

FAITH CRISIS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM: THE BIRTH AND EMERGENCE OF A NEW RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

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Abstract : The current crisis of religious faith in the United Kingdom has created many changes within British society. Today, with the additional impacts coming from modernity and the influence of new doctrines, the country is witnessing the birth and emergence of a new religious identity. This new religious community belongs to Christianity but does not follow Christian recommendations. This is what Linda Woodhead calls the “None.” This article focuses on religious change in the United Kingdom and analyses the phenomenon of the emergence of the “None” in British society.

Keywords: Doctrine, Change, Identity, Modernity, Religion

CRISE DE LA FOI AU ROYAUME-UNI : LA NAISSANCE ET L'ÉMERGENCE D'UNE NOUVELLE IDENTITÉ RELIGIEUSE

Résumé : La crise actuelle de la foi religieuse au Royaume-Uni a créé de nombreux changements au sein de la société britannique. Aujourd'hui, avec les impacts supplémentaires émanant de la modernité et de l'influence de nouvelles doctrines, le pays assiste à la naissance et à l'émergence d'une nouvelle identité religieuse. Cette nouvelle communauté religieuse est connue pour son appartenance au christianisme mais au non-respect des exigences Chrétiennes. C'est ce que Linda Woodhead appelle les « None. » Cet article se concentre sur le changement religieux au Royaume-Uni. Elle analyse aussi le phénomène de l'émergence des « None » dans la société britannique.

Keywords: Doctrine, Change, Identity, Modernity, Religion

Introduction

It is generally agreed that if you want to participate in the decline of religion, makes it a personal affair but also if you want to create a new identity, have a different consideration or attitude towards religious recommendation. The word “identity” is a complicated and unclear concept that nonetheless plays a central role in ongoing debates in every subfield such as ethnic, gender, state identities and religion. An identity refers to social category, defined by membership rules, and characteristic attributes, or expected behaviors, or socially distinguishing features that a person takes a special pride in or views as unchangeable but socially consequential. Fearon (1999, p.7) In the later sense, “identity” is a modern formulation of dignity, pride and or honor that implicitly link these to social categories. Thus, “identity” in its present

incarnation has a double sense. It refers at the same time to social categories and to the sources of an individual's self-respect or dignity. There is no necessary linkage between these things. In ordinary language, at least, one can use "identity" to refer to personal characteristics or attributes that cannot naturally be expressed in terms of a social category, and in some contexts certain categories can be described as "identities" even though no one sees them as central to their personal identity. Fearon (1999, p.7) Nonetheless, "identity" in its present incarnation reflects and evokes the idea that social categories are bound up with the bases of an individual's self-respect. The concept of identity preconceives people who perceive themselves as both integrated into certain social environments and distinct from other ones. Through their identification with or separation from specific groups, people cultivate their sense of self and thereby give meaning and purpose to their lives. As this process of identity formation shapes human behavior and action, a detailed examination of its meaning and significance is imperative. Identity refers to how people answer the question, who are you? This question may be posed explicitly or implicitly, at a personal or a collective level, to others or to oneself. In ordinary language, at least, we can use "identity" to refer to personal characteristics or attributes that cannot naturally be expressed in terms of a social category, and in some contexts certain categories can be described as "identities" even though no one sees them as central to their personal identity. Vignoles (2017, p.1)

However, religious identity is a specific type of identity. Particularly, it is the sense of group membership to a religion and the importance of this group membership as it pertains to one's self-concept. Religious identity is not necessarily the same as religiousness or religiosity. Religious identity is the specific position someone has toward a religion. According to many authors such as Linda Woodhead, there are many British people who have a new position different from the ones we used to see in the United Kingdom's past. For example: the "none" community. The religious social change called by many writers as religious faith crisis has created many different changes in British society. The level of attendance at a place of religious worship in Great Britain was far higher than it is now.

This work is an analytical study of the religious social change created by the ongoing faith crisis with the emergence of a new religious identity in the United Kingdom. This study is very important because it details the way religious changes have created the growth of a new community in the United Kingdom. In fact, authors like Lo have sustained that the emergence of this new community is centered on the fact that parents no longer educate their children to know and practice their religion. Almost a third (30%) of Christian parents says that they never read Bible stories to their children. Furthermore 7% do not think that their child, aged over 3, has ever read, seen or heard any Bible stories. In stark contrast, 86% of parents read, listened to or watched Bible stories themselves as a child aged 3 to 16. Lo (1983 p. 274.) Before doing this work, the hypothesis we got was that there is a new religious identity in the British society because of the growth of modernity with the emergence new technologies. To lead this

work, we will use a sociological approach which is essentially practical and expresses the relationship between society as well as its individuals and groups with religion and custom. Kuzubaş (2020 p.451) the plan of the work is structured in two parts: the first one entitled the Religious Changes in the United Kingdom will focus on the Faith Crisis. The second part will underline the historical background and the emergence of religious change in British society and how British people are becoming faithless in religion.

Religious Changes in the United Kingdom

The Religious Faith Crisis

Religious conflict is best described as a more complex phenomenon that engages a combination of contested domains, including power, personality, space or place, and group identity. Mayer (1913 p.3) It is a situation in which religious people are involved in a serious disagreement with one religious group and another. It is a situation in which there are opposition in ideas, opinions, feelings and wishes. However, "Faith Crisis" is a crisis of trust, it is exactly like it sounds. It's a moment in time when you question everything you regarded as truth. It's when a person feels that he or she no longer trusts God. It refers to the point at which a person feels that he or she can no longer serve God or follow religion recommendations. A person going through a crisis of faith is tempted to turn away from all he or she had believed in. Faith crisis in the United Kingdom may be illustrated by the fact that an important part of the population does no longer pay too much attention on religious practices. Faith Crisis is defined as a state of intense emotional and spiritual distress resulting from the discovery of Church history facts that do not align with the traditional. This distress results in members losing faith in some or all foundational truth claims of the Church itself. Clayton (2016 p.6). This phenomenon has now taken a very rapid growth, and it should be seen as a serious problem because, no one can deny the fact that Christianity has been playing an important role in the United Kingdom. If we visit again British history, we can see that religion played a big role for their becoming a big nation.

It is accepted that various social changes associated with industrialization and the rise of liberal democracy, science and technology, have reduced the power, popularity of tradition, culture and religion in the World. Precisely when one dates the start of decline depends on which facets of religiosity one chooses and how one measures them. In the United Kingdom, church attendance has declined steadily since at least 1851, when a government count showed about half the population in church on a particular Sunday. Bruce (2011 p.243) the concept of crisis of faith is most commonly applied to religious beliefs. Since faith is a basic principle of many religious ones in the United Kingdom, the gravity of religious decision is perceived by many to be great enough to describe a period of extreme doubt as a crisis. It can be influenced in the country today by certain decisions or facts such as modernity and religious controversies.

Religious identity : concept and complexity

According to Beverly Daniel, Tatum, the concept of identity is very complex to define because it is shaped by individual characteristics, family dynamics, historical factors, and social and political contexts. Who am I? The answer depends in large part on who the world around me says I am. Who do my parents say I am? Who do my peers say I am? What message is reflected back to me in the faces and voices of my teachers, my neighbours, store clerks? What do I learn from the media about myself? How am I represented in the cultural images around me? Beverly (2000, pp. 9, 14).

Religion has been delineated in many and various ways according to a number of scholars. However, it seems that there is no generally accepted definition of religion taken into account the nature of the discipline, diversity of religions, diversity of religious experiences, and diversity of religious origins, among others. The influence of religion on identity formation might also arise from community influence. Assume that members of a particular community are mostly religious. It would be the case that, most people would adhere to the norms of the community. If it is the case that the norms of the community is binding on most, if not all the members of the community, then, religion might play significant role in identity formation. The strength of the linkage also depends on the period covered. Religion seems to be more forceful in the olden days compared with the modern society. In the past, most societies tend to be deeply religious. This implies that the influence of religion on identity such societies would be strong. Religious identity is part of all of the above types of identity integrated into a socio-cultural context, and it is formed within and at the same time with them.

To speak of religious identity is to refer to a particular way of approaching 'difference'. Religious identity is, above all, a discourse of boundaries, relatedness and otherness, on the one hand, and encompassment and inclusiveness, on the other – and of the powerful forces that are perceived to challenge, contest and preserve these distinctions and unities. In this sense the conjunction of religion and identity is both more, and less, than religion, seen broadly as a world-encompassing way of life relating to the sacred, and identity, as the locus of self and subjectivity. Religious identity may be invoked to explain or legitimise conflicts between and within religious groups. It emerges whenever groups are torn apart by schismatic or sectarian divisions, or engage among themselves in arguments of identity, often passionate and sometimes violent, even where doctrinal differences appear to be minimal.

Werbner (2010, p. 233)

Religious identity is a specific type of identity formation. Particularly, it is the sense of group membership to a religion and the importance of this group membership as it pertains to one's self-concept. Religious identity is not necessarily the same as religiousness or religiosity. Religious identity is the specific position someone has toward a religion. However, according to many published documents, there are many

British people who have a new position different from ones we used to see in the country. For example: the “none” community.

For believers, religious identity marks, above all, the division between human and sacred worlds, person and God, sacred and profane. It conceptualises and embodies cosmologies of difference between the living and the dead. In this respect, religious identity points to the experience of transcendence and divinity both for individuals and collectivises.

The construction and creation of new identities brings to the fore a struggle and a conflict between global, national and religious identities, but also between global and local identities. Many believe that, for example, national identities are at risk of globalization.

It also seems that globalization is what led to the erosion of identities and helped to create 'hybrid' identities. This fight and confrontation highlights the defensive tactics of local identities, which resist global identities. Indeed, it seems that globalization has highlighted the local element of various cultures, with the result that various cultural elements are displayed in a foreign environment.

The New Religious Identity: Historical Background and Emergence

The Historical Background to British Religious Identity

Christianity had long time been the main identity of British people. Hereby birth and emergence of Anglicanism in the British society is a perfect justification of how religion was so important in the past United Kingdom. Christianity was at the center of everything. Today, British society is one of the most secularised in the world and in many surveys determining religious beliefs of the population, secular humanism, and non-affiliation are views shared by large percentages of Britons. However, religion was so much important the country because, the fact that Anglicanism was born in England remains a perfect illustration of the relevance of Christianity in the country. The ongoing of the religious faith crisis in the United Kingdom has created a new identity in British people. Most of the time in the past, British people belonged at least to one religion which was Christianity; divided into two branches after the Reformation: Catholicism and Protestantism.

However, according to Grace Davie, Lucie Lee, Steve Bruce, Linda Woodhead, the British Social Attitude Survey and surveys that had been done in religion field, many British sustain that they belong to the “None «community. Woodhead, 2016. 34) To be clearer, they belong to a new religious identity or have a new position towards religion. In fact, the “None” community doesn’t practice any religion, they do not focus or pay much attention to religion or religious dogma. This adopted position is different from Atheism. The reason is that, Atheism fully rejects religion and its practices. In reality, the “Nones” are rising in Britain in a slow, unplanned and almost unnoticed revolution. It has been happening for a long time, but the tipping point has arrived

only very recently, the point at which a majority of United Kingdom adults described their affiliation as “no religion” rather than “Christian” (Woodhead, 2016. 34).

Religious faith crisis is the inevitable outcome of secularization. A central tenet of this theory is that scientific and technical progress has made the world a rational place, with the expansion of mass education in the twentieth century understood as the major vessel of this process. According to this theory, religion is unscientific and irrational, and, because of the rationalization of society, religion is inevitably called to die out. The idea is that, as British societies have become increasingly rational and secular, people who see the irrationality of religion will not only disaffiliate. Yet, it also opposes religious irrationality, and tries to ban it from society. Rationalization theory thus implies that secularization follows from growing levels of rationalization and this rationalization explains negative attitudes towards religion. In other words, as a consequence of rationalization, non-religious people are anti-religious, always and everywhere.

In fact, the privatization of religion also has consequences for the non-religious and their attitudes towards religion. Applied to the subject at hand, namely the possible incidence of anti-religiosity, this theory leads to the hypothesis that in contexts wherein religion has become privatized, non-religious people will not oppose religion, as there is nothing to oppose, and they will become indifferent. Non-religious people assume that religion is compartmentalized to the religious sphere, and as far as they are concerned, it does not interfere with other institutional spheres, let alone with their lives. It has become irrelevant. S. Bruce (2011, p. 8) even argues:

Privatization of religion leads to a complete ignorance of religion, referring to the situation in the United Kingdom, where religion has become alien to people. Subsequently, only in contexts where religion has public significance and where it influences other institutional spheres (politics, economy or the media), anti-religious attitudes can be expected. The stronger this religious influence in a certain context is, the more reasons the non-religious will have for opposing religion. A second explanation of anti-religiosity focuses on religion’s power to define what is “normal” and what is “deviant” in more and less religious national contexts. Until the 1960s, in all of the Western European countries, being a non-religious was an identity that needed to be defended or at least accounted for. Most Western Europeans were connected to a religious institution of some sort, the church had a major influence on politics and society, and the small numbers of non-religious people were firmly connected to anti-establishment and anti-religious institutions. Being a nonreligious one means to have a different position toward religion which also means to be against religion.

Religion ideally serves several functions. It gives meaning and purpose to life. It also reinforces social unity and stability. By serving as an agent of social control, it promotes psychological and physical well-being. Also noted is that it may motivate people to work for positive social change. Religious identity refers to how individuals develop their personal sense of religious and/or spiritual identity over the course of their lifetimes. Researchers often equate religion with the concrete rituals and behaviors of traditional, established religious institutions, as well as with official

denominational doctrine. Alternatively, spirituality becomes synonymous with one's personal faith and ethical beliefs, including private behaviors such as prayer and personal morality. In the British past, religious identity had become the origin of many changes and conflicts. Everybody knows that the birth of Anglicanism can be seen as the outcome of religious identity conflicts. Catholicism and Anglicanism fought many times in British past and the main cause was centered on the hegemony one specific religious identity. This conflict is the justification of the importance of religious identity in British past.

Prior to the Reformation of the 1530s, the Church in England was under the authority of Rome, with the Pope as head of the English Church. Under the Act of Supremacy 1534, King Henry VIII replaced the Pope as the "Supreme Head" of the church. In 1553, Rome's jurisdiction was temporarily restored under Queen Mary I, but this was reversed after the accession of Queen Elizabeth I in 1558 who became "Supreme Governor" of the church in 1559. The first Elizabethan Archbishop of Canterbury was appointed in December 1559 and has remained the "Primate of all England" (i.e. the first bishop) ever since, except between 1646 and 1660 when episcopacy was abolished by Parliament before being restored by King Charles II. In addition to his primacy in England, the Archbishop of Canterbury is also recognized as the head of the wider Anglican Communion, which includes all churches throughout the world in communion with the Church of England, although he does not exercise direct authority over them. Although the Church of England became the established church through an act of Parliament, it does not mean that it is identified with the State or that it is a department of State operating under a Ministry for Religious Affairs.¹

On the contrary, several different government departments have responsibilities for religious issues. These include the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), established in 2006, which has a Minister for Faith and a Faith Engagement Team as the main point of contact with the government for faith-based organizations. The nature of establishment as such has evolved and weakened over time, but some key features remain. The Sovereign is still the Supreme Governor of the Church of England and must be a member of it. The Sovereign formally appoints all bishops, but in practice the appointments are made by the Crown Nominations Commission and approved by the Prime Minister. Since 2007, the convention has been that the Prime Minister will accept the Commission's recommendation.

The 'None': Emergence of the New Religious Identity in the United Kingdom

The ongoing of the religious faith crisis in the United Kingdom has created a new identity in British people. Most of the time in the past, British people belonged at least to one religion which was Christianity; divided into two branches after the Reformation: Catholicism and Protestantism. However, according to Grace Davie,

¹ <https://www.insightturkey.com/articles/state-and-religion-in-great-britain-constitutional-foundations-religious-minorities-the-law-and-education> Accessed on 24-03-2022

Lucie Lee, Steve Bruce, Linda Woodhead, the British Social Attitude Survey and surveys that had been done in religion field, many British people have the ability to sustain that they belong to “none”. To be clearer, they belong to a new religious or to a new position towards religion.² In fact, the “none” community doesn’t practice any religion, they do not focus or pay much attention on religion religious dogma. In fact, this taken position different from Atheism because, Atheism rejects fully religion and its practices. L. Woodhead (2016, p. 245) posits in illustration:

The “nones” are rising in Britain in a slow, unplanned and almost unnoticed revolution. It has been happening for a long time, but the tipping point came only very recently, the point at which a majority of United Kingdom adults described their affiliation as “no religion” rather than “Christian”.

Basically, two common mistakes are made concerning these attitudes. One is to think that all nonreligious people must be militant atheists, who oppose and reject religion in every way they can. Another is to consider it as a left-over category not worth exploring. This is problematic, as contemporary literature more and more described the non-religious as people with very diverse and meaningful positions vis-à-vis religion. There are people who have no idea about religion, of no affinity with religion and no interest to know more about religion. Then, there are people for whom being non-religious is something meaningful. Again, other people are fascinated by religions without having religious beliefs themselves. A person can also choose to ignore matters of religion and be conscious of the rejection of its demands. This attitude of conscious ignoring matters of religion came close to anti-religiosity. In fact, one of the first to study non-religious people’s attitudes towards religion, indifference and anti-religiosity are almost the same thing. Perhaps this was due to the fact that being indifferent out of ignorance was no option due to the strength of religion in Western cultures. Nowadays, indifference is mostly seen as a different attitude than anti-religiosity.

Nearly six in ten (58%) now say that they have no religion, up 18 points on 1999 when the figure stood at four in ten (40%). Young people are least likely to be religious; three quarters of young people (74% of 18-34s) say they have no religion compared with 34% of those over 65. There has been a fall in religious identity across all age groups; however, it has been slowest among those over 65. There has been an 11-percentage point increase in the proportion of over 65s who say they have no religion between 1999 and 2016 (from 23% to 34%) but in comparison the increase among those aged 50-64 has been 24 percentage points (from 33% to 57%). Most of the decline in religious affiliation over this 17-year period has been felt by the Church of Scotland. Around half as many people (18%) now say they belong to the Church of Scotland as did in 1999 (35%). The proportion of Roman Catholics (10%), other Christian

² In January 2013 the proportion asked who reported ‘no religion’ was 41 per cent (‘no religion’ 37 per cent; ‘Prefer not to say’ 4 per cent). The exact question is: ‘Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion, and if so, to which of these do you belong?’ It is reasonable to assume that those who prefer not to state their religion have ‘no religion’, with the exception of small numbers who do not wish to identify themselves for reasons of historic persecution. Survey sample size 4437 GB adults. Fieldwork 25-30 January 2013. Designed by Woodhead and administered by YouGov. Data and analysis available at <http://faithdebates.org.uk/research/>

affiliations (11%) and non-Christian religious people (2%) in the Scottish population has remained relatively stable over the same period.

(J. Curtice et al., 2019, p. 3)

The secularization literature is a conglomerate of different theories on religious decline, change, resurgence and resilience, and not many of its contributors have concerned themselves with the outcome of secularization: non-religiosity, let alone anti-religiosity. Nevertheless, there are several theories about opposition to religion in secularized context.

Rationalization theory maintains that religious faith crisis is the inevitable outcome of secularization. A central tenet of this theory is that scientific and technical progress has made the world a rational place, with the expansion of mass education in the twentieth century understood as the major vessel of this process. According to this theory, religion is unscientific and irrational. Because of the rationalization of society, religion is inevitably called to die out. The idea is that, as British societies have become increasingly rational and secular; people who see the irrationality of religion will not only disaffiliate, but also oppose religious irrationality, and try to ban it from society. Rationalization theory thus implies that secularization follows from growing levels of rationalization and this rationalization explains negative attitudes towards religion. In other words, as a consequence of rationalization, non-religious people are anti-religious, always and everywhere.

In fact, the privatization of religion also has consequences for the non-religious and their attitudes towards religion. Applied to the subject at hand, namely the possible incidence of anti-religiosity, this idea leads to the hypothesis that in contexts wherein religion has become privatized, non-religious people will not oppose religion, as there is nothing to oppose, and they will become indifferent.

The non-religious assume that religion is compartmentalized to the religious sphere. As far as they are concerned, it does not interfere with other institutional spheres, let alone with their lives. It has become irrelevant. Bruce (Bruce 2011, p. 10) even argues that privatization of religion leads to a complete ignorance of religion, referring to the situation in the United Kingdom, where religion has become alien to people. Subsequently, only in contexts where religion has public significance and where it influences other institutional spheres (politics, economy or the media), anti-religious attitudes can be expected.

The stronger this religious influence in a certain context is, the more reasons the non-religious will have for opposing religion. A second explanation of anti-religiosity focuses on religion's power to define what is "normal" and what is "deviant" in more and less religious national contexts. Until the 1960s, in all of the Western European countries, being a non-religious was an identity that needed to be defended or at least accounted for. Most Western Europeans were connected to a religious institution of some sort, the church had a major influence on politics and society, and the small

numbers of non-religious people were firmly connected to anti-establishment and anti-religious institutions. Being a nonreligious one means to have a different position toward religion which also means to be against religion.

The growth of civil marriages has become the most normal form of marriage solemnization after their introduction in 1836. Today only 30% of marriages in England and Wales are conducted according to religious rites. This rise of “Nones” is set to continue because of the youthful age profile of the nones: the younger you are the more likely you are to be one. As nones age and have children they are likely to pass on their non-religion, with the pool of nones swelling accordingly. By contrast, Christians are more likely to be in the older age range; indeed, the older you are the more likely you are to be a Christian. In that sense Christianity is literally dying out, whereas ‘no religion’ is expanding (L. Woodhead, 2016, p. 247).

It is easy to imagine the rise of ‘no religion’ being driven by personal crises of faith in which adults become disillusioned and abandon their religion, but in fact the rise of ‘no religion’ and the decline of ‘Christian’ have much more to do with transmission from parents to children than with adult (de)conversions. Adults do sometimes change their minds and switch from identifying with a religion to identifying with no religion, or the other way round, but the more important story has to do with children. The massive cultural shift from Christian to non-religious Britain has come about largely because of children ceasing to follow the religious commitments of their parents. Analysis of the British Social Attitudes survey, which asks a question about religion of upbringing, reveals that children brought up Christian have a 45 per cent chance of ending up as ‘nones’, whereas those brought up ‘no religion’ have a 95 per cent probability of retaining that identification. Thus ‘no religion’ is proving ‘sticky’ in a way that Christianity is not. This means that not only are ‘none’ parents more likely to produce ‘none’ children, but that those children will do the same. This ensures the continued growth of ‘no religion’ even if the birth rate is somewhat lower for nones than for religious people. As a result, more and more children are being raised in Britain with little or no first-hand knowledge of Christianity. Currently many will still have Christian grandparents, but in a generation or two that will have ceased to be the case.

(L. Woodhead, 2016, p. 247).

In fact, the birth and rise of a new religious identity in the United Kingdom is justified by the fact that parent who are among the “none” community are transmitting their position toward religion to their sons and so on. Then, being part of the “none” community is just related to someone’s religious identity. All this process is the process of British new religious identity.

Conclusion

To conclude, in the first chapter we talked about religious changes in British society and how the faith crisis is emerging in the country. In the second chapter, we highlighted the historical background of religious identity and the emergence of the new religious identity called the ‘none’. In fact, British people have begun changing the way they thought and their perception of religion since years and it is caused by

many phenomena. With the hegemony of “Reason”, people have started questioning things that had never been questioned before. Among them, religion remains the most sensible one because of its dogmas and its history. However, it is a general truth that reason is still dominating human ways of analyzing and thinking. Modernity has changed mentality, has made culture and tradition disappear and finally, modernity is the main cause of the decline of religiosity in the world in general and in the United Kingdom in particular. The advance of modernity is the main cause of social changes in the world. In fact, these changes are the origin of the birth and emergence of new religious identity in the United Kingdom which Linda Woodhead calls the “None” community. Finally, the quest of new religious identity perfectly defines many British people.

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