Proselytising religions have a long tradition of global orientation. Most of them carry a message meant for humanity in general; an example of this is the early Christian message that there is no distinction between Jew and Greek (Romans 10:12). This idea of a global reach was succinctly reiterated by the founder of the Methodist Church, John Wesley (1703–1791), while he toured England and preached under open sky: “I look upon all the world as my parish” (Curnock, 1909: 218).

In connection with such universal aspirations, missionaries representing Christianity, Islam and Buddhism have contributed significantly, through centuries, to international cultural and commercial exchange. Indeed, religion was part of globalization from its very beginning. The spread of the different religious traditions into new territories meant both peaceful and bloody encounters between groups of different religious traditions, making boundaries between them topical. These boundaries were in some cases congruent with ethnic boundaries. In other cases, however, religious groups became multi-ethnic and ethnic groups divided between different creeds. None of the religious or ethnic boundaries were so rigid, though, as to turn the entities they separated into societal billiard balls.

When the Enlightenment ideas of universal human rights and equality before the law broke through in the West, the traditional boundaries that distinguished one religious group from another were supplemented with a new religious boundary: the boundary between religious and secular positions on politics, society and family life.

The issue of defining the boundary between a religious group and the rest of society is topical, also long after a group is formed (Barker, 2006). Peter Beyer has proposed that for analyses of new and/or marginal religions in modern society both the boundary between different religious groups and the boundary between the religious and the secular are topical (Beyer, 2006: 254–256). I shall also consider these two types of religious boundary in an analysis of some of the changes that international migration—one of the major characteristics
of globalization—has meant for religious boundaries in Europe. Since the late 1960s international migration has resulted in the religious landscape of Europe becoming a complex pattern of ethnic and religious affiliations. Therefore, when discussing globalization and boundaries of religion in Europe, the discussion will invariably include considerations on ethnic boundaries too.

In the first main section of this chapter I show that within many religious groups in Europe new internal boundaries arise along ethnic lines. However, pre-existing, internal boundaries within immigrant religious traditions may also become less important in the new homeland. In this section I further show that some religious groups, which at first consisted mainly of proselytes from the European majority population, have changed their ethnic profile through the immigration of co-believers. This has led to the situation where the religious boundary separating such a minority religious group from the Christian majority has gradually converged with the ethnic boundary separating immigrants from the ethnic majority.

In the second main section, which concerns the legal and political aspects regulating the boundary between religious and secular positions, I exemplify and discuss how this boundary has become a zone of contestation in the wake of globalization and the immigration of particularly Muslims to Europe. In some cases, this contestation has erupted in crises and clashes; because of globalization these crises have not always been confined to the national political arenas but have become international affairs.

The overall scope of this chapter is to show that a complex set of boundaries associated with the different religions in Europe has become more salient with globalization and its companion, increasing international migration. These boundaries run along religious, ethnic and national divides, reflecting that religious diversity is interwoven with cultural diversity in the era of globalization.

Throughout the chapter I illustrate the different points with empirical cases, many of them from Denmark. Denmark is a small European Protestant country, and the cases are representative of Protestant Europe in general, but most of them are not widely known. An exception to this is the well-known incident in 2005 and 2006, where Denmark was at the centre of a conspicuous clash over the boundary between religious and secular positions. I am here referring to the international crisis which followed the publication in a Danish newspaper in 2005