I received answers such as “I don’t think I have ever been to a regular service” (Connor), “20 years ago maybe” (Olivia), “the only time I ever went to the church was with school” (Henry), and “I went once or twice in the early 1990s” (Susan).

Eric calls himself religious, but he does not see the need to go to church. He believes most people in his generation have a similar mindset: “People our age just don’t go. It’s fairly boring. It’s on a Sunday morning, so you don’t go unless you find it to be important. You know, people just don’t see it as being important.” In line with this, a common theme from the interviews was the perception that the church mainly serves older people. Gill, who is, as mentioned, a regular church participant, recognises this problem. She explains that, “If you visit a lot of Church of Scotland churches it will mainly be old people, which kind of shows that it is dying ‘cause younger people aren’t going anymore, and eventually... you know... the old people won’t be going.”

Examining church attendance frequency by age reveals interesting differences between cohorts as well as between Scotland and Sweden. In Scotland there is a much larger cohort effect in terms of regular attendance than in Sweden, in line with different historical stages of secularisation as suggested in the first part of this chapter. As mentioned in the interviews, younger Scots indeed attend much less frequently than those who are older (see Table 6.9). Around a third (36.5 percent) of respondents who were born in 1940 or earlier claim to attend church regularly. This is in contrast to the youngest age group, where only 12 percent claim to attend as frequently. An interesting difference can be observed between those born before and after the 1960s. The proportion of Scots who attend regularly decreases steadily among those born between 1912 and 1960, when it consequently stabilises at around 12-13 percent. Nevertheless, while a large percentage of the oldest cohort attends

regularly, it is important to highlight that *never* attending is the most frequent category for all cohorts.

There are two possible explanations for the observed relationship between age and attendance. It could mean that individuals become more frequent church attendees as they age in line with Stark and Finke’s (2000) rational choice theory, or the far more plausible explanation that there has been a generational shift as argued by among others Steve Bruce (2002a:66). As presented in the first part of this chapter, in Scotland, the older but not the younger generations have had a frequent contact with the church throughout their lives, suggesting that church attendance in Scotland will tail off with each generational shift.

Table 6.9: Current Scottish attendance (by birth cohort)

	1912- 1940	1941- 1950	1951- 1960	1961- 1970	1971- 1980	1981- 1993
Regularly	36.5%	27.5%	17.1%	12.2%	13.1%	12.0%
Occasionally	15.5%	15.0%	16.1%	15.5%	13.6%	9.5%
Never*	47.9%	57.5%	66.8%	72.3%	73.3%	78.5%
N	219	200	205	213	191	158

*Includes *No Religion*. Data source: *Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2011*

6.4.3 Sweden: “I Went to a Religious Service in 1964”

Unlike in Scotland, regular attendance in Sweden is roughly even and very low across the different cohorts. Apart from the oldest age group at 9.2 percent, only between about 3 and 5 percent of the respondents report attending at least monthly (see Table 6.10). Just as mentioned above, attending *occasionally* is the most common category for all age groups, explained by participation on “special occasions” such as for life cycle ceremonies. Intriguingly, churches in Sweden not only fail to attract the young, they are also unable to find participants among the older generations.

Table 6.10: Current Swedish attendance (by birth cohort)

	1929- 1943	1944- 1953	1954- 1963	1964- 1973	1974- 1983	1984- 1991
Regularly	9.2%	4.5%	5.4%	4.8%	5.2%	3.2%
Occasionally	68.4%	65.7%	58.6%	58.1%	57.1%	50.8%
Never	22.3%	29.8%	36.0%	37.1%	37.6%	46.0%
N	306	230	226	214	156	64

Data source: International Social Survey Programme, 2008

This is clearly illustrated by my conversation with Birgitta, 75, and Bertil 77, the oldest couple in my interview sample. Both Birgitta and Bertil fall into the oldest cohort in Table 6.10. They call themselves Protestants, are committed members of the Church of Sweden, and have never considered leaving the church. Interestingly, neither one of them nor their friends ever attend church other than for weddings, funerals, and baptisms.

Isabella: When did you last go to church and why?

Birgitta: Let me think... Yes it was when my grandson got married.

Bertil: It must have been many years ago. 2003?

Birgitta: 2002 or 2003.

Isabella: Have you been to a religious service? Midnight mass? Or Easter?

Birgitta: No... but my mum always went on Christmas morning to eat the porridge.

Isabella: How long has it been since you went to a regular service?

Birgitta: Well it must have been... I don't remember... Yes, I did go to a religious service with my mother and it was in 1964...

Bertil: I don't know if I have ever been.

Birgitta: We did go in the United States. Where they stomp their feet and clap their hands.

Isabella: But the Church of Sweden was in 1964?

Birgitta: Yes.

Bertil and Birgitta, but also most of the other Swedish participants came across as outright oblivious to the fact that it could in any way be perceived as odd that they literally *never* attend for a religious service even if they are loyal church members. This attitude was expressed by Amanda. She is a 34-year old dietician who married her husband Isak, 32, a radio operator, in a Church of Sweden ceremony. Out of all 32 Swedish participants, she was by far the strongest supporter of the Church of Sweden. She became very defensive when speaking of declining membership rates and the idea that school graduations would be held elsewhere. Nonetheless, she has not attended a religious service since she “sang in the choir as a small child,” and explains that “considering the ‘faith level’ that we are at, there is no reason to sit in church.” This suggests that the Church of Sweden brings different meanings to people’s lives. For most people, it is not a strictly religious meaning, but a sense of cultural belonging. On the other hand, to a small minority who are dedicated to the Christian faith, the church gives a different meaning, namely a sense of spiritual wellbeing. It is the latter, but very seldom the former group, who attend church on a Sunday. Although you are more than welcome to attend, if you are only “a little religious” you are not expected to be there.

6.4.4 National Churches and Non-Attendance

As mentioned earlier, Protestant Europe is considered to have lower levels of participation than elsewhere in Europe. Chapter 2 discussed the theory that Protestantism is in itself secularising (e.g. Taylor, 2007; Weber, 1904/2009), and in Chapter 3 it is explained that the theory of the religious economy sees a relationship between the religious monopoly created by Protestant state churches and low religious vitality (e.g. Stark and Finke, 2000).

As presented in Table 6.11, the Protestant national churches of Scotland and Sweden indeed have lower levels of active participation than other denominations. In terms of claimed active participation, the national churches in Scotland and Sweden hold a weak position. Regular attendance for those identifying with the Church of Sweden is virtually the same as for those with no religious identification, in line with the proposition that belonging to the Church of Sweden is largely a cultural rather than a religious identification. In Scotland, on the other hand, church activity for

those that identify with the Church of Scotland fall in between *no religion* and *other religion* on all three levels of participation. Nevertheless, patterns of church attendance for those who identify with the Church of Scotland are a lot closer to those with *other religion* than in the Swedish context.

Table 6.11: Attendance by denomination¹⁶⁵

	Sweden (2008)			Scotland (2011)		
	Church of Sweden	Other	None	Church of Scotland	Other	None
Regularly	3.2%	43.3%	1.2%	34.0%	47.1%	1.8%
Occasionally	59.7%	44.0%	40.4%	25.0%	23.0%	8.0%
Never	26.5%	9.6%	58.5%	41.0%	29.5%	90.2%
N	778	83	354	300	278	608

Data source: International Social Survey Programme, 2008 (Sweden) and Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2011 (Scotland)

When asking the interview participants why other denominations are, relatively speaking, doing much better at retaining participants than the Church of Sweden and the Church of Scotland, participants across both nations expressed similar thoughts. A majority stated that they do not attend regularly because the services are *boring*. Axel, 49, is a non-religious project manager who is married to Elin, 43, an entrepreneur. They are both members of the Church of Sweden, but married in a civil ceremony. He believes and that the Church needs to renew itself in order to keep up with other denominations:

Axel: I never attended church as a child. Baptisms and funerals, weddings, confirmations, but never mass. But I did go to a Christmas morning service sometime when mum forced me to come along. It only confirmed my picture that it is so *incredibly boring*. The Church of Sweden only has itself to blame that they fall behind. I mean they do arrange those rock n' roll services, but not the ones I have been to. If you get dragged out of bed at 5 am at Christmas when you're 7 years old and have to go listen to someone speaking of the devil, it's not very exciting.

¹⁶⁵ Again, it is important to note that the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (2011) asks for attendance *apart from special occasions*, while the ISSP (2008) asks for overall attendance. Similar analysis on the ISSP 2008 for Scotland suggest that for the Church of Scotland, 14.9 percent attend regularly, 19.1 percent occasionally, and 55.3 percent *never* attend. The corresponding figures for *other religion* is 29.0 percent *regularly*, 26.3% *occasionally*, and 44.7% *never*. Finally, among those with *no religion*, 1.2 percent attend *regularly*, 11.7 percent *occasionally*, and 87.2 percent *never*.

Petra, 27, a teacher, married her husband Elias, 26, an engineer, in the Church of Sweden. They never attend church other than for special occasions. However, since Elias' family is Baptist, they have attended a small number of free church services together. They share Axel's opinion that the Church of Sweden needs to renew itself in order to keep up with a changing society and mentions that free churches, but not the Church of Sweden, have managed to do this. Petra states that, "The Church of Sweden has an older focus. The free churches have a new perspective. I understand why people would want to go there. But someone just standing there preaching, that's a different story."

Lars is 53 years old and works in human resources. He is married to Maria, 36, a chef. Also hinting that the church services are not very exciting, Lars generally has good things to say about the church that he married in, but is nevertheless not interested in attending:

Isabella: When was the last time you attended a regular Sunday service?

Lars: Oh... That was a really long time ago. I can't even remember.

Isabella: Why don't you go?

Lars: Well, Sunday at 11. It's the wrong time.

Isabella: Would you go if it were at a different time?

Lars: *Laughing.*

(after a moment of silence)

Lars: The church is beautiful. I like the songs and the music is nice, but all that talking...

Just like the Swedes, several Scottish interview participants perceived the services as "gloomy" and "depressing." Along these lines, Henry mentions that, "If you go into the churches and look at them, they are so austere, so boring, and the services are so dull."

In line with the theory of the religious economy discussed in Chapter 3, state sponsored churches and religious markets with little competition become complacent. The Church of Sweden has not had the incentive to make an effort to attract participants. While it no longer relies on state funding to operate, a majority of

Swedes still pay a considerable part of their income to the Church (Svenska Kyrkan, 2013) and it financially makes no difference to them if these members attend on Sundays or not. Although the Church of Scotland is the largest denomination in Scotland, it has far from the comfortable position that the Church of Sweden holds and therefore has to work hard to convince people to join their church above others. A handful of interview participants, such as Keith, mentioned that his church stands out as more vibrant and original than others, offering activities practically unheard of in Sweden.

Keith: I say, society has become more individualised where smaller groups will meet up for coffee and that kind of thing, where as the church is still kind of, you sit, you sing songs, you listen to the sermon, you stand up, you sing more, you pray, and that kind of order of the service is quite rigid, but for some churches like my church, we have Bible studies, where there are smaller groups, where you can kind of explain what the service was about on Sunday, so then you can explore your relationship with god and I think that's where the other churches need to catch up a bit.

While prior restrictions to “free market” competition may serve as a plausible explanation as to why the national churches are doing worse than their competitors, particularly in Sweden, the effort of the churches is not the only factor to consider. It is crucial to emphasise that the long history of national churches has caused the Church of Sweden, and to a smaller extent the Church of Scotland, to be regarded the “default religion” of all, suggesting why more non-religious individuals identify with the national churches compared to other denominations.¹⁶⁶ This explains why their supposed adherents are less keen on attending religious services. Furthermore, the theory of the religious economy is only able to account for momentary differences in church attendance and is less effective in understanding long-term changes. Despite some efforts from the Church of Scotland relative to the Church of Sweden, no amount of diversification seems to reverse the decline in church attendance presented in the first part of this chapter.

¹⁶⁶ As seen in section 5.3.1 (pp. 135-139).

6.5 Non-Religious Church Attendance

Some of the non-religious interviewees in both Scotland and Sweden mention that, aside from life cycle ceremonies, they occasionally attend other services and activities that the church organises. In line with this, Figure 6.4 below suggests that occasional attendance for non-religious reasons is fairly common in both Scotland and Sweden. Figure 6.4 shows the percentage of respondents of each level of church attendance who believe in God. Close to everyone who goes to church regularly in both nations believe in God, suggesting that those who attend actively do so for religious reasons.

While none of the Swedish interviewees attend church regularly, a handful of the Scottish couples are active participants. In line with the findings presented in Figure 6.4, these couples all express religious reasons for going to church regularly. In fact, for most of them, religion influences their everyday life in many ways not witnessed among the interview participants who attend less frequently. Most of the regular participants mentioned having family members who are active in the organisation of the church, for example through serving as elders, ministers, or church administrators. David and Gill illustrate this:

David: I grew up in the Church of Scotland. Both of us had Christian parents. Well obviously, your dad was a minister and your mum played the organ. My dad was an elder in the church, and my mum ran the Sunday school. And both are still heavily involved in the church.

Isabella: So for most of your life you have been going to church almost every Sunday?

Gill: Yeah, I have never really known any different.

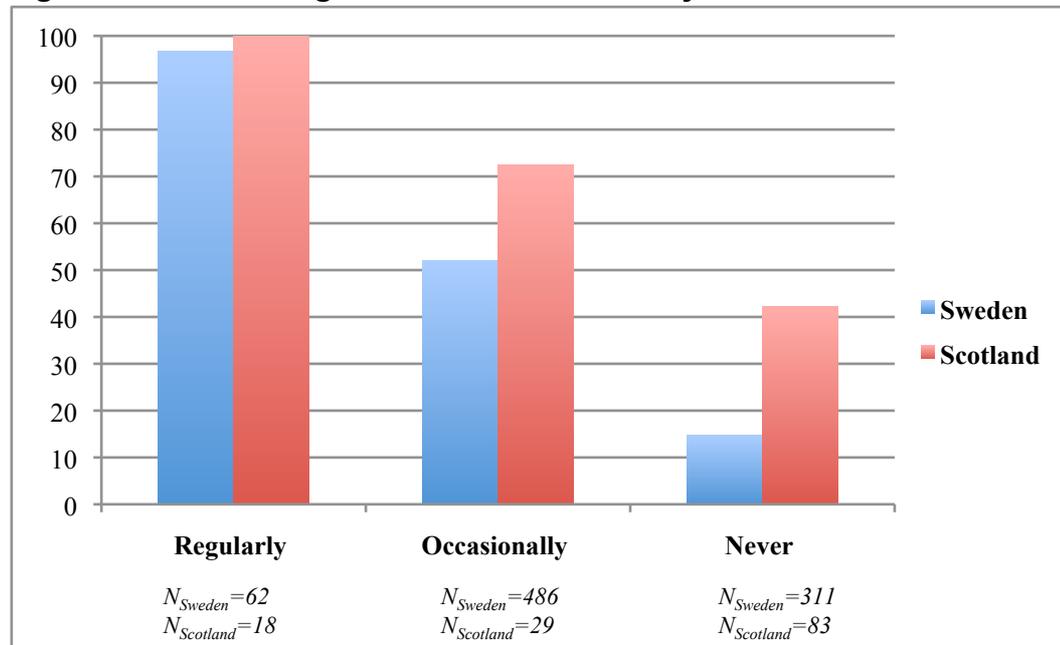
Isabella: So does it ever happen that you don't go on a Sunday?

Gill: The only time ever that we haven't been on a Sunday is if we are ill.

Approximately half of Swedes and 3 in 4 Scots who attend occasionally believe in God, again confirming the notion that Swedes are more likely than Scots to attend church for non-religious reasons. Nonetheless, it is important to note that just because a number of the individuals who attend church occasionally believe in God, it does not necessarily mean that they attend church to worship. Furthermore, Figure 6.4 shows that a majority of both Swedes and Scots who never attend church

also do not believe in God. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Davie (1990, 1994, 2002a, 2004, 2007) primarily uses church attendance as *belonging* and as is observed in Figure 6.4, most individuals who, by this definition do not *belong* also do not believe, challenging her notion that Swedes and Scots *believe without belonging*.¹⁶⁷

Figure 6.4: Percentage who believe in God by attendance



Data source: *International Social Survey Programme, 2008*¹⁶⁸

When speaking to Swedes and Scots about their non-religious reasons for attending church, differences between the two countries become apparent. In Sweden, interviewees attend for activities, such as concerts or plays, for traditions, such as midnight mass, and for emotional wellbeing because of the atmosphere in the church building. In Scotland, on the other hand, only one reason to attend for non-religious reasons emerged, namely to attend for the sake of family members. These differences are consequently explored below.

¹⁶⁷ This is discussed in detail in chapters 5 (pp. 123-157 and 7 (pp. 193-232).

¹⁶⁸ Given that the question on attendance in the Scottish Social Attitudes Surveys asks for attendance *apart from* special occasions, using this data set would have offered a very limited ability to compare non-religious, occasional attendance between the two nations. Many non-religious Swedes not only attend for life cycle ceremonies, special occasions also involve Christmas services and similar. The corresponding figures from the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2001 are, nevertheless 61.7 percent for never (including those with no religion who were not asked question on attendance), 93.2 percent for occasional attendance (apart from special occasions), and 98.2 percent for regular attendance. This analysis excludes the missing cases of people who “can’t choose” on the question of belief in God. This is 28.4 percent of the Swedish respondents and 23.7 percent of the Scottish respondents.

6.5.1 Sweden: “It’s not surprising if you go to church, but it’s odd if you believe in what is said there”

None of the 32 Swedish participants attend church regularly, and among those who occasionally visit for other reasons than ceremonies, not a single one mentioned doing so for religious reasons. On the contrary, some of the participants, such as Natalie, expressed that they wished the church would tone down the religious components of the services.

Natalie: I would consider going to church more often, absolutely. Because I think that sometimes when I’m there and hear the words about God I can’t think it’s all that wrong really, but what makes it a no is that it just becomes too much, not just amen and hallelujah, but they have to have hallelujah 10 times and amen 20. Why? Are you more... are you a better person or more religious if you repeat these words? I don’t understand it and this makes me “anti.” Then I don’t want to go there. I don’t want to hear amen and hallelujah 28 times in an hour. I can go there and listen – amen! And that would make it a rather nice message. It irritates me when they say it so many times and therefore I don’t feel the nice message. So I don’t go.

Olof, a principal, and Rebecka, a guidance counsellor, are both 32 years of age and married in a civil ceremony in their garden by the sea. They hold similar attitudes as Natalie. Even though she has left the church, Rebecka occasionally attends non-religious activities that the church arranges, such as concerts and toddler groups. Olof believes that in this day and age, the churches should remove the most religious components of their services, seemingly unaware of, or perhaps disagreeing with the fact that this is indeed the main purpose of a church.

Isabella: So it feels okay to go to the church? When you don’t believe?

Rebecka: Yes it feels okay. I have a bit of anxiety over the fact that we have exited the Church and I still go to things that they organise for free. They give you coffee and cake and then I think, oh right, I don’t even pay to the Church. I go to church occasionally, but not for a regular Sunday service. I went to a concert over Easter, and it was really nice with the atmosphere... and I guess the Easter concert is hallelujah so then of course it has to be hallelujah, no way around it...

Olof: That they still have the hallelujah annoys me more than you I think. I’m more like “but come on, it’s 2012!”

Even though several interview participants dislike the most religious aspects of a service, they still feel compelled to attend on certain occasions. This may be explained by the fact that to the typical Swede, the Church of Sweden represents important historical and cultural traditions. In line with the concept of *cultural religion* (e.g. Demerath, 2000; Zuckerman, 2008) as described in Chapter 3, some of the participants attend church at Christmas for the purpose of recognising these traditions. Alice and Ludvig describe this sentiment.

Alice: We went to midnight mass sometimes. Maybe because we lived next to the church. It wasn't important. But it was nice and relaxed.

Ludvig: We did that too at some point.

Isabella: But not for religious reasons?

Ludvig: No, the atmosphere. It's nice.

Alice: And we always read the Gospel of Luke. Every Christmas.

Ludvig: We do that too. We can't open the presents until it's done.

Alice: Midnight mass, reading from the Bible. It's just a tradition.

Ludvig: It's to remember why we celebrate Christmas.

Isabella: But does anyone in your family believe in the religious part?

Ludvig: No, no...

This form of *belonging* is nonetheless not to a *religion* per se, but to a social group in a Durkheimian sense and a recognition of a cultural heritage in line with what Hervieu-Léger (2006:48) calls a collective, shared memory. This was clearly illustrated by Malin. She does not believe in God, but states that "I think what moves me when I go to church is that you feel part of something bigger... I almost start to cry because I think everyone in the room is there because we believe in something more... but I can't say it's religious."

Even if they do not believe in God and they may consider the services to be boring, most Swedes do not avoid entering churches. As a matter of fact, the church building was often described as a place to find emotional well-being, without finding God. Caroline explains that the church is a good place to reflect upon oneself as she

states that, “The feeling you get in church might be that you find yourself. You believe in yourself. It is something deeper than what you get elsewhere.”

Just like Caroline, several other interviewees, among those, Per and Natalie, consider the atmosphere and the sense of peace in the church to be a good reason for paying membership fees to the Church of Sweden.

Isabella: So do you think that the money you pay to the Church of Sweden... that it is used for something good?

Natalie: Yes. Absolutely. I think everything they do is really important. To enter a church, for me always gives a sense of peace. It doesn't matter if it is the Notre Dame with 700 people. Why do you always feel calm in a church?

Per: That would be the reason I don't leave the church. That my church money goes to the building. I get the same feeling when I enter some other buildings too, so it's not the Church in itself. It's the church as a physical phenomenon, not emotionally...

Natalie: No for me there is a spiritual feeling in the building but I can't say what it is.

Per: Yes, in a way there is a spiritual atmosphere.

Natalie: But it doesn't make me religious. I don't go there and pray to god – “oh dear god, make sure it doesn't rain tomorrow.” No.

6.5.2 Scotland: “It's important to be there for family, but as for the service, ah, you clap once it's over”

Just as is seen in Figure 6.4, it is much less common for Scottish occasional participants to not believe in God. This is in line with the interview data, where Scottish non-believers more commonly said that they never attend church for any reason apart for weddings, funerals, and baptisms. Similarly, the reasons why Swedes attend church for non-religious reasons never came up in the Scottish context. However, some non-religious interview participants mentioned that they occasionally go to church, but for a different reason. While many Swedes expressed that they quite enjoyed occasional church attendance, some Scots saw it as an obligation rather than a choice.

Julie, 32, and Brian, 35, are both police officers from Edinburgh. They married in a humanist ceremony and are both openly atheist. They express that they dislike going to church but that they nonetheless attend at Christmas.

Julie: We went to a Christmas Eve service.

Brian: Wait that's not a normal service. I can't think when I went on a Sunday to be honest with you. Christmas Eve over that past couple of years.

Julie: That's because we visit my family. My mum and dad like to do a Christmas Eve service.

Isabella: So you went with your parents?

Julie: Yes

Isabella: And did you enjoy it?

Julie: Hmm, it was okay.

Brian: It was fine. I mean it was slightly different. It's a family thing.

Julie: I couldn't think the last time I went to a Sunday service though. Definitely over 10 years ago.

Simon and Lucy convey a similar attitude. Just like Julie and Brian, they married in a humanist ceremony and are both atheists. Nevertheless, a friend asked them to come to a service and they agreed.

Isabella: So can you tell me about the last time you went to church? Where did you go and why?

Lucy: It was at my friend's church. She invited us along cause it was an Easter service.

Isabella: Ah okay. How was it? How do you feel about it?

Simon: It's important to be there for your friends and family, but as for the service, ah you clap once it's over. You're happy when you get to social aspect of it.

Lucy: That was the last time I went before I thought about it and realised that I wasn't actually a Christian.

While the Swedish participants expressed that they attend church at Christmas and other special occasions for traditions and for the atmosphere, Scots like Julie, Brian, Simon, and Lucy have almost exclusively mentioned doing so out of respect for family and friends. Some participants mentioned that they feel forced to go by more active family members, and they do not enjoy the experience.

The differences between Scotland and Sweden here undoubtedly correspond to the generational differences described in the first part of this chapter. Many Scottish participants had a religious upbringing where they attended church with

their family. As some of their parents are still active in the church, it is only natural that they wish for their children to come along at special family holidays such as Christmas. However, since Scotland is experiencing a decline in religious participation, attending church for family reasons is likely to tail off with this generation. It is possible then that even though they are doing relatively better in terms of regular participation, the crisis that the Church of Scotland experiences may, at this point, be even more severe than its Swedish counterpart, which despite low regular attendance for many generations, nonetheless has an overwhelming support from most of the population.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter illustrates that apart from the small minority who participate regularly for religious reasons, Scots and Swedes have different attitudes towards church attendance, arguably as a result of contextual differences of secularisation as well as the perceived role of the church. Here, historical differences as well as the theoretical frameworks of secularisation, cultural religion, religious economy, and religion and social capital are suggested as plausible explanations.

The first part of the chapter argued that while church attendance levels are indeed decreasing in both Scotland and Sweden, there has been a more recent and drastic decline in the Scottish case, while in Sweden, the crucial decline appears to have taken place much earlier. In Scotland there seems to have been a generational shift where those who were born in the 1960s and later were much less likely than earlier cohorts to ever have attended church regularly, suggesting a change of attitudes in their parents' generation. In Sweden, on the other hand, church attendance levels have been exceptionally low throughout the past century, suggesting that dramatic change took place prior to the 20th century.

In the second part of the chapter, contextual differences and similarities in contemporary patterns of church attendance emerged. In Scotland, older generations are considerably more likely to be active in the church, while the churches in Sweden have difficulties attracting participants across the board. Both national churches are doing considerably worse than other denominations, while it is particularly severe in

the Swedish case, likely as a result of individuals identifying with the church for non-religious reasons as is further discussed in the next chapter. Nevertheless, both Swedes and Scots expressed a need for the National Church to become more innovative.

Church attendance levels are more polarised in Scotland as Scots are more likely than Swedes to attend regularly or never, while most Swedes attend occasionally. It is argued that occasional church attendance can be accounted for by attendance for non-religious reasons, a phenomenon much more prominent in the Swedish case, where individuals visit the church for traditions, for non-religious activities, and for emotional well-being. Non-religious Scots, on the other hand, seem to only attend church out of obligation to family or friends, and Scots generally held more negative attitudes about church attendance, while Swedes described occasional participation as a fairly pleasant, but yet not religious experience.

If *belonging* is measured as church attendance, then Davie (e.g. 1990, 1994, 2002a, 2004, 2007) is correct in her assertion that Scots and Swedes are *not belonging*, where a majority of Scots do not belong and most Swedes belong *occasionally*. What is clear is that particularly in Sweden, this form of belonging does not serve a religious purpose. Furthermore, while it is not contested that Swedes and Scots generally do not attend church, it is clear that Davie's typology does not thoroughly account for different forms of religious *belonging*. This is consequently the focus of the next chapters.

Chapter 7: Belonging as Membership and Identification

7.1 Introduction

In relation to the debate on secularisation, sociologists of religion primarily emphasise declines in religious beliefs and church attendance. As presented in the previous two chapters, these dimensions of religion are indeed of crucial importance in providing an account of contemporary patterns of secularisation. Nevertheless, literature has given less attention to other key dimensions of religious belonging. As a result, religious identification and membership are discussed in this chapter, and participation in life cycle ceremonies in Chapter 8. Identification here refers to a *subjective* sense belonging to a religious denomination.¹⁶⁹ Membership, on the other hand, is an *objective*, formal acknowledgement of religious adherence.

There are three key reasons for why these aspects of belonging are of key importance. First, they provide an additional and alternative measure of religious change and secularisation. Second, by stressing the complexity of religious belonging, it highlights the superficiality of conceptualising and dichotomising religious beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and practices in terms of *believing and belonging* (Davie, 1990, 1994, 2002a, 2004, 2007). Third, it provides an understanding of remaining functions of religion in contemporary Scotland and Sweden, covered in detail in Chapter 8 with a discussion of religious rituals.

The first part of this chapter continues the examination of *believing and belonging* in Scotland and Sweden by presenting figures and meanings of religious identification and membership. The second part describes how diverse interpretations and meanings of Christianity in the two nations reveal key differences in the role of religion in Scotland and Sweden. The last part of the chapter examines figures of *believing and belonging* and discusses the limitations of referring to *belonging* as active participation alone rather than the more intuitive connection to identification or membership.

¹⁶⁹ For the sake of clarity, the term *identification* has been used instead of *belonging*, which may collectively represent identification, attendance, and participation in rituals.

Overall this chapter aims to highlight the connection between religion and belonging to a social group associated with a cultural heritage or a community (e.g. Durkheim, 1912/1995; Bellah, 1991; Hervieu-Legér, 2006). This is a topic that has not been studied to the same extent as secularisation. However, I believe this aspect is essential to the understanding of religion as a social phenomenon and not the least to changing roles of religion in secularising societies.

7.2 Current Levels and Patterns

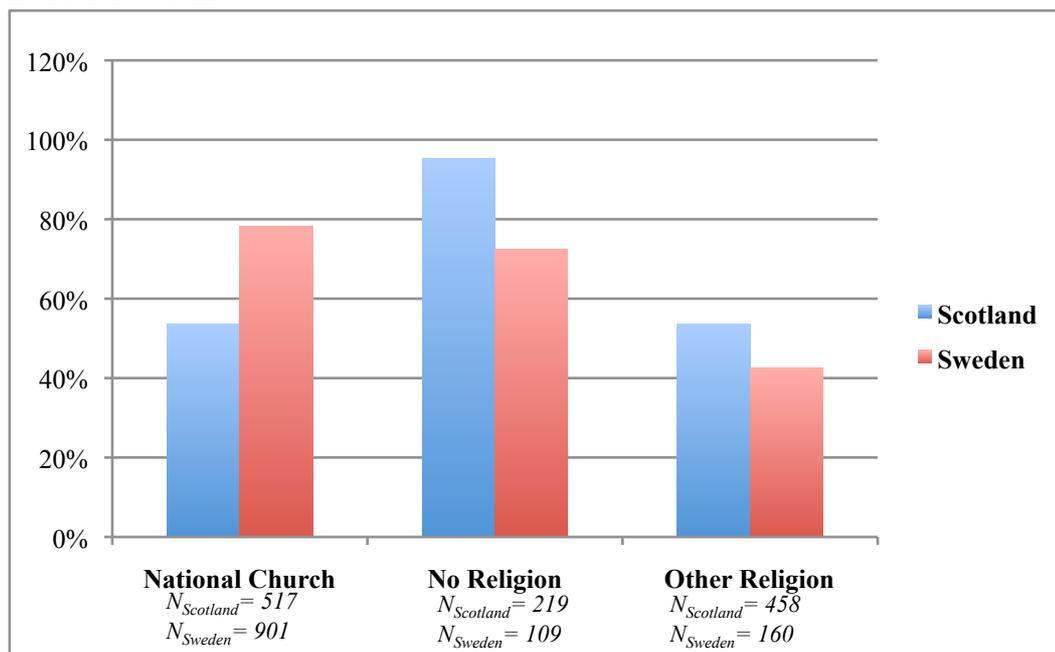
Exploring changes in religious identification between childhood and adulthood in the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (2011) and the International Social Survey Programme (2008) reveals interesting contextual differences that call for further attention. As presented in Figure 7.1 and 7.2, 53.6 percent¹⁷⁰ of those Scots raised in the Church of Scotland still identify as such. In Sweden, the corresponding figure for the Church of Sweden is 78.1 percent. In other words, a majority of respondents with a family background in the Church of Sweden still identify with the National Church, while it is more common for Scots to shift from identifying with the Church of Scotland to *no religion*. This is further shown by the fact that 41.4 percent¹⁷¹ of Scots raised in the Church of Scotland now do not identify with any religion. Furthermore, 25.7 percent of Swedes raised in *no religion* now identify with the National Church, compared to just 0.9 percent for Scots.

This raises a number of questions. If Scots are more religious than Swedes (Chapter 6), how come they are more likely to cease to identify with the National Church? If Swedes virtually *never* attend church apart from special occasions (Chapter 5), why do they still identify with it? Moreover, why do 1 in 4 Swedes with no religious background now identify with the National Church while in Scotland this figure is less than 1 in 100? In the next two sections, I attempt to shed light on these questions, beginning with the case of Sweden.

¹⁷⁰ This figure was 53.2 percent in 2008 (International Social Survey Programme, 2008).

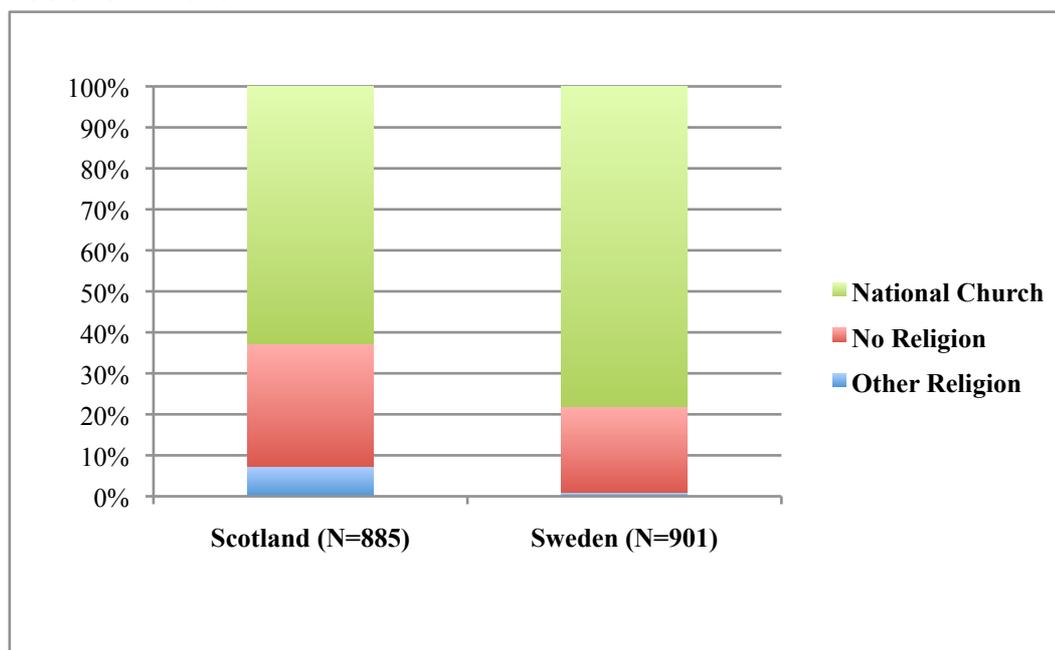
¹⁷¹ This figure was 40.5 percent in 2008 (International Social Survey Programme, 2008).

Figure 7.1: Percentage identifying with same religion as the one they were raised in



Data source: International Social Survey Programme, 2008 (Sweden), and Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2011 (Scotland)

Figure 7.2: Current religious identification of those raised in the National Church



Data source: International Social Survey Programme, 2008 (Sweden), and Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2001 (Scotland)

7.2.1 Sweden: Church Membership

Data from the Church of Sweden (Figure 7.3) show a steady decline in formal membership from 95.2 percent of the population in 1972 to 67.5 percent in 2011. As seen in Figure 7.4, for every single year since 1970, the number of individuals who actively leave¹⁷² the church exceeds the number of new members. However, the difference between the two remained relatively small until after the disestablishment in 2000. The biggest gap can be seen in 2004, when 79 000 members left the church, while only a little over 5000 joined.

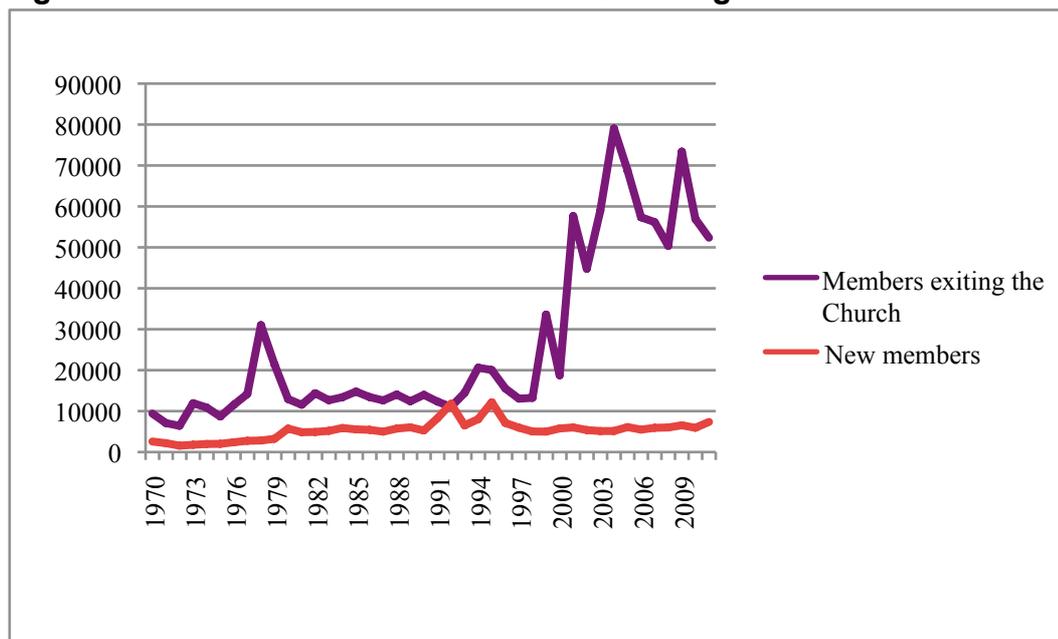
Figure 7.3: Members in the Church of Sweden (percent of population)



Data source: Svenska Kyrkan, 2013

¹⁷² Data only represent an active choice to leave or become member of the church, meaning that it does not include deaths or automatic membership following baptism of children.

Figure 7.4: New members and members leaving the Church of Sweden



Data represents an active choice to leave or become member of the church. *Data source: Svenska Kyrkan, 2013.*

The financial aspect explains the steep decline in membership following the deregulation of the Swedish state church. For the first time, a decision on church membership had a considerable effect on personal income. The membership fees that were previously shared by all Swedish taxpayers could now be avoided by making an active choice to leave the Church. In line with this, according to the website of the Church of Sweden, “from 2001 onward, many individuals leave as they receive their annual tax declaration” (Svenska Kyrkan, 2013). Furthermore, these findings suggest a gradual process of secularisation in Sweden. Bäckström et al (2004:51) show that the decline in membership in the Church of Sweden has not simultaneously meant an increase in membership for other Christian denominations. In fact, almost all free churches have seen decreasing membership rates in the same time period.

Most interview participants who had left the Church gave financial reasons for doing so. However, in relation to their decision to terminate their membership, some participants, among those, Olof and Rebecka, also mentioned values and feelings about the church.

Olof: I looked at the tax declaration one too many times and said, “We need to leave this.” Then you forget. And then the next year, it is there again and you think, “Why the hell are we paying for this? What are we paying to?” It’s like paying to AIK football club even if you’re

not a supporter. It's not just the money, but it's also some kind of a statement to say that we don't belong to this. Since I'm a bit more "anti hallelujah" I think it is important for me to not be a member.

Rebecka: You place more values in your decision. I'm more like "but come on, let's spend the 3000 kronor¹⁷³ we give to the church each year on something else."

Nevertheless, most interview participants are, like the majority of Swedes (see Figure 7.3), still members of the church. Intriguingly, many interviewees came across as rather indifferent about their membership. They do not believe in God and have talked about leaving the church many times but "do not see a pressing need" (Gabriella), "do not have energy to prioritise it" (Axel), or "practical circumstances get in the way" (Elin). In line with this, a perception from the interviews was that many participants feel rather conflicted. While they do not believe in God, they feel a connection to the Church of Sweden and would like to use its services at key points in their lives.¹⁷⁴ Given the fairly recent disestablishment, they are for the first time urged to actively reconsider what their official membership means to them both financially as well as in relation to their values and beliefs, a decision that is often avoided or suspended, such as highlighted by Alice and Ludvig. As is presented in Chapter 5, Alice does not believe in God or any supernatural powers, but she has positive feelings about the Church. Ludvig, on the other hand, believes in "something else," but he is less interested in the Church.

Isabella: So you are both members of the Church of Sweden? Have you ever considered leaving the Church?

Ludvig: Yes we have. Every time we see how much we pay in taxes. But we don't have the energy to do it. Maybe I should, but we are hoping to baptise our child.

Alice: Yes, and I feel that I would like to go there for Christmas at some point, and I got married there, so there is no reason to leave.

Isabella: So do you feel as though your money is well spent?

Alice: Of course we could be there more, but yes, I'm sure they use the money for good things. The buildings are beautiful.

Ludvig: But on the other hand, our visits to the church are very expensive since we only go there once a year. But yes, that's how it is. It's supposed to be like that.

¹⁷³ Approximately £300.

¹⁷⁴ See section 8.2 (pp. 234-248) for a full discussion.

Similarly, Elias and Petra are happy to pay the tax to the church. They do not know what their money is allocated to, and neither are they particularly curious to find out. They have no interest in becoming active participants, but have nonetheless never considered leaving the church.

Elias: We are not active members, but we haven't left the church either.

Isabella: Is the church membership important to you?

Petra: No, I don't reflect over it.

Elias: Well, the Church of Sweden does... It feels okay to pay the taxes because they do good things that aren't just Christian. I mean charity and cultural heritage.

Isabella: So with this tax, do you feel as though you get your money's worth or that it is well spent?

Petra: Yes, but I don't know.

Elias: Yes and we have used its services through our wedding and baptism.

Isabella: So you have no plans to exit the church?

Petra: No. It's so much tradition... And I assume we will baptise our next child.

It is possible that this reluctance to leave the church instead signifies that this passive membership still means something even if it is not religious in nature. One such meaning is the collective responsibility for other people's religious needs expressed by several interview participants. Per and Natalie do not want to leave the Church despite their lack of beliefs and regular attendance. Per mentioned that he is "closer to exiting the church than Natalie." She mentioned on multiple occasions that she felt like the Church "does good things," so I asked her more specifically what this meant.

Natalie: I'm thinking like this: I'm almost political now but in today's society there is not much solidarity anymore. You are supposed to earn money, have the cheapest phone contract and you should... everything is about making money and if I go back to how it was when I grew up, back then you had Telia¹⁷⁵ because Telia took care of everyone and it didn't matter if you lived at the top of the mountain you should of course have a telephone and you shouldn't pay more than anyone else... and the only part in today's Sweden where I feel like we still have that is in a way the Church of Sweden. Everyone has... there is this sense of solidarity. It doesn't matter who enters the church. Everyone is welcome. The church still nurtures this sense of solidarity and I feel like that's important. All children get to be

¹⁷⁵ Sweden's previous state telecommunication monopoly.

baptised, all couples can marry, and all humans get to be buried. It's a humane feeling I don't see anywhere else.

Similarly, Caroline and Magnus would never consider leaving the church despite a lack of belief and attendance. One of the reasons for this is a collective solidarity, in line with Natalie's thoughts.

Magnus: I do believe the church serves a purpose. Even if things are okay for us it can be of an enormous help. It is a safety net in a way.

Isabella: So now that you pay part of your salary to the Church, do you think you get your money's worth?

Magnus: Yes, I think so. Yes.

Caroline: I don't question it... I don't know what my money goes to. But I like the Church. The building in itself is a cultural heritage... and then I think that there are many people that need to go there and we can all help pay for that. We all have different needs.

This exemplifies the strong relationship between the Church of Sweden and *folkhemmet*, the Swedish welfare model,¹⁷⁶ where non-religious individuals pay to the church to ensure it can continue to serve those in need. While this is an important reason for *membership* and *religious identification* in Sweden, these two forms of belonging do not necessarily go hand in hand.

7.2.2 Sweden: Religious Identification

As is seen in Table 6.1, the disestablishment seems to have had a very minor effect on *religious identification*. In 1998, 65.5 percent of the Swedish respondents identified with the Church of Sweden. In 2008, the same figure was 65.4. Overlapping, and almost identical confidence intervals¹⁷⁷ suggest that the proportion of Swedes who identify with the Church of Sweden is not significantly different between 1998 and 2008. In other words, levels of identification with the Church of Sweden has remained unchanged between 1998 and 2008 in spite of the disestablishment in 2000 and the fact that official membership rates have fallen from 84.3 to 72.9 percent in the same time period. This finding suggests that membership

¹⁷⁶ See section 2.3.5 (pp. 33-36).

¹⁷⁷ Confidence interval at 95 percent in 1998: 62.8-68.2 percent. Confidence interval at 95 percent, in 2008: CI, 95%: 62.9-68.3 percent.

is rather different from personal identification and that Swedes can *belong* to the church in other ways than formal membership.

While a majority of Swedes are still members, there is, at this moment, no indication that the trend of a steep decline in membership is turning or even slowing down. On the other hand, many Swedes arguably feel like they belong to the Church of Sweden regardless of their lack of beliefs and active participation. Sweden is therefore a clear example of Bruce’s (1994:35) assertion of people losing faith while retaining a nostalgic, positive attitude about the church. This is in line with the theory of *cultural religion*¹⁷⁸ (e.g. Demerath, 2000; Zuckerman, 2008) that suggests a relationship between a historical heritage and a collective religious identity regardless of beliefs.¹⁷⁹ This theory is, as seen in the following section, less applicable to the case of Scotland.

Table 7.1: Religious identification in Sweden

	1998	2008
Church of Sweden	65.5%	65.4%
Other	6.0% ^a	6.7% ^b
None	28.5%	27.9%
N	1175	1208

a) Free churches: 3.9%, Catholic: 1.0%, Other: 1.1%. b) Free church: 2.8%, Catholic: 1.2%, Islam: 1.2%, Other: 1.5%. *Data source: International Social Survey Programme, 1998, and 2008*

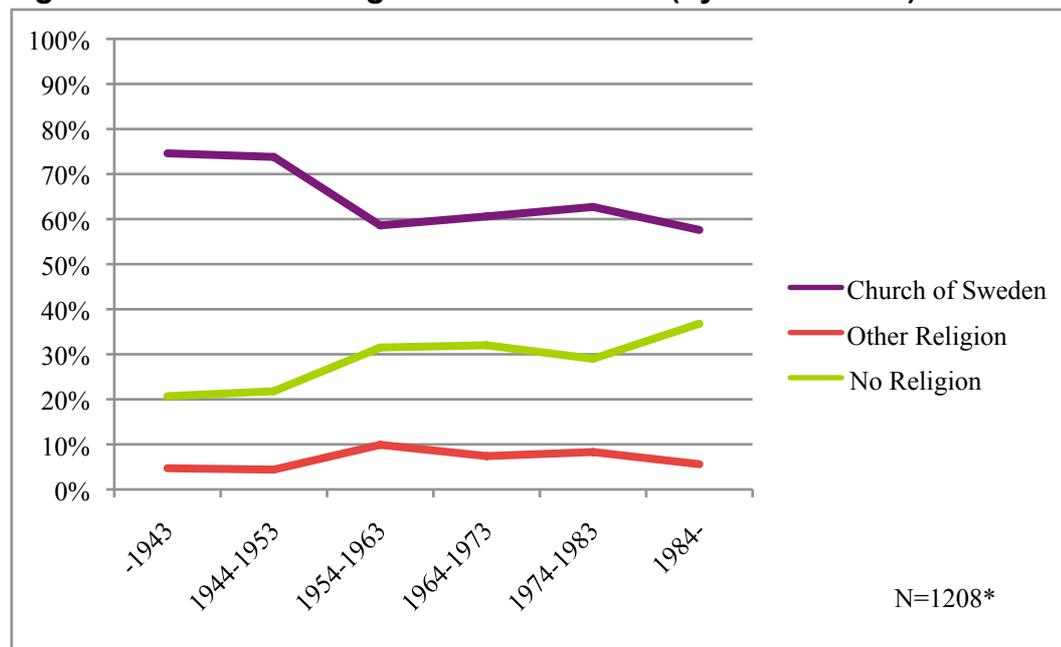
Chapter 6 presents church attendance data suggesting an earlier beginning of religious decline in Sweden than in Scotland. Chapter 5 also showed that in terms of religious beliefs, there is a much larger cohort effect in Scotland than in Sweden, and several Scottish interview participants were of the opinion that the Church of Scotland is “for the elderly.” In Sweden, on the other hand, church attendance and particularly religious beliefs are low and fairly consistent across the different age groups. Figures of religious identification suggest a similar trend. As is seen in Figure 7.5, at least half of the respondents in all age groups identify with the Church of Sweden, with the highest percentage at 74.6 among those born in 1943 or earlier.

¹⁷⁸ See section 3.7.3 (pp. 77-81).

¹⁷⁹ The connection between religious belonging and cultural religion is explored further with religious rituals in Chapter 8.2 (pp. 234-248).

Younger respondents are less likely to identify with the National Church in favour of *no religion*. While this indeed shows that Swedish religious belonging is more common among older generations, the effect is small, in particular in comparison to the Scottish data as seen in Figure 7.7.

Figure 7.5: Swedish religious identification (by birth cohort)



*N for individual cohorts ranges from 125 to 248. Data source: *International Social Survey Programme, 2008*

Findings presented in this section suggest that a majority of Swedes *belong* to the former state church if defined as identification or membership. In 2012, 67.5 percent of Swedes were formal members, and in 2008, 65.4 percent identified with the Church of Sweden. The reason why some Swedes are members even though they do not identify with the Church is likely due to the fact that, as explained earlier, some Swedes are only members “on paper” in that they have not yet filled out the formal paper work to leave the Church of Sweden. Some Swedes may wish to retain their membership in order to use its services or to support it financially for various reasons, without necessarily feeling like they belong to it.¹⁸⁰ Another explanation could be that many Swedes are formal members to both the Church of Sweden and to

¹⁸⁰ It is also likely that some Swedes feel a sense of belonging even though they have formally exited the Church.

a free church as explained by Alva. Less than a third (27.9 percent) claim to not identify with any religion at all. Regardless of the low levels of beliefs presented in Chapter 5, a majority of Swedes nominally *belong* to a religion in even if they do not actively attend church (Chapter 6). Belonging to the National Church as a recognition of a cultural heritage is less common in the case of Scotland. Despite higher levels of religious beliefs, religious identification is declining more rapidly in Scotland than in Sweden, suggesting a different meaning of religious belonging.

7.2.3 Scotland: Membership and Identification

The *Analysis of Religion in the 2001 Census Summary Report* (2005) shows that about two-thirds of Scots identify with a religion. In the Census, 42.4 percent of the population identify with the Church of Scotland¹⁸¹ (47 percent reported having been brought up within this denomination), around 16 percent are Catholic, and the remaining 9 percent identify with other religions, of which, *other Christian* is the largest group with around 7 percent. The Catholic Church plays a large and active role in the religious landscape in Scotland as it is currently the second largest denomination in Scotland. However, the Catholic Church is experiencing a similar decline in adherence as the Church of Scotland. In fact, all religious organisations in Scotland apart from Islam and a number of small newer religions have seen a continuous decline in membership rates (Brown, 1997:158; Robbins, 1994:372; Voas, 2006:108).¹⁸²

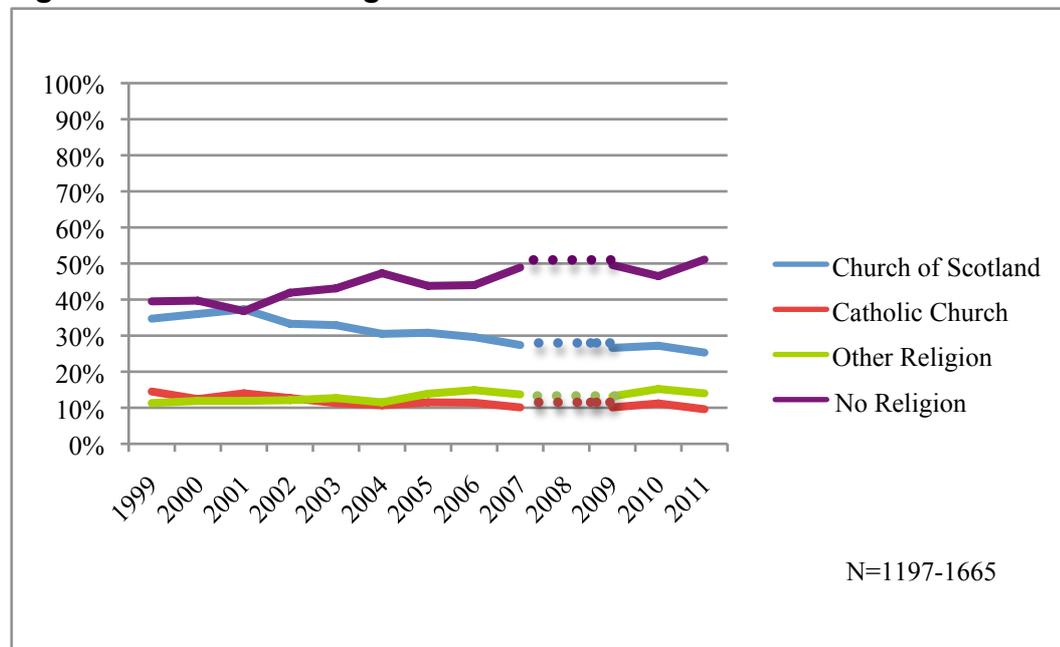
With data from the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (1999-2011), Figure 7.6 shows that up until 2001, more Scottish respondents identified with the Church of Scotland than with *no religion*. Since then, the Church of Scotland has experienced declining levels of religious identification in favour of *no religion*. In 2011, more than half of Scots had no religion and just over a quarter identified with the Church of Scotland. Relatively little change is observed among Catholics and those with other religions. In line with prior literature (e.g. Robbins, 1994:372), this suggests that the Church of Scotland is facing particularly severe difficulties. Not only do

¹⁸¹ The same figure from the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (2001) is 37.3 percent.

¹⁸² As seen below, *membership* in the Church of Scotland entails formally joining a specific congregation.

fewer people identify with the Kirk or attend religious services (Chapter 6), those who do are less likely to call themselves religious than those who identify with other religion (Chapter 5).

Figure 7.6: Scottish religious identification 1999-2011



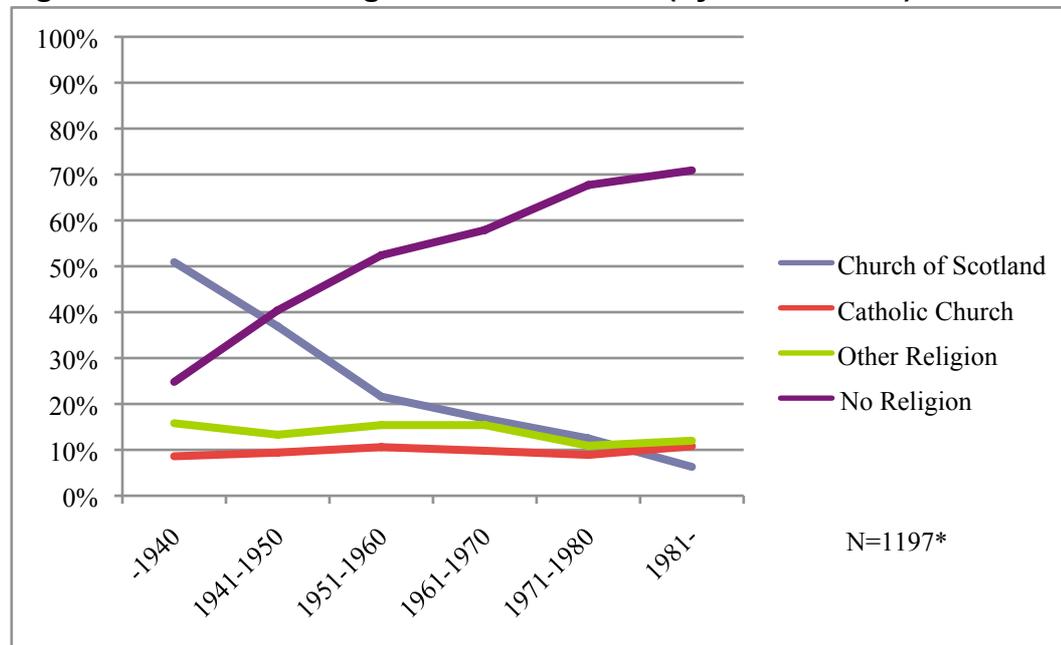
Data source: Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 1999-2011

In line with the notion that the Kirk is “for the elderly” (Chapter 6), Figure 7.7 shows a very strong cohort effect in terms of affiliation with the Church of Scotland. More than half (50.9 percent) of the respondents who were born before 1940 identify with the Church of Scotland. The same figure for those born in 1981 or later is 6.3 percent. This shows that the Kirk is unsuccessful in attracting younger generations. Just as is argued in Chapter 6, this suggests a generational shift rather than an age effect. As presented earlier, only 3.2 percent of respondents begin identifying with the Church of Scotland as adults if they were not raised as such (SSAS, 2001),¹⁸³ which, at least in terms of religious identification rejects Stark and Finke’s (2000) idea that individuals *become* more religious as they age. Furthermore, *other religions* and the Catholic Church do not experience similar differences

¹⁸³ For other religions, the same figure is 6.5 percent.

between cohorts, as the proportion of Scots who identify as such is largely even across different age groups.

Figure 7.7: Scottish religious identification (by birth cohort)



*N for individual age groups ranges from 158 to 222. Data source: *Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2011*

Compared to Sweden, it is much more common to not identify with any religious denomination in Scotland. Less than half (48.9 percent) of Scottish respondents identified with a religion in 2011. The same statistic for Sweden in 2008 is 72.1 percent. While Scots are more frequent churchgoers than Swedes, on levels of religious identification, fewer Scots *belong*. Furthermore, there is a relatively high level of religious diversity in Scotland, with only 25.3 percent identifying with the Church of Scotland, 9.6 percent as Catholic, and 14.0 percent as *other religious denomination*. In Sweden, 65.4 percent of respondents identify with the National Church, and only 6.7 percent with *other religious denominations*.¹⁸⁴ As mentioned in Chapter 2, a higher level of religious diversity suggests a weaker connection between a Scottish cultural identity and the National Church. As a result, Scots are more likely to take a stand, meaning that they identify with a religion primarily for reasons

¹⁸⁴ Including Catholics.

related to religious beliefs.¹⁸⁵ This suggests a form of belonging that is, in Scotland, more of a religious phenomenon than in Sweden.

Just as presented for Sweden, there is a considerable difference between official membership and religious identification in Scotland. It is important to note that in the Church of Scotland membership consists of *joining a particular congregation*, again indicating the Church of Scotland's emphasis on local community. Although it is encouraged, membership in the Church of Scotland does not strictly require a financial commitment. Instead, membership comes as a result of baptism, a public profession of faith,¹⁸⁶ and a subsequent inclusion in the communion roll. In 2009, 9 percent of the population were official members of the national church (The Church of Scotland, 2012).

Several Scottish interview participants identify with the Church of Scotland, attend church frequently, but have never considered becoming members. Sophia is a 30-year-old nurse who married her husband Thomas, 30, a computer analyst, in a Church of Scotland ceremony. He is not religious, but Sophia attends church most Sundays with their two young children.

Sophia: I am not a member of the church, but they do say to you once a year, "does anyone want to become a member?"

Isabella: And why have you decided to not become a member?

Sophia: Because it doesn't really mean anything to be a member. It doesn't make a difference. I mean I am still going to go to the church.

Isabella: So what does a membership involve?

Sophia: I don't even know.

Thomas: It's probably just a commitment.

Sophia: It's probably just a financial commitment.

Isabella: But they are happy for anyone to come whether or not you are an official member?

Sophia: Oh yeah, no one has ever said to me: "Why aren't you a member yet?"

¹⁸⁵ However, non-religious identification exists in the form of community or cultural defence as described in section 7.2.4 (pp. 208-211).

¹⁸⁶ Also known as confirmation.

In other words, official membership has two very different meanings in the two national churches. A perception from the interviews was that only the most committed and most active participants are expected to be members in the Church of Scotland and that those who decide to be members, often do so as a form of belonging to a particular community. Nicole and Samuel explain this.

Isabella: So are you both members of the Church of Scotland?

Nicole: I am.

Samuel: I'm not.

Isabella: Oh okay, so have you been a member since you were a child?

Nicole: Yes... you affiliate yourself to a particular church and you're supposed to give a certain amount of money... Mine is a direct debit that comes out of my account every month.

Isabella: So approximately how much do they... not charge, but do you give?

Nicole: Well, they used to have this expectation years ago that it was 10 percent of your salary, but now it's about 20 pounds a month I think. Out of my account.

Isabella: How come you have chosen to affiliate with this particular church?

Nicole: Because we used to live there. That's where John was christened, and it had a great mother and baby group.

Intriguingly, Nicole's membership is associated with positive experiences of community in the past. She acknowledges that religious belonging has a much more limited role in today's society. She no longer attends church, her children are atheists, and she does not expect them to be a part of the church in the same way that she was.

With an increasing prevalence of identification with *no religion* (Figure 7.6), many Scots opt for a non-religious ceremony, such as a civil or a, now legally recognised humanist ceremony.¹⁸⁷ However, despite the fact that such ceremonies are becoming increasingly popular, few of the interview participants felt that it was important for them to be formal members of the Humanist Society. In fact, most of them only became members because it was required in order to have a humanist wedding ceremony. Lucy mentioned, "We joined up for the wedding, but our

¹⁸⁷ Humanist ceremonies have been legally binding since 2005 (General Registry of Scotland, 2013). See section 8.3 (pp. 248-261).

membership lapsed and we didn't renew because we had to pay." In line with this, Susan shared her thoughts on why many individuals do not see humanist membership as important.

Susan: We are no longer members and I suspect a lot of people aren't. For a lot of churches, collective worship is a core element in expressing your beliefs, and there is no suggestion that we humanists have to hang around other humanists and talk about other humanist stuff.

This sentiment arguably relates to secularisation and the social significance of religion (e.g. Bruce, 2002a; Wallis and Bruce, 1992; Wilson, 1966, 1982). While Scots are more likely than Swedes to take a stand on issues relating to religion, many Scots do not feel so strongly about these matters that they see the need to gather around this common set of values. Most of the interviewees who married in a humanist ceremony simply wanted a non-religious option. Just as is suggested in Chapter 5, if religion had a large impact on Scottish society, it is likely that more Scots would encourage a more active stand on matters of faith.

7.2.4 Scotland: Religion, Community, and Cultural Defence

Fewer and fewer Scots identify with the Church of Scotland and those who have chosen a non-religious alternative to life cycle rituals commonly do not see the need to formally belong to such a network. Yet, two different, but related, reasons for religious affiliation emerged in the Scottish data, namely as *cultural defence* and as belonging to a *community*. The sense of religion as a community came across much stronger in the Scottish than the Swedish interviews. It is possible that as a state sponsored component of the Swedish welfare model, the Church of Sweden has not made an active effort to serve that purpose. In Scotland, belonging to the Kirk means making an active choice to be a part of a group, similar to what is seen among members of the Swedish free churches. For example, Helen recognises the social aspect of the Church of Scotland. As described previously, she is now an outspoken atheist, but she mentioned that during her years at university she joined a religious group as a search for meaning and a community.

Helen: I think I'm fine with my life in Scotland without being aware of religion particularly, which suits me. But having said that, with my job I give talks to particular groups and often

to the Women's Guild, which is part of the Church of Scotland, and all of them are really old. They used to have a younger women's guild. I don't think they called it that but you get the idea. And nowadays women aren't coming through because they're either working or not into religion or whatever. All of these groups are populated with really old women so eventually they might die out. But again my experience with them is that it is more a community thing. It's about organising the community for women. But there is a moral tone to it. I think this is a positive aspect of the church.

Ben and Pamela have similar thoughts on religion as community. However, they also emphasise that not only are religious beliefs and active attendance in decline in Scotland, so is religion as belonging to a social group.

Pamela: That's another thing... It is a community thing as well, not a religious thing. That's why they [Pamela's parents] pay quite a lot to the church. They give them a lot of money.

Ben: Yeah those two things often get confused: Religion and community.

Pamela: Usually in the past I think the church was the centre of the community. It is not so much of that anymore. But some people might still have that connection.

In line with Putnam's (2000) assertion of the decreasing need for social involvement, Olivia relates this decline in community to social structural changes.

Olivia: There is less reliance on community for support. People tend to have much smaller communities of friends. Maybe participation in a much wider community is not the way our society works these days. There are many in our grandparents' generation that just would go because everyone else did.

Again, this serves as an example of Davie's (2002b) use of Putnam's (2001) theory in relation to decline in *belonging*. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Bruce (2002b) disagrees with Davie's (2002b) notion that a disinterest in public association is not accompanied by a similar decrease in beliefs. However, it is clear that a general decline in the community aspect (Putnam, 2001) and secularisation as a result of modernisation (e.g. Bruce, 1996, 2002a) are highly intertwined phenomena that very well may have led to a decline in active participation, membership, identification, and arguably to some extent, religious beliefs.

Furthermore, this decline can also be observed in the diminishing role of religion as *cultural defence*. Many interview participants shared their thoughts on the relations between Scottish Protestants and Catholics. Most of them were aware of a tension between adherents of the two religious groups. Nevertheless, few of them

had personally experienced any conflicts. Most interview participants expressed that this is only really an issue in the West of Scotland, particularly in Glasgow. Moreover, in line with literature on the subject (e.g. Brown, 1997; Rosie, 2004), a common sentiment from the interviews was that Scottish sectarianism is generally weak, and certainly not about religion per se. Even though he grew up in the West of Scotland, Eric shared this idea.

Isabella: Did you notice any conflicts between Catholics and Protestants when you were growing up?

Eric: No, not at all. You only know it because of football.

Isabella: So is it really a religious conflict?

Eric: I think it is more of a stupidity conflict. I think they just want to identify as something, even if they don't believe in it...I don't think they actually believe strongly in the things they are shouting at each other.

Similarly, Helen describes that identifying as Catholic or Protestant oftentimes does not have a religious meaning.

Helen: I wouldn't say it's about religion. Again, it's a cultural community. They very much identify themselves as Catholic because their grandparents are Irish. There was a big Irish Catholic community in Glasgow, and they were very much, "We are Catholic and we support Celtic and the Protestants support Rangers." And you know, being Irish and going to Catholic schools, it was very much about this self-identification, but I don't think they were really genuinely Catholic in the sense that they genuinely lived their lives according to the Catholic Church and many of them don't actually believe. It definitely is a social and cultural, ehm... community association much more than religious.

As described in Chapter 3, in line with the theory of cultural defence (e.g. Bruce, 1996, 2002a), religion often serves as a social institution around which different ethnic and social groups gather. With secularisation, the religious element gradually fades away, but individuals continue to identify with these groups or communities. This is an example of how religion can remain relevant longer or appear to have a stronger place in society.

Belonging to a religious organisation, and particularly to the National Church, is in decline in both Scotland and Sweden. However, the processes are seemingly different in the two nations. In Scotland, a decline in religious beliefs (Chapter 5) and church attendance (Chapter 6) are arguably accompanied by a similar decline in

religious identification. In Sweden, on the other hand, identifying with the church is a largely separate phenomenon from active participation and belief. These perceived differences are examined further in the next two sections that explore determinants of religious identification in Scotland and Sweden.

7.2.5 Modelling Religious Identification in Sweden

Building on the descriptive findings and the perceptions from the interviews, Swedish religious belonging was explored further with a multinomial logistic regression model using data from the International Social Survey Programme, 2008. The dependent variable in the model is *religious identification*, which consists of three different categories constructed from the survey questions “Do you belong to a church or religious parish?” and “Which church, parish, communion, or religion is it?” It is coded as 1 for the Church of Sweden, 2 for *other religion*, and 3 for *no religion*. While the Church of Sweden is a religious organisation, to an extent, it arguably serves a secular role, a phenomenon that is virtually non-existent in other religious denominations. As this is of particular interest, identification with the Church of Sweden is selected as the reference since it allows for a comparison of how identification with the former state church differs from *other religious denominations* or *no religion*.

The following independent variables were included in the model:

- Subjective Religiosity: 1 for *at least somewhat religious*, 0 for less religious
- Church Attendance: Scale from 0 (never) to 6 (once a week or more)
- Urban: 1 for town, small city, suburb, or larger city, 0 for small village or countryside
- Household Income (in thousand kronor)
- Age
- Married: 1 for married, 0 for not married

Sex and *Education* were considered as control variables but were not included in the final models as they were not statistically significant in either the Scottish or the Swedish model.

Table 7.2: Determinants of religious identification in Sweden

DV=Identification ⁺	Other Religion			No Religion		
	Exp (B)	Sign.	Effect	Exp (B)	Sign.	Effect
Subj. Religiosity	6.438	0.000**	Positive	0.993	0.979	-
Attendance	2.578	0.000***	Positive	0.446	0.000***	Negative
Urban	5.880	0.001***	Positive	1.586	0.009**	Positive
Age	0.925	0.000***	Negative	1.002	0.726	-
Married	8.708	0.000***	Positive	0.826	0.262	-
Houshold Income	0.962	0.002***	Negative	1.003	0.054*	Positive
N	977					
Cox and Snell	0.292					

+: Church of Sweden is the base category *<0.1, **<0.05, ***<0.01. *Data source: International Social Survey Programme, 2008*

Table 7.2 shows that three variables are statistically significant in predicting identification with the Church of Sweden in relation to *no religion*. Confirming the evidence presented in Chapter 6, this suggests that individuals who identify with the Church of Sweden hold many similar characteristics to those with no religion. In terms of demographics (*age, sex, marital status, and education*), little differentiates a person who identifies with the Church of Sweden from one who does not identify with any religion. This is in line with the idea that identification with the National Church relates to a sense of belonging to the Swedish culture at large. On the contrary, all variables except *sex* and *education* serve as significant predictors of belonging to *other religions* compared to the Church of Sweden. Arguably, there are more prominent differences between individuals who identify with *other religions* and the Church of Sweden than between those who belong to the Church of Sweden and those with *no religion*. This is interesting given that, the Church of Sweden is a *religious* organisation. This is another example of the Church of Sweden no longer having a close association with religious faith.

In line with the notion that the Church of Sweden serves relatively non-religious functions, *subjective religiosity* has a positive relationship with identification with *other religious denominations* over the Church of Sweden. For example, several interview participants made the connection between openly religious individuals and free churches. To many firm believers, other denominations are more attractive than the Church of Sweden as their main purpose is to relate their adherents to the supernatural. Furthermore, those who are *at least somewhat religious* are no more or less likely to identify with the Church of Sweden as opposed to no religion. This indeed shows the weak bond between subjective religiosity and the National Church and also highlights a prevalence of privatised religion.¹⁸⁸

There is a significant, positive relationship between *attendance* and *other religious denominations* (as opposed to the Church of Sweden). This is in line with figures and interview findings in Chapter 5 that show that *other religious denominations* have more active participants and a stronger sense of community. Not surprisingly, church attendance is also associated with identification with the Church of Sweden in comparison with *no religion*.

Table 7.2 shows that there is a significant and negative relationship between *age* and identification with *other religion* in relation to the Church of Sweden. This suggests that older individuals are more likely to belong to the Church of Sweden than to *other religions*.¹⁸⁹ It is possible that younger individuals are more likely to seek religious answers in the context of a more plural religious market. Most older Swedes have been part of the Church of Sweden for most of their lives. If they still wish to belong to a religious organisation, they are less likely to make an active choice to go to a different denomination as opposed to staying with the National Church. However, age is not a significant predictor of identification with the Church of Sweden in relation to *no religion*. This can be explained by the fact that older Swedes are largely as secular as those who are younger (Chapter 5 and 6), in line with the notion of a historically early secularisation in Sweden. As mentioned, many identify with the National Church for the sake of tradition as opposed to faith. Bertil

¹⁸⁸ As argued by Davie (e.g. 1994, 2002a, 2007). See section 3.4 (pp. 68-71).

¹⁸⁹ However, immigrants with other religions tend to be younger which may influence the results to some extent. I ran a model where citizenship was included as a dependent variable, and no significant differences in the results were observed. However, citizenship does not account for background and does not equate ethnicity by any means.

and Birgitta, the oldest couple in my interview sample, highlight this when they discussed their unwillingness to leave the National Church despite the fact that neither of them believes in God.

Isabella: Why is it that you haven't left the Church then? Do you feel like it is value for the money?

Birgitta: Funerals are free.

Bertil: Yes, but then... We don't go to church very often.

Birgitta: No, only for weddings and baptisms. We don't go for other reasons. But I'm sure they do a lot of good things.

Bertil: Yes, but we know a lot of people who have left the church. Mostly for financial reasons.

Birgitta: But then we say, "we have been with them for so long, so it doesn't matter..."

Bertil: And the Church has good values. It represents stability. And when you were at school, you sang your hymns. It's still there.

Being married is positively associated with *other religion* as opposed to the Church of Sweden. In line with the interviews, other religious denominations are perceived to uphold a sense of family and community, while the Church of Sweden is more strongly linked with a representation of a cultural heritage. Furthermore, as expressed above with the idea that those who identify with the Church of Sweden closely share similar characteristics with those who have no religious identification, being married is not significantly associated with identification with the Church of Sweden as opposed to *no religion*.

There is a significant, negative, relationship between *urban location* and identification with the Church of Sweden both in relation to *other religious denominations* and to *no religion*. Part of this association is likely due to a wider ethnic diversity in urban areas.¹⁹⁰ Today, the fact that almost every small village has a church is a reminder of its historical role as the heart of local communities particularly prior to the industrialisation (Chapter 2). Despite the disestablishment, the Church of Sweden is committed to remain a national church and thereby serves all areas throughout Sweden. Albin and Ida, both 35, live in a small village in

¹⁹⁰ As mentioned, I ran a model where citizenship was included as a dependent variable, and no significant differences in the results were observed. Again, citizenship is highly limited as a measure of ethnic background.

Småland. Albin works in a factory and Ida is a teacher. They married in the Church of Sweden in the neighbouring village and while neither of them believes in God, they are both members of the church, specifically because of its role in the local community.

Ida: I think that here in the countryside the traditions around the Church will remain longer. In the city it has decreased a lot. Traditions are stronger in the countryside. Also, most of the activities that children can participate in are in the church. You are therefore a part of the church at a very young age. And I can't deny that there are a lot of fun activities at confirmation.

Amanda describes a similar idea as she states that, "I believe the church has an important place in society, especially in the countryside. It is very important. They have so many activities like baby singing and arts and crafts evenings and there is nothing else. There is a whole different supply of activities in the city."

Finally, those with lower *household income* are more likely to identify with the Church of Sweden as opposed to *no religion* and less likely to identify with the Church of Sweden as compared to *other religion*. The relationship between income and identification with the Church of Sweden or *no religion*, at first glance, appears to support the deprivation theory suggesting that those who are struggling seek support in religion. However, this relationship was insignificant both in relation to *church attendance* and *subjective religiosity*. Instead, it is more likely that those with lower income are generally more supportive of *folkhemmet*, the Swedish welfare model, in which the Church plays a crucial role.¹⁹¹

The findings presented in this section are in line with the idea that identification with the Church of Sweden often represents a secular form of belonging, very different to that of *other religions*. Those who identify with the Church of Sweden are seemingly similar in characteristics to those with *no religious identification*, aside from the fact that the former group has a sense of belonging to the Church while those in the latter do not. As presented above, this sense of belonging often refers to a cultural heritage or identity, which is explored further in Chapter 8.

¹⁹¹ See section 2.3.5 (pp. 33-36).

7.2.6 Modelling Religious identification in Scotland

As indicated earlier, the Church of Scotland arguably has a different position than the Church of Sweden. Therefore, it is predicted that the independent variables have different relationships to Scottish religious identification. Similar to the one constructed for Sweden, a multinomial logistic regression was created for Scotland using data from the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2001. The dependent variable is *religious belonging* constructed from the survey questions “Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion?” and if yes, “Which?” The variable consists of three categories coded as 1 for the Church of Scotland, 2 for *other religion*, and 3 for *no religion*. Just as described for Sweden above, the aim of the model is to investigate religious belonging as identification to a former national church in a secularising society. Therefore, the Church of Scotland was selected as the reference category against which *other religion* and *no religions* are compared.

The following independent variables were included in the model:

- Subjective Religiosity: 1 for religious or spiritual, 0 for neither religious nor spiritual
- Church Attendance: Scale from 0 (never or practically never) to 7 (once a week or more)
- Population Density (persons per hectare)
- Age
- Female: 1 for female, 0 for male
- Married: 1 for married, 0 for not married
- Household Income (20-point scale)

Again, *Sex* and *Education* were considered as control variables but were not included in the final models as they were not statistically significant.

Findings presented in Table 7.3 suggest that on several measures, there are significant differences between those who identify with the Church of Scotland, *other religious denominations* and *no religion*. More specifically, the variables *age*,

population density, household income, subjective religiosity, and church attendance are significant determinants of religious identification in Scotland.

Table 7.3: Determinants of religious identification in Scotland

DV=Identification ⁺	Other Religion			No Religion		
	Exp (B)	Sign.	Effect	Exp (B)	Sign.	Effect
Subj. Religiosity	1.541	0.011**	Positive	0.674	0.014**	Negative
Attendance	1.169	0.000***	Positive	0.478	0.000***	Negative
Population Density	1.008	0.008***	Positive	1.003	0.302	-
Age	0.961	0.000***	Negative	0.969	0.000***	Negative
Married	1.227	0.219	-	1.086	0.621	-
Household Income	0.960	0.010**	Negative	0.975	0.100	-
N	1354					
Cox and Snell	0.382					

⁺: Church of Scotland is the base category **p<0.05, ***p<0.01. *Data source: Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2001*

As discussed in section 7.2.3 and in Chapter 6, the Church of Scotland has experienced a steep decline in active participation and identification, arguably as a result of generational shifts. In other words, a majority of individuals in older generations still identify with the National Church while it has not succeeded in attracting younger individuals. That older generations favour the Church of Scotland is confirmed in the multinomial logistic regression analysis. Significant odds ratios below one for *other religion* and for *no religion*, suggests that in relation to the Church of Scotland, age is a negative predictor of identification with *other religion* and *no religion*. In other words, older Scots are significantly more likely than younger Scots to identify with the Church of Scotland as opposed to *other religions* and *no religion*. This again suggests a powerful secularising trend that matches the evidence of a generational decline in Scotland. The fact that older Scots favour the Church of Scotland over *other religion* may be explained by religious identification

of immigrants, who tend to be younger,¹⁹² or by the fact that older generations generally have long connection to the Kirk since childhood, while younger Scots are less likely to have been socialised into any particular religious faith.

Individuals with a higher *household income* are more likely to identify with the Church of Scotland as opposed to *other religions*. This may be explained by the role of immigration given the relationship between ethnic minorities and socioeconomic status.¹⁹³ However, just as seen with *subjective religiosity* (Chapter 5) and *attendance* (Chapter 6), *household income* does not have a significant relationship between identification with the Church of Scotland over *no religion*.

Population density is a significant determinant of identification with *other religious denominations* in relation to the Church of Scotland. As religion diversified in Scotland particularly during the period of industrialisation and urbanisation (Chapter 2), non-Presbyterian immigrants settled primarily in urban areas suggesting that the Church of Scotland retained a more prominent role in the countryside. Nonetheless, this does not mean that secularisation has not left a trace on rural Scotland. As population density does not have a significant effect on identification with the Church of Scotland as opposed to *no religion*, this suggests that also in rural areas, many Scots have ceased to identify with the Church of Scotland. This is interesting given the perceived importance of the National Church in providing activities in local communities. However, this is possibly due to the fact that the model controls for church attendance.

Chapter 6 demonstrates a sharp decline in church attendance levels for the Church of Scotland in particular. Similarly, Table 7.3 shows that there is a positive relationship between *church attendance* and identification with *other religious denominations* in relation to the Church of Scotland. This again highlights the idea that the Kirk is unable to attract participants to its services. Furthermore, an interesting difference between Scotland and Sweden can be observed in the effect of *subjective religiosity*. In Sweden, this variable has a strong relationship with identification with *other religious denominations*, but does not significantly predict

¹⁹² Although notably, this relationship holds in a model that controls for *identifying as Scottish*.

¹⁹³ Again, this relationship holds in a model that controls for *identifying as Scottish*.

identification with the National Church over *no religion*.¹⁹⁴ In Scotland, those who are religious or spiritual are significantly more likely than those who are not to identify with the National Church in relation to *no religion*, but less likely to identify with the National Church in contrast to *other religion*, again supporting the idea of a national church that is further secularised than other denominations. This suggests that belonging as measured by religious identification has very different meanings and characteristics in Scotland and Sweden. Consequently, the next section will explore this further by examining different understandings of what it means to be a Christian.

7.3 The Meaning of Christianity

From the interviews, interesting contextual differences emerged around the meanings of Christianity. In Sweden, interview participants are divided on the interpretation of the concept of being a Christian as an expression of a non-religious cultural identity or a form of *religious* belonging. In Scotland, on the other hand, Christianity is, in addition to being a statement of religious identity, also linked to values and actions.

7.3.1 Sweden: “I’m Christian, but I don’t believe in Jesus”

Zuckerman (2008) argues that most Danes and Swedes identify themselves as Christian and that “When they said they were Christian, they simply mean it in terms of cultural heritage and history” (2008:10). While this attitude came across strongly among the Swedish participants, my perception from the interviews is that the term *Christian* has a more ambiguous meaning. Some of the participants associated the term with culture and tradition, while others said it implies *active* Christian beliefs and practices. Noah is of the opinion that being *Christian* means believing. He states that, “I think that someone who is a Christian believes in God, Jesus, and the

¹⁹⁴ Again, it is important to note that the two variables of *subjective religiosity* are measured differently. In Sweden, it involves identifying as *at least somewhat religious* and in Scotland as *either religious or spiritual*.

afterlife.” Similarly, Elias declares that, “If someone says they are Christian, I think of active church attendance. Much more active than I am.”

Nevertheless, several participants expressed that it is possible to be a Christian without believing in God. Birgitta and Bertil interpreted the term *Christian* entirely as belonging to the Church, with or without beliefs.

Isabella: Would you call yourself Christian?

Birgitta: Yes we do.

Isabella: What does that mean to you?

Bertil: It means that we *can* go to church if we want to. We can baptise our children. We can get married in the church. And we haven't left the church. It's security and stability.

Isabella: So you don't have to believe to be a Christian?

Bertil: No, I don't think so. A lot of it is tradition and culture.

In line with Birgitta and Bertil, Ida and Albin also identify as Christian for non-religious reasons.

Ida: I define myself as Christian but I don't believe.

Albin: Yes, me too.

Ida: We celebrate the Christian holidays.

Isabella: But if someone asks if you are religious?

Albin and Ida: No...

Ida: We follow the traditions.

This again illustrates the prevalence of *cultural religion*¹⁹⁵ in Sweden. Christianity has come to represent culture, history, and traditions in a society where religious beliefs are diminishing. Nevertheless, given that the church serves both secular and religious purposes, some individuals express conflicting interpretations of the term *Christian*. Similarly, Malin describes that there are different types of Christians.

Isabella: What would you say if someone asked, “Are you a Christian?”

¹⁹⁵ See section 3.7.3 (pp. 83-85).

Malin: In technical terms, yes I am, but since I don't believe in Jesus...

Isabella: Do you think being a Christian implies religious beliefs?

Malin: I think if people say they are Christian, I would expect them to go to church at least more than I do.

Isabella: Some people say Sweden is a Christian nation. Do you agree with that statement?

Malin: In terms of tradition, yes. But I think it's surprising if someone tells me her or she is religious. I asked my class how it's been at Christmas and this very cool kid was like "I got a bible for Christmas" and I thought he was kidding because, you know, he wouldn't get a bible! So I was like "Yeah right!" and he was like "Yeah, I did." "Oh you did? Was that the only thing you got for Christmas?" "Yes, it wasn't a small gift!" I was really shocked, like "Did you know he is a *real* Christian?"

Along with this, Filippa is of the opinion that *Christian* could mean a religious identity *or* a cultural identity, but also that you can be religious and Christian without believing in the religious aspects of Christianity. She states that, "I'm a little bit religious, as I believe in something. I am also a Christian but not a believer in the Christian faith. It's the cultural heritage and the way you are raised." This clearly highlights the cultural importance of a Christian heritage and that it can be completely separated from religious beliefs *even* if the individual indeed believes. As is explored further below, few Scots make such a connection between Christianity and a non-religious cultural heritage. Nonetheless, Christianity has shaped the culture in Scotland in terms of *values*, an impression that did not come across in the Swedish interviews.

7.3.2 Scotland: "Christianity is about goodness as opposed to God"

While Christianity in Sweden is associated with culture and tradition, the couples I interviewed in Scotland linked Christianity to not only Christian beliefs, but also to *values*, a connection that none of the Swedish interview participants made. Pamela and Ben discussed the ambiguity of the term Christian.

Isabella: If people asked you if you are religious, would you say yes or no?

Pamela and Ben: No.

Isabella: What about if they ask you if you're a Christian?

Ben: If you want to take that conversation into context then I would say I have Christian values but I still call them commonsense values, if you call them Christian values, then yeah...

Pamela: I think "Christian" then it reminds you of someone who goes to church and we don't go to church.

Ben: It has a religious connotation.

Pamela and Ben further explain that many Scots associate *Christian* with *being a good person*. Ben, who only agreed to a religious wedding for Pamela's (or maybe Pamela's mum's) sake, mentioned that when they got married, he searched for parts of Christianity that he agreed with, and focused on that rather than the religious element. For him, this meant Christian values.

Isabella: When you married in the church and they talked about God, what did this mean to you?

Ben: I interpreted those words as goodness as opposed to God. It makes sense to me, and for that reason it was really interesting. I do think some churches know that as far as attendance, it's a problem, but that's not to say people don't attend their own church so to speak, and I don't mean that they are religious.

Isabella: So what do you mean then?

Ben: It's more about the values.

In line with Pamela and Ben, Nicole mentioned the importance of Christian values. Despite the fact that she is religious herself, she sees Christian values as more crucial than religious beliefs in today's society.

Nicole: To me, being a Christian is about treating others the way you want to be treated, and have respect for people, and all that, you know it's more about values actually than a true religious belief.

Isabella: Oh okay, it's more about how you act?

Nicole: Yes.

The idea that Christianity is about being a good person over religious beliefs suggests that Scotland is secularising. Here, Christianity seems far removed from its orthodox interpretation, in line with Bruce's claim of secularisation as "the erosion of the supernatural" (1996:26) and a continuous decline in orthodox beliefs

(2006:36). Although religious beliefs are decreasing, a remaining function of Christianity in Scotland is the notion that religion teaches morality. Brown describes this idea.

The conundrum may perhaps be best understood by seeing 'Christian' as a claim not so much to religious belonging as to 'niceness' – a statement of attachment to personal moral qualities which, while not necessarily Christian, are nonetheless best expressed, in the cultural absence of a better rhetoric, by that word. To proclaim oneself to be a 'Christian' is, in British culture, to make a claim to human goodness (2007:471).

However, several of the non-religious participants did not regard this as a positive aspect. Helen and Chris expressed very strong opinions about the use of the concept of *Christian values*.

Isabella: I had an interview the other day with a couple who said people can believe whatever they like as long as we maintain Christian values in society. What do you think about that?

Helen: Oh...I find that really offensive. Because a lot of values that Christianity has taken to be Christian values, they're not Christian values, they're human values. Christianity and other religions have appropriated say "If you're kind and you're compassionate, then you're a good Christian." No! That's a human feeling. That really, really drives me mad when people try to appropriate good feelings and good things as if that's... uh! Christian Aid Week! That drives me insane! I absolutely refuse to give money to Christian Aid Week! Because of the idea that somehow because you're a Christian you would give money to poor people, whereas other people wouldn't or would then use that money to proselytise rather than giving people... Yeah that really makes me mad!

Chris: It's the inferred insinuation that if you are *not* a Christian or not religious, then you are immoral and that you can't possibly be a good person and have principles.

The assumption that Christianity means being a good person stirs up emotions in a nation where most people take a stand by either belonging to or distancing themselves from religion. This highlights a, relatively speaking, more significant role of religion in Scotland. Most importantly, while both Scotland and Sweden are secularising, different interpretations of what Christianity means in a non-religious context illustrate the different historical backgrounds in the two nations (Chapter 2), where Christianity as a representation of cultural inclusiveness emphasises the Church of Sweden's close connection to the Swedish state. This is largely in contrast to Scotland where a focus on Christian values and morality may have encouraged the development of close-knit communities.

Contextual interpretations of the meaning and role of Christianity described in this section present different characteristics of religious belonging in two Protestant European, secularising, Northern European, nations. Different processes of religious change have undoubtedly influenced the meanings of and reasons for belonging to a religion in contemporary society. However, additional investigation of how religious belonging relates to beliefs is required. Consequently, the final section of this chapter presents figures of *believing and belonging* (as *belief in god or a higher power* and *identification with a religion*) in the two nations as well as in Europe.

7.4 Believing and Belonging

Low levels of regular church attendance in Scotland and Sweden are in line with Davie's (1990, 1994, 2002a, 2004, 2007) notion that Europeans are not *belonging*. Nevertheless, church attendance is only one form of religious belonging and it is debatable whether this measure alone effectively describes patterns and characteristics of religion in Scotland and Sweden. Claiming that Europeans are not *belonging* without discussing levels of religious identification is misleading, and as seen in section 7.2, a majority of Swedes and roughly half of Scots *belong* if conceptualised as *identifying with a religious denomination*. In Chapter 3, I discuss Davie's lack of conceptualisation and argue that it is unconvincing to speak of patterns of religiosity while refraining from operationalising such concepts. Moreover, in Chapter 5, I question whether most Scots and Swedes actually *believe*, since, although *spirituality* is a relatively common phenomenon, this does not necessarily constitute religious beliefs.

The following two sections examine levels of *believing and belonging* (defined as *believing in God or a higher power* and *identifying with a religion*) in Sweden, Scotland, and Europe. Despite the fact that Scotland and Sweden are two Northern European nations with a Protestant history, findings presented throughout this thesis suggest that contemporary trends of religious belief and belonging are largely different in the two contexts. Therefore, the aim of this part of the chapter is

to investigate whether there is in fact, as Davie argues, a common pattern of *believing and belonging* in a religiously diverse Europe.

7.4.1 Believing and Belonging in Sweden

Davie's (1994:2) claim that Northern Europe is *believing without belonging* can be challenged by a comparison of the percentages of Swedes who *believe* (in God or a higher power) and *belong* (whether or not the respondent *identifies with a religion*). As Davie argues that *believing* does not necessarily mean traditional, Christian, beliefs, but a higher prevalence of spirituality, in measuring *believing*, I have included both individuals who believe in God and those who believe in a higher power.¹⁹⁶ Despite the fact that it is questionable whether many of those who believe in a higher power actually *believe* (Chapter 6) in the way Davie uses this term, it is still clear that Swedes cannot be categorised as *believing without belonging*. As demonstrated in Table 7.4 below, this is the smallest category in Sweden with 11.2 percent in 2008 and 13.6 percent in 1998.

Table 7.4: *Believing* in God or a higher power and *belonging* to a religion in Sweden

<i>International Social Survey Programme, 2008</i>		
N=1205	Believe	Do not Believe
Belong	42.4%	28.0%
Do not Belong	11.2%	18.3%
<i>International Social Survey Programme, 1998</i>		
N=1045	Believe	Do not Believe
Belong	44.9%	25.6%
Do not Belong	13.6%	15.1%

Data source: International Social Survey Programme, 1998 and 2008

Many Swedes *belong without believing*. This is in line with Hervieu-Legér's (2006:48) notion that religious belonging may be a representation of a culture or

¹⁹⁶ Including all those who stated that they do believe in God and all who said they do not believe in God or who are uncertain, but who said they believe in a higher power.

community, explaining why many Swedes may identify with a religion without believing. This is also the definition of *cultural religion* (Demerath, 2000; Zuckerman, 2008), where history, culture, and tradition are closely associated with religion (e.g. a historical state church), and where belonging is a recognition of the culture to which the individual is part of rather than any religious beliefs. In 2008, 28.0 percent state that they *belong* to a religion but that they do not *believe in God or a higher power*, a figure that was 25.6 percent in 1998. If belonging were defined as *church attendance*, most of these individuals would be categorised as *neither believing nor belonging*, and it would highly limit the understanding of the role of religion in a secularising society. Lydia is one of these individuals who would, in Davie's opinion, not belong, as she almost never attends church. Nevertheless, she feels a very strong connection to the Church.

Lydia: My dad grew up in a small village in the countryside. He went to church and helped his uncle in the church. Christmas morning service was very important and my dad is really interested in old things and horses so he bought two, three sleds and my whole childhood he has been talking about going with a horse and sled to the church on Christmas morning. He talked about that my whole childhood but we never did. I have a very romanticised image of the church and my dad's childhood, but we never talked about the religious stuff. Maybe that's why I like churches. It was part of his happy childhood. I'm a bit confused now. This stirs up a lot of emotions. It surprises me just how non-religious I am and how important I still think it is with the Church.

This clearly shows that just because Lydia does not attend, it does not mean that she does not *belong* to the Church. Furthermore, as seen in Chapter 6, Lydia states that she wishes she would start believing one day. Her statement above suggests that she may feel a bit conflicted about her positive feelings about the Church and her disbelief. The fact that she does not call herself an atheist because she *would like to* believe in the future does not mean that she *believes*. In other words, Davie may categorise someone like Lydia as *believing without belonging* and doing so completely disregards religious beliefs and the functions of religion in a relatively secularised society.

7.4.2 Believing and Belonging in Scotland

As presented in Tables 7.5 and 7.6, *believing without belonging* only applies to between 15 and 17 percent of Scots. *Believing and belonging* is the largest

category in both surveys, but it is considerably larger in the SSAS 2001 (Table 7.6) even though this measure only includes *belief in God* and not a higher power, as is the case for the data from the ISSP (Table 7.5). There could be a number of reasons for this difference, including the modest sample size in the International Social Survey Programme (2008) or variations in how the questions are worded and placed in the survey. Nevertheless, this *may* indicate a decline in *believing and belonging* in favour of *neither believing nor belonging* between 2001 and 2008.

Table 7.5: *Believing in God or a higher power and belonging* to a religion in Scotland*

<i>International Social Survey Programme, 2008</i>		
N=169	Believe	Do not Believe
Belong	37.3%	12.4%
Do not Belong	15.4%	34.9%

*Identifying with a religion. *Data source: International Social Survey Programme, 2008*

Table 7.6: *Believing in God and belonging* to a religion in Scotland*

<i>Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2001</i>		
N=1520	Believe	Do not Believe
Belong	58.3%	5.5%
Do not Belong	17.6%	18.6%

*Identifying with a religion. *Data source: Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2001*

This is further explored by investigating differences in *believing and belonging* by age. This chapter previously demonstrated a considerably lower level of religious identification among younger generations. Similarly, Chapter 5 revealed a positive relationship between age and religiosity. Along with this, Table 7.7 shows that *believing and belonging* is much more common among the older age groups. Younger age groups are increasingly likely to *believe without belonging*, which appears to confirm Davie's (1990, 1994, 2002a, 2004, 2007) assertion that this is becoming a more common phenomenon.¹⁹⁷ However, while *believing without belonging* indeed is more prevalent among the younger, an even larger difference can

¹⁹⁷ Assuming that *believing and belonging* experiences generational shifts and not age effects, as discussed in 5.2.1 (pp. 127-128).

be seen in the category of *neither believing nor belonging*. This is similar to Bruce's (2002a) argument that not all indicators of religiosity have to decline at an even pace for the secularisation thesis to be sustained. It is entirely reasonable that individuals who *believe and belong* first cease to belong, leading to a temporary increase in the category of *believing without belonging*. Ultimately, without religious socialisation through belonging, beliefs also disappear, increasing the frequency of individuals who *neither believe nor belong*.

Table 7.7: *Believing in God and belonging to a religion in Scotland*

<i>Individuals aged 30 and Below</i>		
N=255	Believe	Do not Believe
Belong	44.3%	6.3%
Do not Belong	25.1%	30.6%
<i>Individuals aged 31-60</i>		
N=787	Believe	Do not Believe
Belong	52.0%	6.7%
Do not Belong	19.3%	22.1%
<i>Individuals aged 60 and over</i>		
N=481	Believe	Do not Believe
Belong	79.2%	3.5%
Do not Belong	11.0%	6.2%

Data source: Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2001

Just as demonstrated earlier, Table 7.5 and 7.6 suggest that Scots are more likely to take a stand, given that most individuals either *believe and belong* or *neither believe nor belong*. Very few Scots *belong without believing* highlighting low levels of cultural religion in Scotland. This is likely due to the relatively weaker historical position of the Church of Scotland, meaning that a particular religion has not been associated with a unified cultural identity in Scotland. In fact, several Scottish interview participants mentioned that belonging to a religion or using the church for

various purposes without believing in God would be hypocritical,¹⁹⁸ clearly showing that in Scotland, *belief* and *belonging* are more strongly connected to each other than in Sweden.

By assuming a common path of religious change in Europe, Davie (1990, 1994, 2002a, 2004, 2007) fails to acknowledge clear differences in the meaning of and relationship between various dimensions of religiosity in two, on the surface, similar nations. The fact that most Scots take a stand for or against religion *and* belief and that Swedes are much more likely to *belong without believing* is not adequately grasped with the current implementation of her typology. Nevertheless, despite these differences, there are similarities between the two nations in that they both experience a decline on measures of *believing* and *belonging*, in line with the theories of secularisation (e.g. Bruce, 1996, 2002a).

7.4.3 Believing and Belonging in Europe

Belonging without believing is, overall, more common in the Nordic countries than in the rest of the European nations surveyed (see Table 7.8). This is in line with the idea that a long history of state churches has shaped a strong bond between the Church and the nation (Chapter 2). More Swedes than Danes and Norwegians *neither believe nor belong*, possibly as a result of the state church disestablishment that had, in 2008, neither taken place in Norway nor Denmark.¹⁹⁹

The two most common categories in Great Britain, as a whole are, just as seen in Scotland, *believing and belonging* and *neither believing nor belonging*. Scotland, England, and Wales have fairly similar characteristics with just over a third of its respondents *believing and belonging* and another third *neither believing nor belonging*. Here, very few people *belong without believing*, demonstrating a clear difference between the Nordic countries and Great Britain.

Most importantly, the information presented in this table is a direct challenge to Davie's (1990, 1994, 2002a, 2004, 2007) claim of Europe as *believing without belonging* as it is, based on this measurement, far from the most common category in

¹⁹⁸ This is discussed in detail in Chapter 8.3 (pp. 248-261).

¹⁹⁹ The Church of Denmark still serves as a state church while the Church of Norway was separated from the state with a constitutional amendment in May, 2012 (e.g. Kasselstrand and Kandlik Eltanani, 2013).

any of the nations. Indeed, it is the category with the lowest proportion of respondents in most countries in the sample. Furthermore, Table 7.8 also shows that the religious landscape of Europe is highly diverse and it is questionable whether one can speak of common patterns even in very general terms.

Table 7.8: Believing and belonging in Europe

	Believing - Belonging	Believing - Not Belonging	Belonging - Not Believing	Not Believing - Not Belonging	N
Austria	22.4%	4.7%	60.4%	12.5%	1020
Belgium	52.2%	3.4%	25.5%	18.8%	1191
Croatia	80.5%	2.4%	13.0%	4.1%	1187
Cyprus	84.7%	0.2%	14.7%	0.2%	998
Czech Republic	30.2%	10.7%	9.0%	50.0%	1464
Denmark	53.5%	5.3%	32.1%	9.1%	1896
England	42.0%	11.4%	15.5%	31.1%	1700
Finland	54.6%	6.3%	27.5%	11.6%	1101
France	55.1%	9.8%	14.7%	35.1%	2343
Germany	50.9%	7.6%	15.0%	26.8%	1673
Ireland	81.6%	2.8%	11.4%	4.1%	2038
Latvia	53.0%	14.4%	7.6%	25.0%	1052
Netherlands	35.5%	24.4%	22.0%	18.0%	1879
Northern Ireland	75.2%	6.4%	11.5%	6.9%	1086
Norway	54.1%	5.0%	30.0%	11.0%	1048
Portugal	87.3%	3.8%	4.9%	3.9%	988
Russia	64.7%	5.4%	10.6%	19.4%	976
Scotland	37.3%	15.4%	12.4%	34.9%	169
Slovakia	74.4%	3.6%	8.9%	13.1%	1098
Slovenia	65.3%	6.9%	15.3%	12.4%	1030
Spain	70.4%	5.2%	8.0%	16.4%	2305
Sweden	42.4%	11.2%	28.0%	18.3%	1205
Switzerland	65.6%	14.1%	9.2%	11.1%	1189
Turkey	96.2%	0.0%	3.5%	0.3%	1436
Ukraine	81.6%	1.7%	10.1%	6.7%	1877
Wales	38.1%	15.5%	9.5%	36.9%	84

Believing= Believing in God or a higher power. Belonging= Belonging to a religious denomination.
Data source: International Social Survey Programme, 2008

7.5 Conclusion

Just as described with beliefs and attendance, this chapter showed clear differences in religious membership and identification between the two nations. In Sweden, identification with the National Church is portrayed by an allegiance to a cultural heritage, and in Scotland as a religious commitment or a recognition of family or community. In addition to historical differences, the theories of *cultural religion*, *religion and social capital*, and *secularisation* are used as reasons for the current levels, patterns, and meanings of this form of religious belonging.

The first part of the chapter explored measures of religious membership and identification as well as described what church identification means to the interview participants in both nations. Membership and identification do not necessarily go hand in hand. There is no, statistically significant, difference in the percentage of Swedes between 1998 and 2008 who identify with the Church of Sweden, despite the fact that, in the same time period, official membership has plummeted. Yet, there are more Swedes who are members than who identify with the Church of Sweden, while many more Scots identify with rather than are members of the Church of Scotland. Findings suggested that church identification in Sweden is closely linked to a sense of belonging to a cultural heritage and traditions. In Scotland, formal membership implies a particularly strong commitment to the Church or to a local community. Nonetheless, church identification is primarily associated with religious beliefs.

Following from the first part of the chapter, the second part examined contextual differences in the meaning of Christianity. Given the two largely separate roles of the National Church in Sweden, distinct interpretations of Christianity are presented as a religious identity or a cultural identity. In Scotland, on the other hand, morality serves as a secular interpretation of Christianity, apparently to the dissatisfaction of openly non-religious interview participants.

The final part of the chapter presented levels of *believing and belonging* in Scotland and Sweden. Here, I argue that not only is Davie's (1990, 1994, 2002a, 2004, 2007) very broad notion that Europe is *believing without belonging* challenged with current data on belonging as church identification, it also fails to capture crucial differences in patterns of religious change in Scotland and Sweden. Most Scots either *believe and belong* or *neither believe nor belong*. Swedes, on the other hand, *believe*

and belong (not necessarily suggesting a connection between the two) or *belong without believing*.

Compared to the Church of Scotland, the Church of Sweden is seemingly secular. Nevertheless, the Church of Scotland is experiencing a very rapid decline in measures of attendance and identification. In Sweden, the fact that the Church performs many non-religious functions means that it has remained relevant for longer in a society that is highly secularised on measures of belief and attendance. While few Scots and Swedes belong as measured by active church attendance (Chapter 6), and many Scots and Swedes hold a passive sense of belonging to a religion as seen in this chapter, there is an additional, active dimension of religious belonging. This is explored in the next chapter, focusing on rituals as distinct representations of remaining functions of religion in secularising societies.

Chapter 8: Belonging as Participation in Rituals

8.1 Introduction

The previous three chapters have explored the link between secularisation and national churches in Scotland and Sweden with an investigation of religious beliefs (Chapter 5), attendance (Chapter 6), and identification and membership (Chapter 7). This chapter involves a comprehensive assessment of another role of the national churches in Scotland and Sweden, namely the *provision of life cycle rituals*, such as weddings, funerals, baptisms, and confirmations. This dimension of religion shares characteristics with religious identification in that it provides an additional measure of secularisation that is not as thoroughly studied as church attendance and religious beliefs. Furthermore, while religious identification highlights a passive sense of belonging as being part of a religion or a social group, participation in rituals emphasises active and public processes of belonging. While this also applies to church attendance, the measures are distinctly different as church attendance, for the most part,²⁰⁰ signifies actions with a religious motivation (Chapter 6), while participation in rituals has a wider meaning and purpose beyond the religious realm (e.g. Durkheim, 1915/1995).

My findings suggest different meanings of traditionally religious rituals to Scots and Swedes. The first half of this chapter focuses on the role of rituals in Sweden, highlighting the importance of cultural heritage and traditions. Here, I present current levels and patterns of religious and secular ceremonies, discuss the availability of alternatives to church ceremonies, and the importance of a sense of occasion. The second half of the chapter explores current patterns of life cycle ceremonies in Scotland, emphasises the role family plays in the decision making process, and discusses common perceptions and opinions on church rituals for non-religious individuals.

²⁰⁰ There are forms of non-religious church attendance as seen in section 6.5 (pp. 185-191), however, this applies to occasional attendance and not frequent attendance and is much more common in the Swedish than the Scottish case.

Ultimately, the purpose of this chapter is to investigate the importance and meanings of traditionally religious rituals in the secular realm, in line with Bruce's (2002a:30) assertion that, at least in the shorter term, religion can serve specific roles in secular societies. In addition to affiliation, this is a largely understudied phenomenon that may provide a crucial understanding of remaining functions of the church in a secularising society, as well as the extent to which these forms of belonging remain *religious*.

8.2 Sweden: Cultural Heritage and Tradition

8.2.1 A Non-Religious Tradition

As noted previously, a typical Swede has a special relationship to the Church that often lacks religious beliefs (Chapter 5) and frequent attendance (Chapter 6), but that is characterised by a strong sense of belonging to the church as a cultural heritage. In addition to membership and identification (Chapter 7) this form of belonging also involves participating in various life cycle ceremonies. That church rituals are of key importance to Swedes is emphasised by Bäckström et al (2004:60). They show that Swedish respondents find old church buildings (61 percent), baptisms (62 percent), church weddings (63 percent), and church funerals (70 percent) important to them *personally*. The particularly prominent role of the church as a provider of funeral services is discussed further below.

As I spoke to Swedish participants about their choices in relation to their wedding ceremony as well as their thoughts on other rituals, many expressed that anything but a church ceremony would feel incomplete. For example, Markus states that, "I think baptism is important, but I don't know why. Without a baptism it feels like the child doesn't get a name." Ida expresses a similar sentiment.

Ida: If I got married on a beach or in a civil ceremony, it would not feel like a wedding, it would feel like something else. I would not feel married. I guess it is tradition with the church, but it is not about religion. Even if I brought a minister to marry us on the beach, it still wouldn't feel right.

Most interview participants who had a church wedding share this attitude. They find the rituals to be of key importance in their lives, but do not know why and neither is it a matter that they contemplate.

Furthermore, none of the interviewees who find church rituals and traditions important attend church regularly, most of them do not believe, and most of those who believe in *something* do not connect this belief to the Church. The notion that religious rituals are not performed for religious reasons is again highlighted with data from Bäckström et al (2004:61-62). Only 29 percent of respondents relate the purpose of baptism predominantly to Christianity or being part of a religious community. Interestingly, 71 percent see it as an alternative form of *belonging*, namely as becoming part of society or the church like “everyone else.” Similarly, only 23 percent see a church funeral primarily as having a religious purpose, while 77 percent view it either as an important tradition or as giving the deceased a dignified departure without attaching a religious meaning to it.

The wish to have a meaningful, traditional, but non-religious church ceremony unsurprisingly creates a conflict among some non-believers as they ask the minister to avoid religious elements in the ceremony. Natalie and Per mentioned that until they had agreed to take part in the interview, they had never even considered the fact that they had a Church of Sweden wedding as conflicting with their (lack of) beliefs. Their wedding took place in their garden with a minister from the local area. They live in the countryside and did not know of anyone else who could perform the ceremony. To them, the location was more important than having a minister. They had considered the local church but since it had burned down in the 1950s and then renovated, it looked “too modern” and “too 1970s” to them. Natalie and Per emphasise the importance of traditions and cultural (and not necessarily Christian) celebrations in connection to their wedding. Just like several other interview participants, they are of the opinion that a *secular church wedding* would have been ideal and that it is unfortunate that God has to be involved in an otherwise beautiful ceremony.

Natalie: We had an idea of what we wanted the day to look like. An image that we agreed on. We wanted it to be on Midsummer Eve, with a midsummer party, musicians playing, and all of that. We wanted it to feel like it was midsummer. That was very important! It was the only thing that was important. Of course with the food and drinks, herring and the alcohol. Just

like a normal midsummer. We wanted everyone to dance around the midsummer pole and barbecue. All of this was more important than if we had a minister or not. We told him [the minister] about it and said “this is how we see our day” and he said “that sounds perfect!” Oh, okay, and of course he wanted to say something religious, and we were like “we want music, but no hymns.”

Isabella: And that was okay?

Natalie: Yes, yes... but then he said “I would like to say something from ‘The Song of Songs.’” And we said “What? What’s that?” Confirmed people who don’t even know what “The Song of Songs” is! And he took something from it that I don’t remember, but he chose a few words and we thought, “That sounds very beautiful, take that.”

Per: That was really the only religious thing that was said apart from the forced, “churchy” words that are required.

Natalie: Yes, but he really deemphasised religion a lot even there because he must have understood what we wanted, what our wishes were, and he chose his words according to that. He was very willing to make alterations.

In other words, the minister was happy to accommodate to the fact that they were non-religious. Interestingly, some interview participants were completely unaware that the Church of Sweden requires religion in its ceremonies. This was discussed in the interview with Lydia and Noah. Although they had a civil ceremony, Lydia has, as presented earlier, very positive feelings about the Church. They married in the registrar’s office as they only had a limited period of time before moving to Dubai and being married facilitates living together in the United Arab Emirates.

Isabella: If you hadn’t moved to Dubai, would you have considered having a church wedding?

Lydia: Yes, I have been to countless weddings, baptisms, and funerals. There are not many people in Sweden who have religious faith. I don’t know if I know anyone. Well maybe I know a few people. The Church is a cultural heritage and for many, many generations, people have done all of those things; baptisms, funerals, weddings in the church. It’s a part of your life.

Isabella: So how do you feel about the fact that you buy the whole package including the religious bit with promising in front of God? Can you disregard that or does it feel strange?

Lydia: When my sister got married I thought it was a bit odd, but God is also a part of this tradition. But Noah, you said before you could have considered a church wedding?

Noah: I think I have to change that answer now.

Lydia: I can’t say we would have ended up in the church if we hadn’t moved to Dubai, but it is how you imagine it when you are younger.

Noah: Wait, I didn’t think you had to have all the religious stuff?

Isabella: I think you can choose a lot of it, but some of it is required.

Noah: Then I will have to change my answer. Then I'm against marrying in the church.

Isabella: So the place is okay?

Noah: Yes. The place is okay. The church is lovely. But to have to hear about God and all, that would have felt awkward.

Furthermore, many couples who had a civil ceremony, some of which had made an active decision to leave the Church of Sweden, expressed that they do not personally feel comfortable with the idea of a secular church wedding, but understand why others make this choice. Rebecka and Olof married in a civil ceremony, but recognise that even if you do not believe, you can still marry in the church out of tradition. However, they mention that at the end of the day, it is still a Christian ceremony.

Isabella: Why do you think that so many non-believers still choose to marry in the church?

Rebecka: Tradition...

Isabella: Do you understand their choice?

Rebecka: Yes I understand it because you don't reflect over it. You don't think about it.

Olof: It's like funerals that we talked about before. "Okay we are burying someone." You don't reflect over whether to be in a church or not or what it means. "Okay, now we're having a big wedding here. How many people do we invite? Where are we having the party? Which church are we marrying in?" Those are the three questions you might ask yourself. You don't reflect over it...

Rebecka: And yes, "We need to have three hymns during the ceremony. Which hymns should we choose that are the least hallelujah?" So it doesn't get too religious.

Olof: We have heard that from friends that got married.

Rebecka: You want the wedding there but not the religious part.

These non-religious church traditions demonstrate yet another example of *cultural religion*²⁰¹ (e.g. Demerath, 2000; Zuckerman, 2008). The fact that Swedes hold on to a church that represents a historical past while they do not believe in the supernatural aspect is, according to Demerath (2000) an example of the last remnants of a religious past in a secularising society. The tradition of recognising key points in life in the church still holds a strong sense of meaning to Swedes even if it does not serve

²⁰¹ See Chapter 3.7.3 (pp. 83-85).

a religious purpose. Hervieu-Léger (2006:48) argues that religion provides a “distant shared memory, which does not necessarily entail shared belief, but which still – even from a distance – governs collective reflexes in terms of identity.” Participation in rituals therefore serves to recognise this collective identity in line with Durkheim’s (1912/1995) ideas on the connection between religion and society. This relationship between secularisation, a ceremonial sense of occasion, and the church as a cultural means to belong is discussed further in the next section.

8.2.2 Importance of the Sacred

That ceremonies in the church may be largely non-religious, cultural practices, further exemplify that just because Swedes value these church traditions, it does not mean that they are *religious*. Davie (2002a) and Stark and Finke (2000) use a high prevalence of church rituals in the Nordic countries as evidence of enduring importance of *religion* when it is clear that it is rather an expression of a *cultural heritage*. To suggest that Swedes are *implicitly* religious is unconvincing given that a majority do not explicitly believe in God or define themselves as religious (Chapter 5) and rarely do those who do believe in *something* place any religious meaning in their church participation or identification. Arguably, Davie (2002a) and Stark and Finke (2000) appear to confuse the *religious* with the *sacred*.²⁰² In Sweden, a church wedding gives a ceremonial sense of occasion as it represents a sense of belonging to something bigger even for the non-believer. This is illustrated by my conversation with Alice and Ludvig.

Alice: My thought is that humans create meaning and the church is a place that creates meaning. But I don’t think there is a god in that house.

Ludvig: I don’t think there is a god there either. We are both convinced the church is created by people.

Alice: Even if nothing happens after death, you can create a similar meaning in your life. Traditions are generally more important than religious faith. For me, traditions create the meaning that others might get through religion.

²⁰² Defined as carrying “a quality of mysterious and awesome power...attributed to the objectifications of human culture” (Berger, 1967:25).

This illustrates that, in secularising Sweden, the National Church provides rituals that are sacred, but to a large extent non-religious. Just as argued by Durkheim (1912/1995), these rituals do not necessarily represent God but have the purpose of raising awareness of a collective sense of belonging to a social group. This form of belonging is reinforced by participating in these traditions, generating “reassurance and dependence that are created in consciousness through the workings of society” (Durkheim, 1912/1995:328).²⁰³ This is arguably a key reason for why many non-religious Swedes are of the opinion that a church wedding is more special than a civil ceremony or even a wedding on the beach with a minister. However, church ceremonies feel special because of their association to tradition and heritage rather than to faith or belief in the supernatural.

Nevertheless, a ceremony in the church inevitably involves references to religion. Interestingly, while several interviewees would have preferred a ceremony without any mentioning of God, for many non-believers, this aspect was an important factor in creating a sense of occasion. This may, on the surface, look like these individuals *believe*. Why else would you want to hear about God in your wedding ceremony? Interestingly, the reference to God meant something else to the participants, but they could not explain what this was specifically. This was discussed in the interview with Caroline and Magnus.

Isabella: So, since you don't believe in God or anything supernatural, what did the church ceremony mean to you if it wasn't about God?

Caroline: Well, for me it *was* about God during the ceremony.

Isabella: But you said you don't believe? Could you explain that further?

Magnus: God, yes. When the minister raised the rings and said something religious, I was almost terrified.

Caroline: Then I felt “Wow!” Then God was there! (*laughter*)

Isabella: So God was an important part of the ceremony for you?

Caroline: Yes, it made it meaningful. It was more real and important. It is really hard to explain. I was a bit surprised with my own feeling, that it has so much importance when I don't believe...

Magnus: Yes, well... I don't know.

²⁰³ Durkheim's theory is discussed further in section 3.7 (pp. 79-85)

Caroline: He did a blessing of the rings and I'm sitting here as a neutral person thinking it's just a piece of jewellery. It doesn't have a meaning. But in that moment, it was powerful. Powerful!

In other words, Caroline and Magnus felt that including God in the ceremony was a key aspect of recognising a special occasion. This is in line with Durkheim's (1912/1995) notion that society needs holidays and rituals to acknowledge the sacred over the profane, and that God may serve as a symbol of the social group rather than religious faith. This was a common aspect in the interviews. Just like Caroline, Alice does not believe in God or a supernatural power. Unlike their husbands, they do not call themselves spiritual and do not believe in fate. Nonetheless, Alice also feels like the religious aspect is important to the ceremony. She speculates that this must be as a result of a Christian upbringing.

Alice: God adds another level to it, even if I don't believe. If we had had the ceremony in our garden at home it would have been nice, but in the church it is even more... It's hard to describe why it feels so powerful with God in the ceremony when you're not religious, but it is simply something you have grown up with. It is within us...

This further suggests that the inclusion of God in the ceremony serves the purpose of recognising a cultural heritage. Lars described a similar sentiment. He related the meaning of God to important societal traditions.

Lars: I'm not baptised or a member but it is natural that when you are standing there in the church, it is very powerful. It's a feeling you don't get anywhere else. You grow up with Christianity even if you're not religious and in the ceremony, this feels special. I don't think we have had that feeling at any other point. For me it's not about God, it is about something else. I didn't think I would feel so touched, but it was powerful in the moment. But I didn't have God in my thoughts when I left if you know what I mean.

In relation to the arguments made by Durkheim (1912/1995) this suggests that these sacred events are celebrations of a cultural identity and that they can, in fact, be largely non-religious. Furthermore, Durkheim's (1912/1995) argument also suggests that sacred cultural celebrations do not *need* to be conducted in the church and even those who no longer belong to the National Church find meaning in ceremonies and tradition. In other words, as a society changes, so does the way in which its cultural practices are celebrated. The strong connection between the

Church of Sweden and the Swedish state was severed in 2000, leaving Swedes in the position to re-evaluate their relationship with the Church.

8.2.3 Current Levels and Changing Trends

As presented above, typical Swedes state that they are neither religious nor regular churchgoers, but that they do identify with the Church of Sweden and have a formal chain of contacts with the church throughout life. In line with this, Figure 8.1 shows that in 1970, 4 out of 5 weddings took place in the State Church, 4 out of 5 newborns were baptised, 4 out of 5 15 year olds were confirmed, and over 95 percent of all funerals were conducted by the Church of Sweden. Meanwhile, each week, only a few percent of the Swedish population attended church (e.g. Gustafsson, 1990:6).

The phenomenon of Swedes having a passive sense of belonging with only occasional interaction with the church at key points in their lives is arguably a result of the relationship between the former state church and the Swedish welfare state (see Chapter 2). The role of the Church has first and foremost been to carry out key civil functions while its spiritual mission has remained in the background. Since the Church of Sweden had a near monopoly until relatively recently and given that Swedes were automatically enrolled as members at birth, it meant that active choices in relation to life-cycle ceremonies were seldom required, a reality that is largely different from the Scottish case.²⁰⁴ However, as the State Church was deregulated in 2000, its relationship not only to the state but also to the Swedish people has changed dramatically. Suddenly, Swedes have to re-evaluate their church membership and, as a result, where to turn to as they recognise key moments in their lives. Although 7 out of 10 Swedes are still members of the Church of Sweden, this number has seen a steady decline since the disestablishment, and while these church ceremonies generally play a crucial role in the life of a typical Swede, there are signs that things may be changing.

Several interviewees, particularly those who themselves chose a civil wedding, recognise the declining importance of religious ceremonies in Sweden.

²⁰⁴ See section 8.3 (pp. 248-261).

This is illustrated by my conversation with Elin and Axel. They were both married previously in a church ceremony and Elin baptised her children from her previous marriage. They mention that things are different today. They are not active in the church and while they do not reject the possibility of a higher power, they do not believe in the Christian God. They wish to leave the Church, but as explained in Chapter 7, have not considered it urgent enough to complete the required paperwork. They married in a civil ceremony, and have made the choice to not baptise their new baby.

Elin: I was baptised and confirmed in the same church and I have baptised my other two children in the Church of Sweden.

Isabella: Have you or will you baptise Maja?

Axel: No, we haven't baptised her and we will not do so.

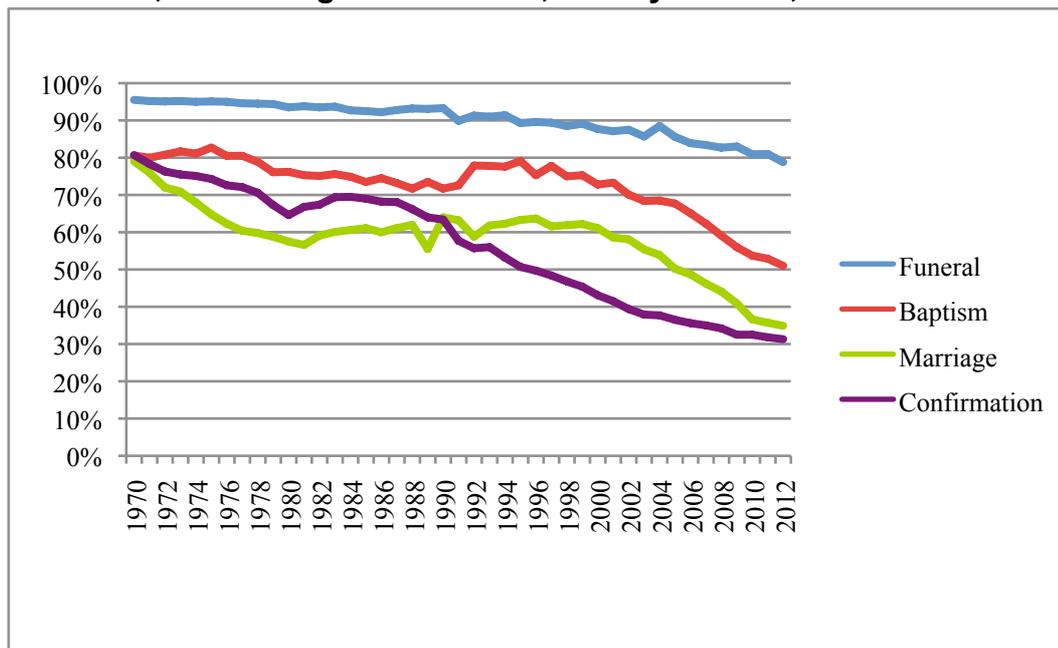
Elin: She can do it later herself if she wishes to.

Isabella: How did you come to this decision when you baptised your older children?

Elin: It feels a bit like that time when you just automatically baptised your children into a parish is in the past. It's history. Conservative, old traditions don't feel as important anymore.

In line with Elin's idea that social expectations on church rituals are changing, Figure 8.1 shows that, in addition to a decrease in belief and church attendance, the percentage of Swedes taking part in these rituals has declined since the 1970s and a more substantial drop can be observed after year 2000. In 1999, 75.3 percent of newborns were baptised in the Church of Sweden. In 2012, the same figure was 51.0 percent. Similarly, in 1999, 62.2 percent of all weddings took place in the former state church, a percentage that had gone down to 43.9 in 2012. Moreover, 45.4 percent of all 15 year olds were confirmed in the Church of Sweden in 1999, and in 2012, this ceremony only attracted 31.3 percent. Funerals have seen a less drastic decline, and in 2012, close to 4 out of 5 funerals were conducted in the Church of Sweden.

Figure 8.1: Rituals in the Church of Sweden as a percentage of all newborns, all marriage ceremonies, all 15 year olds, and all deaths

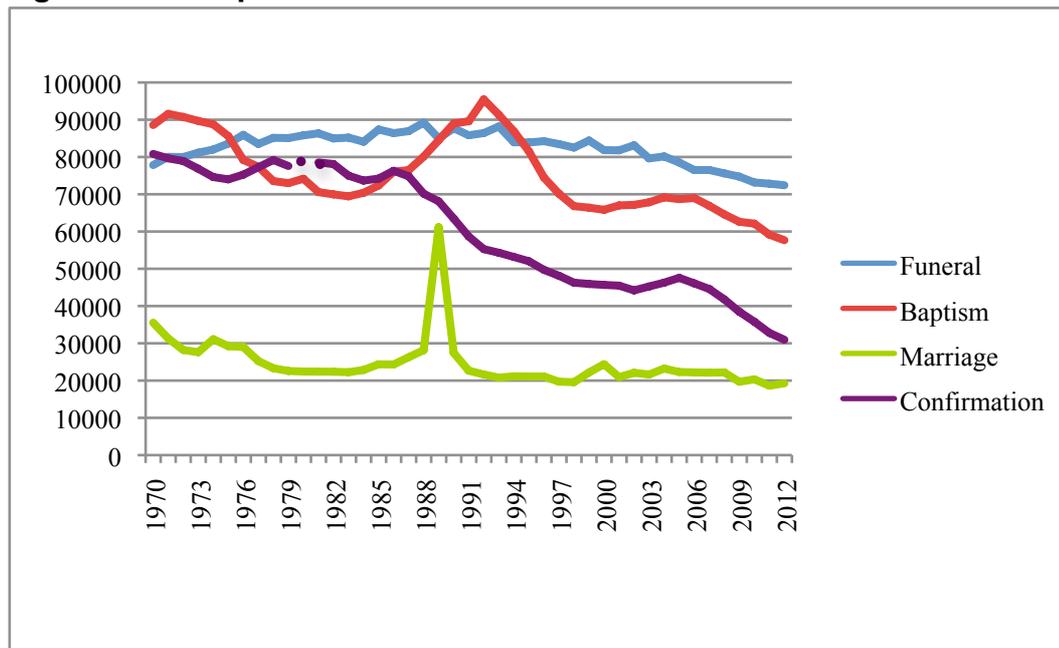


Data source: Svenska Kyrkan, 2013

Bäckström et al (2004:43) agree that the percentage of Swedes who go through the Church of Sweden for life cycle ceremonies is decreasing, but argue that if the extensive immigration to Sweden is taken into account, the decline is marginal. This was investigated by examining the number of (as opposed to percentage of) people participating in these formal rituals. As seen in Figure 8.2, up until the time when Bäckström et al (2004) published their book, the decrease in these church rituals was in fact small. However, since then, there has been a much steeper decline. Since 2005, the number of confirmations has decreased from 47 570 to 30 959 per year, the frequency of baptisms went from 69 694 to 57 673 per year, while the number of weddings has seen a less drastic decline from 22 305 to 19 271 per year. As mentioned above, funerals have only marginally decreased over the last 42 years. In 1970, the Church of Sweden conducted 77 825 funerals, a figure that was 72 413 in 2012.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁵ This is in part due to limited availability of alternatives. See section 8.2.4 (pp. 236-240).

Figure 8.2: Frequencies of rituals in the Church of Sweden



The peak in marriages in 1989 is a result of tax legislation introduced January 1, 1990. Couples who married before that date received certain tax benefits. *Data source: Svenska Kyrkan, 2013*

As discussed in Chapter 7, while the effect may be smaller than in Scotland, the older generation is less likely to have left the Church of Sweden than those who are younger. This is, as noted, not necessarily for religious reasons, but perhaps a result of a lifelong relationship with the church and its traditions. In the first half of the 20th century, the Church of Sweden had a stronger position than it does today, meaning that a majority of those who reach the end of life now have been baptised and confirmed, have married in the church, and have baptised their children and grandchildren. This suggests that as more and more individuals who have made the decision to exit the church approach the age at which they begin contemplating the end of life, the number of funerals in the Church of Sweden will see a more substantial decline. As they are not currently in high demand, the availability of alternative forms of funeral services and other forms of life cycle rituals is low.

8.2.4 Availability of Alternatives

Swedes have a very limited choice in terms of weddings and funerals. While a civil option exists, up until 2000, the state in essence endorsed the celebration of these rituals in the Church of Sweden. Even though the state church has been

disestablished, a majority of Swedes are still members of the Church of Sweden meaning that there has not yet been a strong demand for alternative means to perform these ceremonies. This is different in Scotland where there not only are more options, but people are also more aware of the diverse range of ceremonies that are available.

As a ceremony, a wedding is particularly interesting as it is the only life cycle ritual that carries official and legal implications. There are around 40 religious denominations that hold the right to perform marriage ceremonies in Sweden (Kammarkollegiet, 2013). Unlike in Scotland, the Humanist Society of Sweden is not considered a belief based organisation and is therefore not one of them.²⁰⁶ Today, roughly 60 percent of all marriage ceremonies are civil (Haraldsson, 2011).²⁰⁷ A civil ceremony is conducted either in the registrar's office or at a location of the couple's choice by an officiant appointed by the local county administrative board. Many interviewees expressed dissatisfaction with such a ceremony, mentioning that it is "less meaningful and too quick" (Caroline), and "the ceremony is just 5 minutes and you're done, which is a bit unexciting" (Lars).

Filippa and Nils, who had a destination wedding in Croatia, portray how limitations to the availability of options have affected their fundamental choices in relation to the wedding. Filippa mentioned that she would have liked a wedding in the Church of Sweden because "the church is doing such a great job at delivering ceremonies, the beauty of the buildings, and the sense of occasion." Nevertheless, since Nils did not feel comfortable having their wedding in the church when he does not believe, to them, the only other option was going abroad for a civil ceremony. In line with Nils and Filippa, several other participants agreed that, in Sweden, there are few options to a church ceremony. Gabriella and Jonas mention several reasons for why they believe this is the case.

Isabella: Do you know anyone in Sweden who married in the Church of Sweden even though they don't believe in God?

²⁰⁶ There are, however, a very limited number of humanists who are ordained to conduct civil ceremonies (Humanisterna, 2013).

²⁰⁷ With 36 percent of weddings take place in the Church of Sweden - see Figure 8.1 (p. 243), this means that less than 5 percent of weddings are conducted in a religious denomination other than the former national church.

Jonas: Yes, almost all the weddings we have been to. In Sweden it is difficult to marry outside the Church and get a nice ceremony. The default option is to marry in the Church and tell the minister to not talk that much about God.

Isabella: Why is it like that?

Jonas: Partly because there's nothing else. Here in Scotland there are more and more humanist weddings. In Sweden, you think of a civil ceremony and having to go to the registrar's office and it's not that nice. People aren't even aware that you can make them personal, that the option exists.

Gabriella: The Humanist Society offers something that people want; weddings, funerals. It's an alternative. The reason why almost everyone gets buried in the Church of Sweden is because there are no alternatives. Well, there *are* alternatives, but no one knows they exist. Funeral homes barely know. The fact that the Church of Sweden has completely removed all their religious requirements, that you don't need God in the ceremonies, means no alternatives are requested the way they are in Scotland. I think people are members of the Church just for the sake of the ceremonies. We definitely need more options in Sweden.

In other words, Gabriella and Jonas note two reasons for why there is little demand for other options. Not only are church rituals a strong marker of a cultural heritage and traditions, the Church of Sweden has also maintained its role as serving all Swedes even if it means that their spiritual mission has been kept in the background.²⁰⁸ They have therefore created a type of ceremony that both believers and non-believers appreciate. This clearly illuminates the limitations to Davie's (2002a:19) idea of *vicarious religion*, assuming that Swedes are implicitly religious since a majority return to the Church at select moments in life.

Furthermore, Gabriella also points out that people are just not aware of other options. My conversation with Filippa and Nils illustrates this.

Isabella: Have you ever been to a civil funeral?

Nils: No, only weddings. I did not know you could have a civil funeral.

Filippa: I knew about it. I saw it on TV!

Nils: What do you mean? Do you have the ceremony in someone's house or what?

Interestingly, Nils, who does not believe in God and who, as mentioned, was against marrying in the church for this reason, was not aware that there are any alternatives to a church funeral. This is in line with figures 8.1 and 8.2 showing that weddings outside the Church of Sweden are becoming more common but that the Church of

²⁰⁸ See section 2.3 (pp. 22-35).

Sweden still completely dominates the provision of funeral services. As mentioned, this is likely due to the fact that most individuals who are at the age where they contemplate end of life choices are committed members of the Church of Sweden. As a result, the strong position that the Church of Sweden holds as a funeral provider, and to a lesser extent as a provider of life cycle rituals more generally, will decline as it loses members. The Humanist Society of Sweden has picked up on this, something that they highlight in their annual report.

As the Church of Sweden continues to lose members and participants in its ceremonies, a growing demand for alternative ceremonies has emerged. Here, the Humanist Society plays an important role in being able to offer options where ceremonies are formed based on a content that rests on humanist values (Humanisterna, 2013:50, my translation).

This demand for more personalised alternatives or more suitable options for non-believers was mentioned by several interview participants, particularly those who had a civil ceremony. As Olof and Rebecka exited the church some time ago, it made less sense for them to marry in the church and with this, they recognise a generational shift. They mentioned that their generation has grown up with a state church, and that significant changes will be seen in the next decade or two as those who were born around the turn of the millennium reach the age at which they marry. Rebecka recognises that as the Church loses members and status as a national church, young adults have to make more informed choices in regards to these rituals to a much larger extent than their parents and grandparents.

Rebecka: I know there are civil funerals as I have seen advertisements saying you can make your funeral personal, however you want to have it, like anything goes. But I don't know. For me it is more the practical aspect. I don't know how it works. I can imagine that our generation will make more active choices and plan for that we might want a different type of ceremony. It will become more and more common in the future.

The aspects discussed in this section represent long-lasting effects of a state church. The close, historical, relationship between the Church of Sweden and the Swedish state has formed a bond between the church and a cultural identity, meaning that few alternatives have been requested as most Swedes, for this reason, use the church for life cycle rituals. Ironically, this religious monopoly has restricted options to the extent that older Swedes have little choice but to turn to the Church of

Sweden, a practice that is mentioned by Davie (2002a:19) as evidence of *believing* and e.g. Stark and Finke (2000) as an innate human desire for religion.

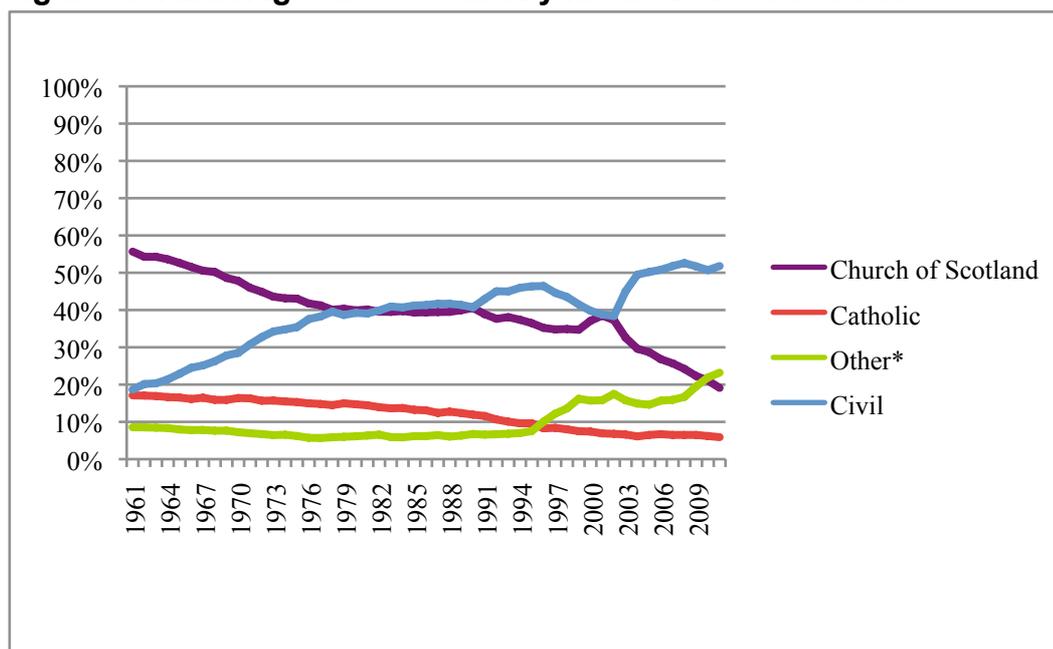
Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 2, the Church of Sweden has functioned as a key component of the Swedish welfare model *folkhemmet*, and one of its core missions has been to serve all Swedish citizens throughout the nation. This has led to both an encouragement from the state as well as a willingness within the church to accommodate to religious as well as non-religious members. However, since the Church of Sweden has been disestablished as a state church, things are changing. To an increasing extent Swedes have to make active choices about their life cycle ceremonies, suggesting that this is a key period of transition. It is possible that, in time, Sweden will resemble Scotland in this matter, where there is a wider range of options around which individuals make more active decisions. This is discussed further in the remainder of the chapter.

8.3 Scotland: Diversity and Family

8.3.1 Current Levels and Patterns

Unlike in Sweden where various dimensions of religion have a seemingly weaker association to one another, in Scotland, participation in rituals follow similar patterns to religious beliefs, church attendance, and identification. As seen in Figure 8.3 below, not only has the Church of Scotland experienced a steep decline in attendance (Chapter 6) and identification (Chapter 7), the percentage of Scottish marriages celebrated in the Kirk has decreased rapidly over the last 50 years. In 1961, 55.7 percent of marriages were conducted in the Church of Scotland, and in 2011, the corresponding figure was 19.1 percent. Similarly, the percentage of married couples that went through the Catholic Church has decreased from 17.1 in 1961 to 5.9 in 2011. This decline in ritual participation in Scotland's two largest religious organisations is a clear indication that Scotland is secularising. Together with relatively low levels of belief (Chapter 5), declining levels of attendance (Chapter 6), and religious membership and identification (Chapter 7), this makes any argument that Scotland is not secularising very difficult to sustain.

Figure 8.3: Marriages in Scotland by method of celebration



N= Between 27 524 and 43 696 with an average of 35 588. *Includes Humanist weddings.²⁰⁹
 Data source: General Register Office for Scotland, 2011

Table 8.1: Scottish marriages by method of celebration, 2011

Church of Scotland	19.1%
Catholic	5.93%
Humanist	8.53%
Civil	51.8%
Other*	14.7%
N	28479

*The five most common *other denominations* are all Christian: *Assemblies of God* (3.0 percent of all marriages), *Scottish Episcopal Church and other churches of the Anglican communion* (2.4 percent), *Methodist Church in Scotland* (1.7 percent), *Baptist Union of Scotland* (1.0 percent), and the *Bathgate Community Church* (0.7 percent). The remaining 33 *listed denominations* include, among others, *other Christian, Muslim, Jewish, and spiritualist congregations*. Data source: General Register Office for Scotland, 2011

This is further illustrated by the fact that in 2011, 60.3 percent of marriage ceremonies were non-religious, with 51.8 percent civil, and 8.5 percent Humanist (see Table 8.1). This means that Humanist weddings, only considered legally binding since 2005 (General Register Office for Scotland, 2013), have surpassed Catholic

²⁰⁹ The time series data does not break *other* down into specific denominations, see Table 8.1 for the five most common *other denominations* in 2011.

weddings as the third most common provider of wedding ceremonies after civil marriages and weddings in the Church of Scotland.²¹⁰ Humanist weddings have seen a steep increase from 82 ceremonies in 2005 to 2486 in 2011.²¹¹

Using statistics on baptism in Scotland between 1930 and 2001, Voas (2006:113) makes a number of noteworthy assertions. First of all, he shows that there has been a consistent decline in baptism rates in the Church of Scotland from roughly 45 percent of newborns in the 1950s to below 20 percent at the end of the 20th century. At the same time, figures for the Catholic Church have remained steady at around 15-20 percent. This is in line with the notion that the Church of Scotland is experiencing particular difficulties in attracting and retaining participants (e.g. Brown, 1997). This also suggests that *cultural* Catholicism is fairly common in Scotland.

Second, levels of upbringing in the Church of Scotland have been consistently higher than baptism rates. Interestingly, the difference between the two was larger until the mid 1950s. Voas (2006:113) speculates that this is due to the fact that in the past, baptism was commonly considered to be a ceremony only for the most committed Christians. He states that “Many people would have identified themselves with the church without feeling sufficiently confident of their standing to bring their children to be baptised. In recent decades that strictness has moderated” (Voas, 2006:113). This aspect was discussed in my interview with James, 37, and Lily, 34 from Glasgow. Lily is a full-time mum and James is a minister in the Church of Scotland. He affirms that baptism is, within the Church of Scotland, a symbol of a promise to bring up a child in the Christian faith, while a wedding is between a man and a woman regardless of religious beliefs. Therefore, he would feel uncomfortable baptising a child of a non-believer.

James: We have a service where we pray for the wee one, but I wouldn't actually baptise, and then they can go off to their party. Some ministers in the Church of Scotland would baptise, but I couldn't in good conscience...Baptism is just for the children of believers.

²¹⁰ Humanist weddings are legally categorised as *religious weddings*. However, a new proposition is being put forth involving *belief based* ceremonies as a third category, which would include humanists (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2012).

²¹¹ 2005: 85 ceremonies, 2006: 434, 2007: 710, 2008: 1026, 2009: 1544, 2010: 2092, 2011: 2486 (Total number of marriages range from 27524 to 30881 yearly) (General Register Office for Scotland, 2011).

In other words, in Scotland, baptism is primarily a religious ritual contrary to the case of Sweden. Nevertheless, as mentioned by James and in line with Voas (2006), some ministers are now less strict.

In comparison with the Church of Sweden (which as seen in Figure 8.1, baptised 80 percent of newborns in 1970 and 51 percent in 2012), the Church of Scotland baptises a relatively small share of newborns. Similarly, as seen in Figure 8.3, the National Church has not conducted a majority of Scottish weddings since the 1960s,²¹² highlighting that relative to Sweden, Scotland is more religiously diverse. In 2011, the Kirk performed 48 percent of all religious weddings in Scotland (excluding Humanist ceremonies), followed by the Catholic Church with 15 percent. Furthermore, in 2011, 29 percent of legal marriage ceremonies in Scotland were neither civil nor within the National Church,²¹³ while the same statistic for Sweden is roughly 5 percent.²¹⁴ Interestingly, religious diversity and the availability of non-religious options have, as seen in the next section influenced how Scots relate religious beliefs to practices of life cycle rituals.

8.3.2 Rituals and Belief

As discussed in Chapter 7, religious belonging has largely different meanings in Scotland and Sweden. Belonging for the sake of a cultural heritage external to religious beliefs is much less prevalent in Scotland, particularly among Presbyterians, where individuals are more likely to belong for religious reasons and to some extent to a local community. While Swedes typically choose a religious ceremony primarily for the sake of culture and tradition, just as described earlier, Scots seem more likely to make a choice that corresponds to their religious convictions. A majority of interview participants in Scotland who chose a religious service mentioned that they did so because at least one person in the couple is religious. Sophia expressed the importance of having a religious ceremony for

²¹² The Church of Sweden provided a majority of Swedish weddings until 2005.

²¹³ If including Humanist weddings, this figure is 80 percent.

²¹⁴ As seen in Figure 8.1 (p. 243), the Church of Sweden conducted 36 percent of weddings in 2011 (Svenska Kyrkan, 2013), a year in which roughly 60 percent of marriage ceremonies were civil (Haraldsson, 2011), suggesting that less than 1 in 20 weddings were performed elsewhere.

religious reasons and also because of a sense of belonging associated with a religious upbringing.

Sophia: I did want a religious ceremony. It was probably more important to me. Thomas was quite happy to go along with it. I was brought up in going to church, and I think, whilst I wasn't going to church when we met, but it had always been important to me that it would be religious. And since then I started going back to church.

Similarly, those who chose a non-religious wedding ceremony mentioned their lack of belief as a primary reason. Susan and John describe this.

Isabella: How come you didn't want a religious ceremony?

John: I wouldn't be able to...

Susan: I don't think I could really do a religious ceremony these days, I think I am possible more of an agnostic, but wouldn't say atheist, but I wouldn't be comfortable with some of it. I would have to kind of bite my tongue through bits of it.

In other words, unlike many Swedes, non-religious Scots often express that they would feel very uncomfortable with religious vows and prayers in their ceremony. When I mentioned to the Scottish interview participants that it is very common in Sweden that even non-believers choose to conduct life cycle rituals in the National Church, almost all interviewees felt that this was odd, and a phenomenon rarely seen in Scotland. James and Lily express this sentiment.

Isabella: What do you, as a minister, think of non-religious people marrying in the church?

James: That is bizarre to me. I don't see the... I don't know why people would get married in a church... There is no logic in getting married in a church if you don't believe in it.

Isabella: Do you think its okay that they do that?

James: Well I think it's bizarre, I don't see the sense in it.

Lily: For me it is also because you are making vows.

This is a sharp contrast to the Swedish norm of asking for a secular church ceremony, which further highlights the importance of context in research. James' and Lily's thoughts exemplify the importance of religious convictions in the decision-making process and several participants mentioned that it is inappropriate to use the church for ceremonies without religious faith. Lucy describes this as she states that,

“I want it written in my will that I would like a humanist funeral...I would feel as though I was a hypocrite to get a church service.”

Others mention that a church ceremony for a non-religious individual is disrespectful to those who believe, a sentiment that never came up in Sweden.

Isabella: So what was the main reason why you wouldn't want to have a church ceremony?

Olivia: It would have felt a bit hypocritical, 'cause neither of us have been to church at all. *To get married and never go again didn't seem right*, 'cause its sort of disrespectful to what the people who believe in the church believe in.

This suggests that, in Scotland, the Church has a stronger association to religion, while, in Sweden, it is the norm “to get married and never go again.” Similar to Olivia, Henry describes how the religious foundation of churches needs to be respected by others.

Henry: Neither of us are religious, so... Even though I would consider myself an atheist, I still think that people should respect churches. And I think that it is weird the way people use them as venues. I think that you should only get married in the church if you believe in the religion.

Isabella: How come you think that you can't use them for other reasons?

Henry: Because I think it makes the whole thing sort of a sham, something false about it. Like it's such an important event and I don't think there should be some sort of artificial quality to it. And that they are pretending to believe in these things, it's just a bit strange and I have found it a bit uncomfortable.

The national differences in the relationship between rituals and religiosity are likely due to the different historical trajectories described in Chapter 2. The fact that Scots were never unified on the basis of a particular religious denomination to the extent that Swedes were means that Scots to a lesser extent see one specific church as a “default option.” This has led to Scots having to take a stand where it is more common to “opt in” to a religion, in contrast to Swedes who, until very recently, and to some extent still, have to “opt out.”

Furthermore, the Church of Scotland has not had a role as a public service provider to the extent that the Church of Sweden has. This means that it serves *religious* individuals to a further extent than the Church of Sweden that provides services to *all* Swedes. As a result, the Church of Scotland may be stricter in terms of

whom it marries (see Chapter 5). Furthermore, while the Church of Scotland is less likely than its Swedish counterpart to encounter individuals who wishes to marry in the church for reasons of tradition and cultural belonging, the Church of Scotland typically performs rituals such as weddings and funerals for non-religious individuals if they have a *family connection* to a church. This shows that while the Church of Scotland attempts to retain its religious ideology, it also understands its important connection to family and community. Even though many interviewees mentioned that non-religious church ceremonies are “hypocritical” but rare, as seen in the next section, family reasons and social expectations were mentioned as explanations for why this *occasionally* happens in Scotland.²¹⁵ In line with this, the interviews gave the impression that family wishes are generally taken very seriously by the Scottish couples.

8.3.3 Family Expectations

Previous chapters have described how religious belief and belonging differ in Scotland and Sweden. *Cultural religion* (e.g. Demerath, 2000; Zuckerman, 2008) characterised by a non-religious sense of belonging to religion as part of a wider cultural identity, is much less prevalent in relation to the Church of Scotland.²¹⁶ Instead, Scottish religious belonging is more closely associated with a sense of *community*, which, to a limited extent also attracts non-religious individuals (e.g. Hervieu-Léger, 2006). In line with this, several Scottish participants expressed that they chose a religious ceremony or included religious elements in their non-religious ceremony as a “sign of respect” to those who were religious or active in a church. My conversation with Pamela and Ben illustrate how family members’ opinions were considered in the decision-making process around their wedding. As mentioned earlier, Pamela and Ben are both non-believers, but Pamela grew up in a religious family. This influenced their choice of ceremony.

²¹⁵ For this reason, this may still be relatively common in rural areas. However, current data is unable to confirm this.

²¹⁶ It may, as mentioned, be more common among Scottish Catholics.

Ben: We wanted summer of 08, so then we started shopping around for places to marry... And Pamela's mum had a say in that. She has probably had the biggest influence on our decision to marry in the church.

Pamela: Her and my dad go to church but I wouldn't say they're extremely religious, but she would always kind of prefer if we married in the church. Neither of us go to church but the church has been a big traditional thing, a childhood experience as well.

Ben: So that's why it was going to be Pamela's mum's church.

Pamela: Yeah, she's quite traditional so... I suppose it was just a nice thing to do, a nice thing for your parents as well.

Ben: Pamela's mum always had it in her head that it was going to be perfect and it was as much for her as it was for Pamela. There's no question about that. And I knew that from early on and because I didn't have a strong feeling either way, I just let them have a church wedding.

Isabella: Were you able to have an input on what was said in the ceremony?

Pamela: We had options of hymns and readings.

Isabella: How did you make those decisions?

Pamela: To be honest, I wasn't really that bothered about what was going to be in there. She (her mum) suggested some readings rather than us coming up with our own thing.

Isabella: So how did you decide the hymns?

Pamela: My mum suggested the hymns. I wouldn't know what hymns to choose because I don't go to church.

In other words, to Ben and Pamela, their wedding was not only about their commitment to each other, it was also important that her mother had her day too, that she was involved and had her wishes heard. Similarly, while Lucy and Simon had a humanist wedding and are atheists, they recognise the importance of acknowledging beliefs and expectations of friends and family.

Lucy: We did actually have a prayer at the wedding during the meal. We asked our friend's husband to do it (a minister), but that was more a mark of respect for other people at the wedding who were religious, like your aunty, you know like other people. Like I said I've got some Christian friends so we thought that would be nice for them to do that.

While some participants chose to go along with their family's wishes, others, who themselves had non-religious wedding ceremonies, expressed frustration with this practice. This is similar to how those who had a non-religious ceremony in Sweden expressed that they felt about others marrying in the church for traditional reasons

alone. Katie, 28, a PhD student, and Matthew, 27, a forklift driver, married in a Humanist ceremony in Edinburgh. They are both non-religious and Matthew rather bluntly expressed what he felt about fellow Scots who marry in a church without being religious.

Matthew: I think they are stupid. If you are going to do something, at least know what you are doing instead of just walking into it blindly, just because social restrictions. Like, "It's what we are expected to do, so lets just do it." Make your own mind up! How do you actually feel about this? Rather than just saying that "Society has handed me this, and that's what I am expected to do."

Nevertheless, as seen above, a common sentiment from the interviews was that many non-religious individuals who choose a religious ceremony consider it carefully and come to the conclusion that they wish to honour family wishes, while others may want to avoid a conflict altogether. In line with this, several participants discussed the tension and conflict that could potentially arise by going against wishes of family members. Amy and Keith acknowledge how opinions of family members may be a source of conflict when organising important ceremonies such as weddings and christenings.

Amy: My friend who got married on the side of the mountain, her parents were really adamant that she should have a church wedding. She was brought up in the church, and she went against them when she said, "Well I don't feel like I am in that place anymore and I just don't want that." And it took ages to organise their wedding because she had a bit of an argument with them. They really wanted it!

Keith: And that's probably why most people who have family connections to the church just go along with it for their parents' sake, to save arguments and rifts within the family. They probably do it for just that reason.

Family expectations never came up as an issue in the Swedish interviews. Arguably, the differences can be explained by the different stages of secularisation in the two nations. While it appears to be declining steadily, the social significance of religion is seemingly stronger in Scotland (Chapter 5). With this come social expectations, not the least in relation to traditionally religious rituals such as weddings and baptisms. Jonas and Gabriella mention these differences between Scotland and Sweden.

Gabriella: I don't think religion and religious ceremonies always are about God here in Scotland. Often it is about family "What will they think?" The whole family and all the relatives are expecting this. Going against that, choosing something different, means distancing yourself from your family.

Jonas: I don't think you take your parents as seriously in Sweden.

Gabriella and Jonas' comments about parental expectations likely relate to distinct generational differences in Scotland. Since the older generations are more religious (Chapter 5) and active in the church (Chapter 6) than those who are younger, a clash between different values and practices are likely to appear. Furthermore, while they may not currently be religious, with relatively religious upbringings, many couples express that the Church has a strong association to their childhood. This is in line with Bruce's (1996) claim that churches are oftentimes used for rituals regardless of belief as they hold a sense of nostalgia. This applies well, but differently, to both Scotland and Sweden. As religion plays an important role in their parents' and grandparents' lives, this means that couples find it appropriate to recognise this in the ceremony. There seems to only be minor generational differences on key measures of religiosity in Sweden and even parents and grandparents can be described as largely indifferent towards religion. As the older generations of Swedes generally do not seem to have strong opinions either for or against a church ceremony, conflicts and disagreements are much less likely to emerge.

To accommodate to different values and opinions, there are, as mentioned earlier, a wider range of options of ceremonies in Scotland than in Sweden. While Humanist weddings are becoming increasingly common, they are still a relatively new form of celebration, and, as a result, couples encountered a wide range of thoughts and perceptions from friends and family. As seen in the next section, such a discussion also highlighted that even if the couple requested a non-religious ceremony, most of them mentioned that it was still important to include traditional elements to their wedding.

8.3.4 Non-Religious Rituals and Importance of Traditions

Similar to the Swedish interviewees, several Scottish participants held rather negative perceptions about civil ceremonies. However, Scots have the option to

choose a legally recognised humanist wedding. Amy mentioned that this type of ceremony offers a sense of occasion with a “personal approach.” Along with this, Olivia and Connor explained how they came to the decision to have a humanist wedding over a ceremony in the registrar’s office or in a church.

Isabella: How did you decide on a humanist ceremony?

Olivia: Connor said he would burst into flames if he had it set in a church.

Connor: It’s not *exactly* true.

Olivia: Neither of us is from Edinburgh, but we decided to get married here. Connor is from Wick, on the very north coast of Scotland, which would have been nice but it is a little too far to ask my granny to come there from Southampton. I’m from St Andrews and my granddad was actually an Episcopalian priest. Had he still been alive, I would have probably tried to get married in his church, cause that would be like a family connection... I mean we never go to church, I don’t really believe in God at all, so we decided on a humanist ceremony. I wanted something with a bit more feeling than a registrar’s office. I’ve been to a humanist funeral before and it was quite nice. It was different, but still having the songs and the speeches and stuff that you get with a church service, without the “bish bash, bosh, you’re married” of the registrar’s office. William and Maggie’s wedding was like, “Do you want to marry him? Yeah, okay, bye!” It felt a bit soul-less, so that’s why we chose humanism.

In other words, Olivia and Connor equate a humanist ceremony with a church service devoid of religious reference. It has many of the aspects of a church ceremony that are appreciated by the couples, such as songs, poems, and personalised readings and speeches. Like Olivia and Connor, Thomas and Sophia further express their thoughts on the differences between civil and humanist weddings.

Isabella: Have you ever been to a non-religious wedding, funeral, or naming ceremony?

Thomas: We have been to two and they were very contrasting. One of them was like being in a court of law.

Sophia: Very legal. And the registrar kept saying that this is a legally binding agreement. It was very much like they had gone to sign a contract. That was in the registrar’s office. Whilst that one was lovely, the humanist one was about love and companionship, and obviously no talking about God. And that was a very different feel to the registrar’s one.

Thomas: The registrar one seemed more like a legality than a celebration.

Similarly, Katie and Matthew spoke about the importance of personalising their wedding ceremony. A marriage ceremony in the registrar’s office would not do justice to what they wanted.

Katie: Originally we were going to do a civil ceremony with the registrar, but then we found out that... I didn't want it to be just a random person, I wanted it to be a real personal ceremony, and they said that we wouldn't know who would marry us until about 15 minutes before the ceremony is actually happening. And that it just is what it is 'cause it is a legal thing. There is no real room to move. So I said I didn't want that. So, we are atheist. So they said that you might want to contact the Humanist Society, they might be in line with what you want. They perform a quasi-mocking religious ceremony and can still be very personal.

Matthew: I wouldn't say mocking religion. There is nothing religious about it.

Katie: Well, I know, but it is the same kind of style. Very personal, very, you know, poetic.

Isabella: It's traditional in a way?

Katie: Yes, we had a lot of readings and poetry and family got up and spoke. Even, when my sister got married at the Catholic Church they did the same thing, so rather than people getting up and reading prayers and scripture, people got up and read different poems by people that we picked. You know, gave different talks.

Matthew: It was just a typical wedding. It was the people we invited and just about me and Katie, we just never praised a god.

Katie: Yes, there was none of that. It was a very personal ceremony.

From the interviews with Scottish participants and as seen in Table 8.1, it is clear that humanist weddings are in high demand in an increasingly secular society.²¹⁷ The Scottish interview participants, among those Olivia and Connor, explained that this relatively new method of celebrating these rituals evoked a wide range of reactions from family and friends.

Olivia: It was nice, and people still say how they enjoyed the service, but there was a lot of confusion about it. Your dad didn't think it was going to be legal. My granny who was quite religious was like, "is it real?" She was very confused by this, like a weird "new religion" type of thing that she didn't understand.

Connor: There was more confusion for all the older generation, you know our parents, and then much more acceptance after the fact. They were actually like, "this is really nice."

In line with Olivia and Connor, Matthew and Katie expressed that there seems to have been a generational difference in relation to the opinions on their humanist ceremony.

Katie: We actually had to have the celebrant put a paragraph in there to explain to the audience what the humanist thing is all about. Because most people were like, "what the hell

²¹⁷ As seen in section 8.2 (pp. 234-248), the fact that humanist ceremonies are not yet legally binding in Sweden is a key reason for why the Church of Sweden still conducts a large percentage of Swedish weddings.

is humanist?”

Matthew: My friends are especially ignorant. They see it as you just get married in a church. They were very confused by it and didn't expect it. There was a very mixed reaction. The people in their 40s and 50s said that “it wasn't my cup of tea, not my sort of wedding or the way it should be.” But everybody my age or younger were like “It was a great ceremony, not what we are used to, with some guy in a robe talking nonsense.”

Section 8.2 explained that traditions are a key aspect of Swedish rites of passage and that, as part of a cultural heritage, the Church of Sweden has a longstanding association with ceremonial traditions. The Scottish interviews revealed that traditions are of high importance to them as well, but that, interestingly, these traditions are rarely linked to the Church of Scotland or to religion more generally. Several participants expressed this sentiment. While they had humanist ceremonies, Simon and Lucy and Chris and Helen emphasised that traditional, but not religious, elements of a wedding were very important to them. Helen's father gave her away, they had written vows, exchanged rings, they did not spend the night before the wedding together, and she wore a traditional white dress.

Chris: I think we still wanted that sense of occasion, that sense of ceremony and you know it's a template that works and it's what my...

Helen: And people identify with it... I think we just thought that we could have something where everyone could come to and it would be more recognising...

Simon and Lucy also included many traditional aspects of a wedding in their ceremony, but they also wanted to involve more elements from their background or culture.

Lucy: She [the celebrant] talked a little bit about how we met. It was quite humorous I would say. We had my uncle and Simon's aunty both do readings for us, my uncle did Robbie Burns, and Simon's aunty did an Irish poem, cause he's got Irish descendants... And we also drank from a quaich, which is a Scottish cup. It had Bacardi in it and we both had a sip, 'cause this is like a tradition that, ehm, a king from Norway and a Scottish wife, it was what they did, so... so that's what we did.

Isabella: So you felt that traditions were important?

Simon: Yes, it was a traditional type of service, bar the religious element.

In line with Simon and Lucy, Katie further highlights the importance of family background and cultural traditions.

Katie: I wore my mother's wedding dress, since I promised her since I was in my 20's that I could, 'cause I had three sisters, and I was the only one that is the same size as her. And I had my grandmother's wedding gloves. I have my other grandmother's engagement and wedding set and he has my grandfather's wedding band. So we had a lot of heirlooms linked in. We did a traditional handfasting thing for the Scottish and Celts. We kind of decided to do that for the Scottish culture.

As presented here, traditional aspects are perhaps just as important whether couples married in a religious or non-religious ceremony. This is in line with the idea that recognising and “repeating” history through *traditions* are core components of rites of passage and that celebrating a social past is an important aspect of socialisation and group membership (e.g. Van Gennep, 1909/2010; Bell, 1997). The difference between Scotland and Sweden is that while traditions are important to Scots, they have a much weaker association to a *national church*. This further suggests that Durkheim's (1915/1995) claim that society needs traditional rituals and holidays to separate the sacred from the profane can successfully be applied to a secularising society. As seen here, sacred, but not necessarily religious, rituals that mark special occasions in life remain a cornerstone of social life even where religion has lost much of its social significance.

8.4 Conclusion

This chapter explored participation in rituals as a third measure of religious belonging. This dimension follows roughly similar patterns of decline as religious identification discussed in Chapter 7. In both Scotland and Sweden, levels of participation in religious ceremonies are decreasing steadily, serving as yet another confirmation that both Scotland and Sweden are secularising. Nevertheless, there are key contextual differences on opinions of and experiences with religious rituals and secular alternatives in the two nations.

The first part of the chapter focused on rites of passage in Sweden. In addition to religious identification and membership (Chapter 7), this is another aspect in which Swedes *belong* to the National Church. Just as suggested with identification, this is essentially a secular form of belonging to a wider Swedish culture. Because of this and the role of the Church of Sweden as a state endorsed

provider of key life cycle rituals (until 2000), there has until recently been a very low demand for alternatives, with civil ceremonies serving as the only legal non-religious option. Furthermore, as it conducts largely non-religious functions as well as being associated with a cultural heritage, the Church of Sweden has remained relevant in a highly secularised society. It is nevertheless clear that this relevance has seen a steep decline since the disestablishment.

The second part of the chapter focused on rituals in Scotland. Here, it is suggested that reasons for choosing religious or non-religious ceremonies are more closely associated with a religiously diverse society. Unlike in Sweden, Scots are more aware that they have an active choice to make among a wider range of options. Because of this, church weddings for non-religious individuals are thought of as either hypocritical or as respectful to religious family and friends. The latter may be due to a later Scottish secularisation, where parents' and grandparents' generations are considerably more religious and active in the church (Chapter 5 and 6).

Moreover, many Scots and Swedes participate in largely non-religious, but sacred and traditional ceremonies. The difference is that Scots typically do so with a humanist ceremony, while many Swedes ask the Church of Sweden for a service with little emphasis on religion. In other words, Scotland and Sweden are in some aspects similar, but just as seen with belief, church attendance, and religious identification in the previous three chapters, diverse historical and political trajectories have shaped contemporary patterns and experiences of traditionally religious rites of passage in two secularising societies.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

This thesis set out to compare contemporary religious trends and experiences in Scotland and Sweden, two case studies from the relatively secularised Protestant Europe. More specifically, a key objective was to investigate the extent to which national context influences key processes of religious change in this region. Protestant Europe consists of nations that, to some degree, have a common historical background and that are perceived to share some similarities in relation to current trends of global religious change.

Two questions were posed in response to gaps in current literature, particularly concerning the limited understanding of diverse contextual process and experiences of secularisation:

To what extent are Scotland and Sweden secularised and how does this fit into previous conceptualisations of religious belief and belonging?

How can national context explain differences in religious belonging and how the key functions of national churches are maintained, transformed or abandoned?

The next two sections address these questions with a summary of findings and key arguments. This is followed by a reflection on limitations of the research and suggestions for future research. Finally, the last section offers some concluding remarks.

9.2 Secularisation in Protestant Europe

Sweden appears further secularised than Scotland with lower levels of belief on seven different indicators, and a particularly large difference observed on measures of “traditional beliefs,” such as heaven and hell (see Chapter 5). Nevertheless, analysis of the relationship between age and religiosity showed secularising trends in both nations as lower levels of religiosity were observed in

younger cohorts, arguably a result of generational shifts rather than an effect of aging. Moreover, an examination of respondents' beliefs about God did not reveal particularly high levels of belief in either nation, as claimed by scholars who reject the classical secularisation theory (e.g. Davie, 1990, 1994, 2002a; Stark and Bainbridge, 1987; Stark and Finke, 2000). Nevertheless, such authors assert that society is characterised by an increasing prevalence of *spirituality*, and findings cautiously confirmed the notion that traditional beliefs are declining for individualised perceptions of the supernatural. However, qualitative data exposed a vast range of interpretations of the term *spirituality*, many of which seem entirely non-religious. To claim that most Swedes and Scots *believe* (Davie, 1990, 1994, 2002a) is therefore an exaggeration, as it does not take such meanings and interpretations into consideration. In fact, it appears as though one needs to stretch very far from orthodox belief in order to reach the conclusion that nearly all Scots and Swedes in fact *believe*. Furthermore, both qualitative and quantitative data indicated that religion makes a small difference in the lives of many Scots and Swedes. This is in line with secularisation theories (e.g. Bruce, 1996, 2002a; Wilson 1982, 1988) that suggest that secularisation means a declining social significance of religion, rather than atheism.

With a discussion on church attendance, Chapter 6 confirmed the perception that Scotland and Sweden are secularising. Just as described with religious beliefs, relative to Scotland, Sweden is further secularised with few frequent churchgoers. About 1 in 5 Scots claim to attend church at least monthly (SSAS, 2011), a figure that is just over 1 in 20 in Sweden (ISSP, 2008). This may serve as evidence for the idea that Sweden is at a later stage of secularisation. While both nations have seen decreasing levels of church attendance, there seems to have been a later and more drastic decline in Scotland taking place around the mid 20th century, possibly as a result of World War II (Bruce and Glendinning, 2010) and political and cultural changes (such as women's rights, re-housing schemes, and diversification of leisure activities) in the second half of the 20th century (Brown, 1997). In Sweden, on the other hand, church attendance levels were exceptionally low throughout the 20th century, suggesting an earlier initial decline, cautiously dated to the social structural and political changes at the second half of the 19th century (Chapter 2).

In Chapter 7, figures of religious identification and membership once again validated the notion that Scotland and Sweden are secularising. Fewer and fewer Scots and Swedes identify themselves with a religion, and the situation is particularly severe for the national churches. While a majority of Swedes are still members of the Church of Sweden, and as such *belong*, these figures have also seen a steep decline since the disestablishment of the state church in 2000. Nevertheless, levels of identification with the Church of Sweden remained constant between 1998 and 2008. Identification with the Church of Scotland has seen a sharp decline in the last decade going from 35 percent in 1999 to just about 25 percent in 2011 (SSAS, 1999-2011).

Similar patterns were observed on levels of participation in religious life cycle rituals as seen in Chapter 8. In both countries, religious ceremonies are in decline. While the Church of Sweden still has a strong position as a provider of funerals, baptisms, marriage ceremonies, and confirmations, it has, just as seen with membership and identification, seen a steady downturn since 1970 and a more dramatic decline after 2000. In Scotland, 3 out of 5 marriage ceremonies are now non-religious, three times the level of half a century ago (General Register Office for Scotland, 2011). Moreover, the Church of Scotland has experienced a particularly steep decline as a provider of marriage ceremonies.

Evidence presented in this thesis suggests that while Sweden may be further down the path of religious decline, both Scotland and Sweden are indeed secularising. Nevertheless, it is difficult to clearly discern the underlying causes. Both nations are secularising *despite* the fact that, since the Reformation, they have had considerably different experiences of religion as a result of diverse historical, political, and cultural trajectories. This validates the notion of secularising effects of modernity (Chapter 3) and Protestantism (Chapter 2), two aspects that these two nations share. While it is important to bear in mind the different positions of Scotland and Sweden in relation to statehood and the theological differences between Lutheranism and Calvinism, it is plausible that Protestantism *is* a secularising agent (e.g. Anderson, 2006; Llobera, 1994; Marx, 2005; Taylor, 2007; Weber, 1904/2009), that a close connection between church and state makes the church ineffective²¹⁸ (e.g. Iannaccone, 1998; Stark, 1999; Stark and Bainbridge, 1987; Stark and Finke,

²¹⁸ Though, notably, this supposed weakness does not hold in Catholic Europe.

2000), and that modernity *does* bring a decreasing social significance of religion (e.g. Bruce, 1996, 2002a; Wilson 1982, 1988).

However, in the light of the findings, it is clear that even with certain similarities, national context does matter, and that speaking of general characteristics of religion in Europe, Western Europe, Northern Europe, or Protestant Europe only reveals a very limited picture of processes of religious change. While it may be the case that Protestant Europe is, overall, secularising, religious decline has taken different paths in different contexts. This becomes particularly clear when applying Davie's (1990, 1994, 2002a) typology of *believing and belonging* to Scotland and Sweden. Davie (1994:93-94) purposefully avoids conceptualising the terms as she believes it can distort the overall picture. However, breaking the terms down into various measures of belief and belonging and consequently applying them to specific contexts uncovers both inaccuracies and limitations to the typology. Scotland and Sweden are two secularising, Protestant European nations that on measures of *belief* and *belonging* are considerably different. Swedes typically fall into the categories of *belonging without believing* or *believing and belonging*,²¹⁹ while Scots *believe and belong* or *neither believe nor belong* (Chapter 7). In contrast to what Davie argues, this clearly illustrates the value of conceptualising the terms. A thorough examination of measures of religious beliefs and belonging offers an important contribution to the debate on key concepts in the contemporary sociology of religion as it provides a more nuanced and detailed understanding of patterns of religious change.

9.3 Remaining Roles of the Church

In light of the findings that Scotland and Sweden appear to be secularising on multiple accounts, a closer look at the meanings that Scots and Swedes attach to religious belonging revealed how processes of religious change have shaped the contemporary role of national churches in these two nations. Historical, cultural, and political events have intervened to give the Church a place where it has otherwise lost much of its former status. Along with this, Bruce's assertion that "Religion

²¹⁹ As measured by *belief in God or a higher power* and *identification with a religion*

diminishes in social significance... except where it finds work to do other than relating individuals to the supernatural” (2002a:30), rather neatly applies to the Swedish case, but to some extent also to Scotland. Most importantly, this thesis has shown that these enduring functions of the churches differ largely in the two contexts.

Through its close connection to the state for much of its history, the Church of Sweden has maintained a strong position in a secularising society by serving many secular roles on behalf of the state. However, it does so at the cost of relegating the importance of theology and the supernatural. The secular character of the Church of Sweden is likely both a contributor to and a result of the rapid and early secularisation in Sweden. Throughout the 20th century, the Church served a largely non-religious purpose associated with a cultural heritage, welfare, solidarity, and provided a sense of belonging to a wider social group. This is much more limited in Scotland where the Kirk has retained more of its focus on religious doctrine, partially as a result of being able to operate with little influence from a secular state.²²⁰ Additionally, religious diversity has played an important role in shaping religious belonging in today’s Scotland. Historically, the Church of Scotland was not able to unify Scots under one religion, and religious identification was instead often a statement of belonging to an ethnic group or a local community.

Perhaps as a result of a limited understanding of the diverse interpretations of what it means to be a part of a national church, Davie (2002a, 2007) assumes that identification with a church and participation in its rituals generally springs from a religious motivation. Chapter 5 showed that those who identify with the Church of Sweden are largely non-religious particularly in comparison with those who identify with *other religions*. In Scotland, a small majority of individuals who identify with the Church of Scotland claim to be at least *somewhat religious*, which is only slightly lower than for those with *other religions*. Regression modelling revealed a positive relationship between religiosity and identification with the National Church in Scotland, a relationship that was insignificant in Sweden. This clearly suggests that, in line with the concept of *cultural religion* (e.g. Demerath, 2000; Zuckerman, 2008), the Church of Sweden holds a non-religious meaning to the typical Swede, whilst, in

²²⁰ The Church of Scotland has, unlike the Church of Sweden, not been involved in the provision of national welfare as British welfare is governed by the state.

Scotland, there is a closer connection between the Church and its traditional function of relating individuals to a higher power. Furthermore, interview participants in both Scotland and Sweden were under the impression that the national churches themselves are less firm on religious principles than other denominations. This was particularly true in Sweden, where the Church was perceived as having little concern about the beliefs of its adherents.

Along with this, Chapter 6 showed that many Swedes claim to attend church *occasionally* for non-religious reasons, while Scots typically claim to attend either regularly or never. Swedish interview participants expressed that they attended church *occasionally* for non-religious activities, for traditions, and for emotional well-being. This was less common among non-religious Scots, some of whom, nevertheless, attend church occasionally with friends and family. It was argued that, in both Scotland and Sweden, the Church serves a religious purpose for regular participants, an assertion that, for the most part, appeared to hold also for occasional participants in Scotland. On the other hand, occasional participants in Sweden typically attend for non-religious reasons, such as for ceremonies, traditions, or for the atmosphere.

A similar notion was observed in Chapter 7. While Swedes are, relative to Scots, less religious and less active in the Church, a majority of Swedes have a strong connection to the Church through formal membership and identification with the Church of Sweden. For many, this offers a non-religious sense of belonging to a wider culture. In comparison, only about 1 in 4 Scots identify with the Church of Scotland (SSAS, 2011), and less than 1 in 10 are members (Church of Scotland, 2012) of a church that seems to uphold a stronger commitment to religious doctrine. Arguably as a result of different positions and purposes of the national churches in the two nations, Scottish and Swedish interview participants offered different interpretations of the term *Christianity*. Swedish interviewees described Christianity as having an ambiguous association to either a religious or a cultural identity. Scottish interviewees, in turn, perceived the term Christianity as having a religious meaning or a largely non-religious connection to morality.

Chapter 8 examined participation in rituals as a third dimension of religious belonging. Despite secularising trends, the Church of Sweden remains a key provider

of life cycle ceremonies, above all funerals, for the religious and the non-religious alike. Interview participants expressed that a church is a beautiful building, it offers a special sense of occasion, and gives a feeling of belonging to something bigger. Nevertheless, this does not mean that these individuals, or that “something bigger,” are religious. In fact, it is commonplace to marry in the church and ask the minister to remove much of the religious elements in the service. This again shows that the Church of Sweden has a largely secular role in the lives of many non-religious Swedes. By contrast, several Scottish participants expressed that marrying in the Church for non-religious reasons is odd or hypocritical, but that it is nevertheless done occasionally to respect the wishes of family members. However, for Scots, a religious conviction (or a lack thereof) seems to be an important aspect in making a decision among a wider range of alternatives.

This thesis has, as suggested, uncovered diverse *meanings of religious belonging* arguably due to different historical paths of the national churches in Scotland and Sweden. Swedish participants were genuinely surprised to see a church maintain its commitment to religious doctrine while Scots could not wrap their heads around the idea of a non-religious couple that, at their own will, would choose a church wedding. With this in mind, Davie’s (1990, 1994, 2002a) typology of *believing and belonging* also fails to account for these contextual differences in interpretations of religious belonging that have emerged despite the fact that both Scotland and Sweden are increasingly secular, Protestant European, nations. This thesis, again, illustrates just how important context is when attempting to describe and categorise various aspects of religion in seemingly similar nations.

9.4 Limitations and Further Research

Due to the complex nature of religious beliefs and belonging, this thesis draws attention to the importance of a comparative study that picks apart the conventional generalisations of religious change in our contemporary world. This also highlights the strengths of mixed methods research, a valuable methodological approach that is surprisingly underused in the field of sociology of religion. Such a research design also serves to offset several issues with the data. Comprehensive

survey data on religion is limited. This is particularly true for data on life cycle ceremonies, which meant that the conclusions reached on this aspect rest heavily on interview data. Additionally, to my knowledge, there are no comparative national surveys with a large Scottish sample size, since such data is usually collected with Scotland as a smaller sub-sample of the United Kingdom. As a relatively current survey on religion specifically, the ISSP (2008) would have been an ideal dataset for a more direct comparison of the two nations. To compensate for the low Scottish sample in the ISSP (2008), data from the SSAS (2001) (which has an extended module on religion) was emphasised for Scotland. While a newer data set would have been ideal, the larger sample size outweighed the potential issues with using older data. Additionally, newer versions of the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (without extended variables on religion) were used where possible.

This thesis has problematised some often very broad generalisations in the contemporary sociology of religion. While an attempt has been made at describing Swedish and Scottish trends of religion, this thesis does not deny the potential problems of speaking of “a” Swedish or Scottish experience and it by no means assumes that all perspectives and patterns are accounted for. It also does not undermine the value of quantitative research and its ability to generalise to wider population, but it does show the importance of acknowledging contextual differences and applying caution when attempting to describe broader patterns across different populations influenced by diverse cultural, historical, and political trajectories. Similarly the purpose of the in-depth interviews was not to serve as a representative sample of Swedes and Scots, but merely to offer contextualised interpretations of broader trends.

The specific focus of the research comes with a number of limitations that may serve as suggestions for future research. First of all, the key objective of this thesis was to study Sweden and Scotland as case studies from Protestant Europe and as a result, attention was given to how Swedes and Scots relate to respective Protestant national churches and the place of the national churches in the process of religious decline. This thesis does not give a similar attention to how secularisation has affected other religions and their adherents, and there are countless possibilities

for additional research on how Swedish free churches,²²¹ the Catholic and Episcopalian churches of Scotland, and other denominations experience and adapt to religious change. Additionally, only relatively recently married couples were selected for in-depth interviews, many of which shared many characteristics with one another and as such, it is likely that other individuals who did not meet this specific criteria have different thoughts on and experiences of religion. Along with this, most interviews were conducted in a relatively narrow geographical area in each nation. An interview sample where a majority of participants are located in the cities of Edinburgh or Glasgow leaves out the largely different role that the Church may play in the countryside, particularly in the Scottish Highlands. Therefore, additional research that focuses on the importance of local contexts within Scotland and Sweden would be beneficial. Last of all, Sweden and Scotland are just two case studies from Protestant Europe and a broader study of other nations in this region could strengthen the research findings of diverse patterns of secularisations at the national level.

9.5 Concluding Remarks

The results of this thesis indicate that Scotland and Sweden are secularising, but that the two nations have experienced largely different trajectories of secularisation that come with diverse interpretations and experiences of religious beliefs and belonging. In Scotland, the National Church was disestablished almost a century ago, while in Sweden, it happened very recently. It is difficult to predict the particular effect of the disestablishment as an isolated event, especially considering the impact that wider social structural changes have had on religion. Nevertheless, it is likely that, in time, Sweden will resemble Scotland in terms of the availability of alternative ceremonies and the notion that religious belonging is a relatively active choice. Similarly, Scotland is expected to undergo further secularisation, similar to Sweden, leading to a decreasing significance of religion in Scottish society.

While Scots and Swedes may, to an extent, adopt new ways to believe and participate, there is little reason to expect that secularisation will reverse in the long

²²¹ For example, see my study on religious affiliation and trust in the state in the Nordic countries (Kasselstrand and Kandlik Eltanani, 2013)

term. It is also highly likely that the bonds that Swedes, and to some extent Scots, have to their national churches will continue to fade. As Demerath argues, “cultural religion may represent the penultimate stage of religious secularisation – the last loose bond of religious attachment before the ties are let go altogether” (2000:136-137), this suggests that now is the right time to study the connection between religion, state, and culture in Protestant Europe, as, in not too long, this opportunity will vanish. Only time will tell if Demerath (2000) is right in his assertion that a non-religious attachment to a church is the final remnant of religion in a secularising society. Nevertheless, it is clear that all aspects of religion are undergoing profound, irreversible, and contextualised changes in our modern world.

Appendices

Appendix I: Interview Schedules

Interview Schedule Scotland

Thank you both for your willingness to participate. The purpose of this interview is to serve as part of my data for my doctoral research with which I aim to improve the understanding of the connection between religious belief, rituals, and identity in contemporary society. In order to capture everything that we are talking about today, I would like to use a tape recorder if you are both okay with this. Before we start, do you have any questions?

Marriage Ceremony

- First, could you tell me a little bit about your relationship? How did you meet?
- Could you tell me about your decision to get married? How did it happen?
- Could you describe how you went about to choose your venue. How did you come to this decision?
- Could you tell me a bit more about the rest of the planning process and the choices you made? What do you feel influenced your choices?
- Now, could you, with as much details as possible, tell me about your wedding ceremony?
- How did you feel that day? Did everything turn out the way you had hoped?

(Back-up questions: How important was it for you to marry in this specific venue? Was this location equally important to both of you? Did you have an alternative venue in mind? Was it important for you that it was a Church of Sweden/Church of Scotland/civil/humanist ceremony? How much time did you need to plan your wedding? How many people did you invite? How did you choose your dress? Did anyone help you with your wedding planning? Do you feel your choices were traditional or non-traditional and in what ways? How many guests did you have? Who performed the ceremony? How did you “walk down the aisle”? What type of music was played and why? What was said in the ceremony? Did you write your own vows?)

Other Rituals

- First of all, were you two baptised as children?
- Could you describe what baptism means to you? (If they have children:) Did you baptise your children and why did you come to this decision?
- How do you feel about confirmations? What do they mean to you?
- What are your thoughts on what a funeral service is supposed to involve? Can you describe this in detail?

(Back-up questions: What does your extended family think about baptism? What role does the religious aspect play in your thoughts on baptism (and the decision of whether or not to baptise children)? What are your thoughts on alternative naming ceremonies? Were you confirmed and why? Have you attended any confirmations, if yes, can you describe them? Do you feel like it is important to have a Church of Sweden/Church of Scotland funeral? Why or why not? What are your thoughts on civil funerals?)

Religious Background, Affiliation, and Practice

- Could you tell me about your experience with religion in your childhood?
- Do you recall how often you went to a church with your parents? How did you feel about it?
- Which religion, if any, do you identify with today and why?
- Are you a member of a church and why or why not?
- Could you tell me about the last time you went to church? Where did you go and for what reason? How was your experience?
- Could you describe your frequency and reasons for church attendance in the past year? How do you feel about this?

(Back-up questions: As a child, did religion play a big role in your everyday life and in what ways? What did your parents tell you about God? Who do you normally go to church with? Are there any specific services that you prefer? Do you attend because of your faith or for other reason?)

Religious Beliefs

- Could you describe your religious beliefs in as much detail as possible?
- Would you call yourself religious? Why or why not? Could you describe how important your beliefs (or lack thereof) are to you?
- Are you open about your beliefs to others or is it more of a personal matter? Why or why not?
- Do you feel like your religious beliefs correspond to your religious belonging and participation that we discussed earlier? Do you think believing in God and attending church are equally important? Why or why not?

(Back-up questions: Do you believe in God? Are you spiritual? Do you believe in heaven and hell? Do you believe that Jesus was the son of God? Is it important to go to church if you believe in the Christian God? Is it important to believe in the Christian God if you go to Church? How important is it to you that others share your beliefs?)

Religion in the Wider Community

- They sometimes say Scotland is a Protestant nation. What do you think about this?
- What are your thoughts on public school graduations in church? Why?
- What do you think of government-recognised religious holidays, such as Christmas and Easter? Why?
- In relation to other religious denominations, do you feel that church of Scotland/Church of Sweden has a specific role in society? Why or why not?

(Back-up questions: What do you think about “the Christian heritage”? Should we maintain Christian values in society? To what extent? Should we maintain church buildings?)

Do you have anything else to add before we end the interview? Do you have any questions? Thank you so much for participating.

Interview Schedule Sweden

Tack till er båda för att ni ställer upp på den här intervjun. Målet med intervjun är att den ska utgöra en del av min doktorandforskning i sociologi, med vilken jag hoppas kunna förbättra kunskapen om sambandet mellan religiös tro, deltagande och identitet i dagens samhälle. Jag skulle vilja spela in intervjun om det är okej för er? Innan vi börjar, har ni några frågor?

Vigsel

- Berättade lite om ert förhållande. Hur träffades ni?
- Hur bestämde ni er för att gifta er? När var det och hur gick det till?
- Beskriv hur och varför ni valde att gifta er borgerligt/i Svenska Kyrkan och varför valde ni just den kyrkan/lokalen/platsen?
- Berätta om bröllopsplaneringen och alla val ni gjorde.
- Beskriv ert bröllop så detaljerat som möjligt. Hur gick allt till den dagen?
- Hur kändes det den dagen? Gick allt enligt planerna och blev dagen som ni hade hoppats?

(Extrafrågor: Hur viktigt var det för er att gifta er i just den lokalen? Var det lika viktigt för er båda att gifta er just där? Hade ni något alternativ? Var det viktigt att det var ett borgerligt bröllop/bröllop i Svenska Kyrkan? Hur lång tid tog det att planera ert bröllop? Hur många gäster bjöd ni in? Hur valde du klänningen? Hjälpte någon till med bröllopsplaneringen? Tycker ni att era val var traditionella eller ej? Hur många gäster hade ni? Vem var vigselförrättaren? Gick ni in tillsammans? Vilken musik spelades under ceremonin och varför? Vad sades under vigseln? Skrev ni era egna äktenskapslöften?)

Andra Ceremonier

- Döptes ni som barn?
- Vad betyder dop för er? (Om de har barn:) Döpte ni era barn och varför eller varför inte?
- Vad tycker ni om konfirmationer? Vad betyder en konfirmation för er?
- Vad är era tankar kring hur en begravning ska vara? Beskriv gärna så detaljerat som möjligt.

(Extrafrågor: Vad tycker era familjer om dop? Hur spelar er religiösa tro in i ert val att döpa eller inte döpa era barn? Vad tycker ni om alternativa namngivelseceremonier? Konfirmerades ni och varför? Har ni varit på en konfirmation? Om ja, kan ni berätta hur ni upplevde det? Tycker ni att det är viktigt

att ha en begravning i Svenska Kyrkan? Varför? Varför inte? Vad tycker ni om borgerliga begravningar?)

Religiös Bakgrund, Medlemskap och Deltagande

- Beskriv hur ni upplevde religion under er barndom.
- Minns ni hur ofta ni gick till kyrkan med era föräldrar? Hur kändes det?
- Vilken religion, om någon, identifierar ni med idag och varför?
- Är ni medlemmar i Svenska Kyrkan eller något annat religiöst samfund?
- Berätta om senaste gången ni gick till kyrkan. Vilken kyrka gick ni till och varför? Hur var det?
- Beskriv hur ofta ni gått till kyrkan det senaste året. Vad tycker du om det?

(*Extrafrågor:* Som barn, spelade religion en stor roll i er vardag och på vilket sätt? Pratade era föräldrar om gud? Vad sa de? Vem går ni normalt sett till kyrkan med? Är det några särskilda aktiviteter i kyrkan som ni föredrar? Går ni till kyrkan på grund av er tro eller av annan anledning?)

Religiös Tro

- Beskriv er religiösa tro så detaljerat som möjligt.
- Skulle ni kalla er själva religiösa? Varför eller varför inte? Hur viktig är er tro för er?
- När ni pratar med vänner och bekanta, är ni öppna med er tro eller är det mer en privat angelägenhet? Varför?
- Känner ni att er religiösa tro sammanfaller med ert religiösa medlemskap och deltagande som vi pratade om tidigare? Är tro på gud och att gå i kyrkan lika viktigt? Varför?

(*Extrafrågor:* Tror ni på gud? Tror ni på något annat? Tror ni på kristna himlen och helvetet? Tror ni att Jesus var guds son? Är det viktigt att gå till kyrkan om man tror på den kristna guden? Är det viktigt att tro på den kristna guden om du går till kyrkan? Hur viktigt är det för er att andra delar er tro?)

Religion i Dagens Samhälle

- Vissa säger att Sverige är ett kristet land. Vad tycker du om det?
- Vad tycker ni om skolavslutningar i kyrkan? Varför?
- Vad är era tankar kring att staten uppmärksammar vissa kristna högtider så som jul, påsk, pingst och Kristi himmelfärd? Varför?
- I jämförelse med andra religiösa samfund, tycker ni att Svenska Kyrkan har en speciell roll i svenska samhället? Varför eller varför inte?

(*Extrafrågor:* Vad tycker ni om ”det kristna arvet”? Ska vi behålla kristna värderingar i samhället? Ska vi bevara kyrkor (byggnader) som inte används?)

Har ni något mer att tillägga innan vi avslutar intervjun? Har ni några frågor? Tack så mycket för ert deltagande!

Appendix II: Demographic Questions

Demographic Questions Scotland

Date:

Year of birth:

Nationality:

Did either you or your parents grow up in a different country? If yes, which country?

What is your highest level of education?

What is your occupation?

Demographic Questions Sweden

Datum:

Födelseår:

Nationalitet:

Växte du eller dina föräldrar upp i ett annat land? Om ja, vilket land?

Vad är din högsta utbildningsnivå?

Vad har du för yrke?

Appendix III: Interviews and Participants

Interview Participants: Scotland						
Name*	Age	Nationality	Occupation	Wedding Type	Date	Place of Interview
Jessica	25	Scotland	Dance Teacher	Church of Scotland	Aug 28,	Edinburgh
Owen	26	Scotland	Nursery Teacher	Scotland	28,	
					2012	
Joanne	25	Scotland	Lawyer	Humanist	Aug 23,	Edinburgh
Eric	31	Scotland	Asst. Bank Manager		2012	
Katie	28	United States	PhD Student	Humanist	Sept 3,	West Lothian
Matthew	27	Scotland	Forklift Driver		2012	
Sophia	30	Scotland	Nurse	Church of Scotland	Aug 19,	Edinburgh
Thomas	30	Scotland	Computer Analyst	Scotland	2012	
Gill	26	Scotland	Career Advisor	Church of Scotland	Aug 2,	Glasgow
David	26	Scotland	P.E Teacher	Scotland	2012	
Lily	34	Scotland	Full-Time Mum	Church of Scotland	July 5,	Glasgow
James	37	Northern Ireland	Minister	Scotland	2012	

Amy	32	England	Environmental Consultant	Church of Scotland	July 31,	Edinburgh
Keith	37	Scotland	Community Development		2012	
Julie	32	Scotland	Police Officer	Humanist	July	Edinburgh
Brian	35	Scotland	Police Officer		2, 2012	
Pamela	36	Scotland	Optometrist	Church of	May	Edinburgh
Ben	47	Scotland	Property Rentals	Scotland	27, 2012	
Susan	38	Scotland	Lawyer	Humanist	May	Edinburgh
John	38	Scotland	Lawyer		24, 2012	
Sharon	35	Scotland	Chartered Accountant	Church of Scotland	May 21,	Edinburgh
Martin	37	New Zeeland	Draughtsman		2012	
Ellie	29	Ireland	Research Assistant	Civil Ceremony	May 16,	Edinburgh
Henry	29	Scotland	Househusband		2012	
Lucy	34	Scotland	Physiotherapist	Humanist	Apr	Glasgow
Simon	36	Scotland	Police Officer		30, 2012	
Helen	31	Scotland	Archivist	Humanist		

Helen	31	Scotland	Archivist	Humanist	May	Edinburgh
Chris	33	Northern Ireland	Postdoctoral Researcher		2, 2012	
Nicole	46	Scotland	Banking Industry	Church of Scotland	Apr 30, 2012	West Lothian
Samuel	46	Scotland	Trucking Industry			
Olivia	31	Scotland	Photographer	Humanist	May	Edinburgh
Connor	31	Scotland	Architect		14, 2012	
*All names have been altered.						

Interview Participants: Sweden						
Name*	Age	Nationality	Occupation	Wedding Type	Date	Place of Interview
Maria	36	Poland	Chef	Church of	July	Småland
Lars	53	Sweden	Human Resources	Sweden	12, 2012	
Gabriella	32	Sweden	Violin Teacher	Humanist	June	Glasgow
Jonas	33	Sweden	Opera Singer		5, 2012	
Elisabeth	29	Sweden	Teacher	Church of	May	Stockholm
Markus	28	Sweden	Bank Advisor	Sweden	13, 2012	

Malin	32	Sweden	English Teacher	Civil	May	Norrköping
Lucas	35	England	Recruitment Firm	Ceremony	12, 2012	
Petra	27	Sweden	Teacher	Church of Sweden	May 12, 2012	Norrköping
David	26	Sweden	Engineer			
Lydia	29	Sweden	Speech Therapist	Civil Ceremony	May 12, 2012	Norrköping
Noah	24	Sweden	Student			
Rebecka	32	Sweden	Guidance Counsellor	Civil Ceremony	May 11, 2012	Norrköping
Olof	32	Sweden	Principal			
Natalie	48	Sweden	Science Teacher	Church of Sweden	May 10, 2012	Östergötland
Per	40	Sweden	Engineer			
Caroline	42	Germany	Clothing Sales	Church of Sweden	May 10, 2012	Östergötland
Magnus	42	Sweden	Musician			
Birgitta	75	Sweden	Retired Chef	Civil Ceremony	June 17, 2012	Norrköping
Bertil	77	Sweden	Retired Chief of Finance			
Alva	30	Sweden	Teacher	Church of Sweden	June 17, 2012	Norrköping
Victor	30	Sweden	Digital Communication			

Alice	28	Sweden	Librarian	Church of	June	Norrköping
Ludvig	31	Sweden	Office Manager	Sweden	15, 2012	
Ida	35	Sweden	Teacher	Church of	June	Småland
Albin	35	Sweden	Factory Worker	Sweden	15, 2012	
Amanda	34	Sweden	Dietician	Church of	June	Linköping
Isak	32	Sweden	Radio Operator	Sweden	16, 2012	
Elin	43	Sweden	Entrepreneur	Civil	June	Linköping
Axel	49	Sweden	Project Manager	Ceremony	16, 2012	
Filippa	27	Sweden	Nursery Worker	Civil	June	Stockholm
Nils	31	Sweden	Student	Ceremony	14, 2012	
*All names have been altered.						

Appendix IV: Key Survey Questions

International Social Survey Programme

Religious Identification

Swedish: *Tillhör Du själv någon kyrka eller religiös församling?
(Om ja) Vilken kyrka, församling, samfund eller religion är det?*

English: *Do you belong to a church or religious parish?
(If yes) Which church, parish, communion, or religion is it?*

Religious Background

Swedish: *Vilken var din egen religiösa hemvist, om någon, under din uppväxt?*

English: *What religion, if any, were you raised in? Was it Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, some other religion, or no religion?*

Church Attendance

Swedish: *Hur ofta brukar Du delta i gudstjänster eller andra religiösa möten? 1. Aldrig. 2. Mindre än en gång om året. 3. En eller två gånger om året. 4. Flera gånger om året. 5. En eller två gånger i månaden. 6. Två till tre gånger i månaden. 7. Nästan varje vecka. 8. En gång i veckan. 9. Flera gånger i veckan.*

English: *How often do you attend religious services? 1. Never. 2. Less than once a year. 3. Once or twice a year. 4. Several times a year. 5. Once a month. 6. Two or three times a month. 7. Nearly every week. 8. Once a week. 9. Several times a week.*

Past Attendance

Swedish: *Ungefär hur ofta brukade du själv delta i gudstjänster eller andra religiösa sammankomster när du var i elva-tolvårsåldern? 1. Aldrig. 2. Mindre än en gång om året. 3. En eller två gånger om året. 4. Flera gånger om året. 5. En gång i månaden. 6. Två till tre gånger i månaden. 7. Nästan varje vecka. 8. En gång i veckan. 9. Flera gånger i veckan.*

English: *When you were around 11 or 12, how often did you attend religious services then? 1. Never. 2. Less than once a year. 3. About once or twice a year. 4. Several times a year. 5. About once a month. 6. 2-3 times a month. 7. Nearly every week. 8. Every week. 9. Several times a week.*

Belief in God

Swedish: *Vilket av nedanstående påståenden ligger närmast din egen uppfattning om Gud? 1. Jag tror inte på Gud. 2. Jag vet inte om det finns någon Gud och jag tror inte det finns någon möjlighet att ta reda på det. 3. Jag tror inte på en personlig Gud men jag tror på en Högre Makt av något slag. 4. Ibland tror jag på Gud, ibland inte. 5. Även om jag har mina tvivel känner jag att jag tror på Gud. 6. Jag vet att Gud finns och jag har inga tvivel om detta.*

Vilket av följande beskriver bäst vad du tror om Gud? 1. Jag tror inte på Gud och har aldrig gjort det. 2. Numera tror jag inte på Gud men tidigare gjorde jag det. 2. Numera tror jag på Gud men tidigare gjorde jag inte det. 4. Jag tror på Gud och det har jag alltid gjort.

English: *Please indicate which statement below comes closest to expressing what you believe about God. 1. I don't believe in God. 2. I don't know whether there is a God and I don't believe there is a way to find out. 3. I don't believe in a personal God but I do believe in a Higher Power of some kind. 4. While I have doubt, I feel that I do believe in God. 5. I know God exists and I have no doubts about it.*

Which best describes your beliefs about God? 1. I don't believe in God now and I never have. 2. I don't believe in God now, but I used to. 3. I believe in God now but I didn't use to. 4. I believe in God now and I always have.

Religious

Swedish: *Skulle du vilja beskriva dig som... 1. Mycket djupt religiös? 2. Djupt religiös. 3. Ganska religiös? 4. Varken religiös eller icke-religiös? 5. Ganska icke-religiös? 6. Djupt icke-religiös? 7. Mycket djupt icke-religiös?*

English: *Would you describe yourself...extremely religious, very religious, somewhat religious, neither religious nor non-religious, somewhat non-religious, very non-religious, extremely non-religious?*

Spiritual

Swedish: *Vilket av följande beskriver dig bäst? 1. Jag bekänner mig till en religion och betraktar mig som en andlig person intresserad av det heliga eller övernaturliga. 2. Jag bekänner mig till en religion men betraktar mig inte som en andlig person intresserad av det heliga eller övernaturliga. 3. Jag bekänner mig inte till en religion men jag betraktar mig som en andlig person intresserad av det heliga eller övernaturliga. 4. Jag bekänner mig inte till en religion och betraktar mig inte som en andlig person intresserad av det heliga eller övernaturliga.*

English: *What best describes you? 1. I follow a religion and consider myself to be a spiritual person interested in the sacred or the supernatural. 2. I follow a religion, but don't consider myself to be a spiritual person interested in the sacred or the supernatural. 3. I don't follow a religion, but consider myself to be a spiritual person*

interested in the sacred or the supernatural. 4. I don't follow a religion and don't consider myself to be a spiritual person interested in the sacred or the supernatural.

Scottish Social Attitudes Survey

Religious Identification

*Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion?
(If yes) Which?*

Religious Background

In what religion, if any, were you brought up?

Ever Regular Attendance

Apart from such special occasions as weddings, funerals and baptisms and so on, how often nowadays do you attend services or meetings connected with your religion? 1. Once a week or more. 2. Less often but at least once in two weeks. 3. Less often but at least once a month. 4. Less often but at least twice a year. 5. Less often but at least once a year. 6. Less often, never or practically never.

Past Attendance

Has there ever been a period of at least a year or so when you went to religious services or meetings regularly?

Religious or Spiritual

Whether you attend religious services or not, would you say you are religious, spiritual, or neither?

Belief in God

Do you believe in God?

Belief in the Supernatural

Which of the statements comes closest to your beliefs? 1. There is a personal God. 2. There is some sort of spirit or life force. 3. There is something there. 4. I don't really know what to think. 5. I don't really think there is any sort of God, spirit or life force.

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