

Idols of Today

Slightly altering Protogoras' dictum reveals the dictum of Individualism: "Self is the measure of all things." Individualism represents the idolization of the self, so that one's self becomes the primary measure of what is perceived to be good, proper, pleasing, essential or desirable. Self becomes the adjudicator between right and wrong, good and evil.

INDIVIDUALISM



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Individualism is a big idol for people, manifesting itself in many ways. Some people think of themselves as "independent thinkers," forgetting that their thought processes flow from a number of factors such as cultural background, education and language. Others think of themselves as "self-made people," forgetting how many factors outside oneself influence whether or not one succeeds. Others show their worship of individualism by their rebellious stance toward authority, not realizing that such a stance simply makes one's self the authority.

Selfishness and self-centredness are common ways this idol shows itself. People who look out for their own needs first – seeking their own pleasure, fulfilling their own desires as if they were needs, always talking about themselves – have succumbed to this idol.

Christians may also follow this idol, foolishly mistaking the voice of self for the voice of God. Many Christians may evaluate churches and leaders by whether they meet their selfish needs. They make themselves the arbiters of whether the message is good or bad, based on their own opinion and preference. Others abandon churches altogether since these churches do not suit their felt needs, personal preferences, or expressed desires. Such Christians seem to think that one should evaluate churches by what one receives instead of by one's opportunities to give and serve.

Jesus' antidote to the idol of individualism was simple: deny your "self", take up your cross and follow Jesus.

Dr Rod Woods, The City Temple, London

SIXTH LAUSANNE INTERNATIONAL RESEARCHERS' CONFERENCE

Researchers' Conferences have been held under the auspices of Lausanne every 3 years for some time. The sixth such Conference was held in Atibaia, a town just outside São Paulo, the 5th largest city in the world (19 million), in Brazil, the 5th largest country. Nearly 50 researchers from 20 nationalities gathered for fellowship, to hear new thoughts on methodology, and focus on key findings relevant to leaders in a wide context. 18 papers were presented, some of which are summarised in this issue of *FutureFirst*. plus two key-note addresses.



A group of listening researchers

Bertil Ekstrom, General Secretary of the Mission's Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance, gave the opening key-note address on "Mission in the Second Decade in the Third Millennium," noting that mission is changing with a fast changing world, taking his definition of mission from Chris Wright's work – the primacy of redemption. He focussed on two key elements – Contextualisation and Risk-taking, which he rephrased as Incarnation and

Obedience. "Mission is not just one aspect of the management of the Kingdom of God," he insisted, "it is the Kingdom of God."

Todd Johnson, Director of the World Christian Database, gave the second key-note address outlining some of the key features and findings of the *Atlas of Global Christianity* and their implications for church and mission. Some of his statements were particularly challenging. "80% of Muslims, Buddhist and Hindus in the world have never met a Christian person," he said. So was the fact that the Global South has 60% of all the Christians but only 17% of Christian resources. While the Global South was growing both in population and the number (and percentage) of Christians, it was often growing with many characteristics of Northern culture. There are now (2010) 45,000 denominations in the world, most of them Protestant.



Dr Todd Johnson using his laptop

Everything was filmed and all presentations are on DVD; purchase details are available from h2oviva@terra.com.br.

P2|FUTUREFIRST|0611

21ST CENTURY EVANGELICALS

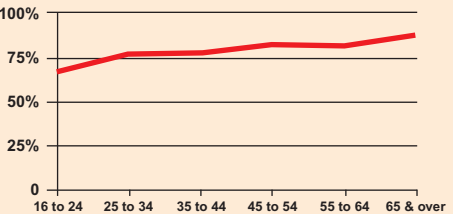
A major study across 88,000 attendees at Christian Conferences such as New Wine, Spring Harvest, Grapevine, Keswick, CLAN (Scotland), ECG (Wales) and New Horizon (NI) yielded some 17,000 responses, and thus a very extensive study. This also included 1,000 forms from congregations in 35 churches in membership with the Evangelical Alliance. Some findings were very common:

- 96% said they attended church at least once a week
- 96% prayed at least a few times per week, and 77% daily
- 94% felt it was a Christian's duty to care for the environment
- 94% agreed that Christians should engage with government
- 93% strongly agreed that the Bible is the inspired word of God
- 91% agreed that Jesus is the only way to God
- 86% voted in the General Election in 2010
- 83% said that spiritual gifts did not come to a end in the first century
- 82% read or listened to the Bible at least a few times every week

Not all who replied were evangelicals, and, significantly, the study showed where evangelicals differed from non-evangelicals. Evangelicals –

- State that faith is the most important thing in their life (88% to 54%)
- Say the Bible is their supreme authority in belief and behaviour (83% to 43%)
- Emphasise evangelism as a Christian duty (71% to 27%)
- Strongly agree that sexual intercourse outside marriage is wrong (62% to 26%)

Percentage of Christians who considered themselves to be Evangelical



The survey also pointed out danger signs. Benita Hewitt, Director of Christian Research, in explaining the results, said that there were some who were evangelical in name but not in practice. In particular, the percentage of Christians who consider themselves evangelical is much lower for younger people than older people as the graph shows. Why? "Younger people may go to an evangelical church but not understand what 'evangelical' means or may not wish to associate themselves with evangelicals," she said. As a consequence the numbers of evangelicals "are going down."

SOURCE: Benita Hewitt, Sixth International Lausanne Researchers Conference, April 2011; 21st Century Evangelicals, Evangelical Alliance and Christian Research, March 2011.

SOURCE: Speaker at the Sixth International Researchers' Conference, Brazil, April 2011.

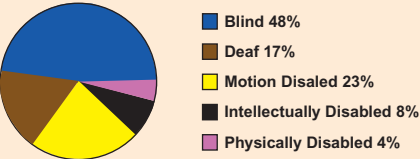
UNREACHED GROUPS

There are many "Unreached People Groups" in Brazil, perhaps two-thirds of which are officially recognised as "indigenous ethnic groups". A detailed survey by Ronald Lidório, of the Christian agency SEPAL, of 340 such groups showed that over half (52%) lived in remote areas, while the other half lived in urban shanty towns. The survey found over 300 churches among them in the remote areas, but only 9 in the urban areas.

Over half of the groups (54%) had a non-Brazilian missionary presence, and 11% were being evangelised by Brazilian churches, leaving a third (35%) with little or no evangelisation, which in this sample was equivalent to over 200,000 people. A lack of locally trained leadership was identified as a key weakness.

Saulo Souza, a full-time volunteer with YWAM, studied Brazilian Census data which showed one person in 7 in the population was disabled, about half of whom were blind as the pie-chart shows. Christian outreach to some of these groups began in the 1980s, especially by the Brazilian Bible Society.

Types of Disabled People in Brazil, 2000



What does this suggest for British church leaders? The importance of using existing data, perhaps government data, to identify unreached groups in the vicinity of their church, and especially their location and problems that may be associated with that area, and then training people for outreach to them.

One London church discovered from Census data that an unusually high proportion of single parents lived nearby. Several from the church called at random on such and asked what needs the church might be able to meet. "Baby-sitting," was a frequent response, so the church set up a group of volunteer baby-sitters, and a fellowship group for lone parents. Several were subsequently converted and joined the church as a consequence.

SOURCE: Ronald Lidório, SEPAL, at the Sixth International Researchers Conference, Brazil, April 2011.

Central Asian Survey

Kazakhstan is a fascinating country. Located in Central Asia, it is a Muslim country with a population of 16 million, divided into some 23 Provinces, and has some 120 distinct People Groups. There are also some 900 churches.



A study using the Natural Church Development survey was undertaken in 2008 in order to provide strategic information for leadership. 62 pastors were interviewed and 15% of the congregations of 77 churches filled in a questionnaire. The task was made more difficult by the fear of Secret Police raids, and that it used a Western methodology. Nevertheless some useful data was obtained:

- Only a quarter (25%) of the congregations were male.
- Only 40% of people welcomed by the church were still present after 12 months.
- While three-quarters (75%) of churchgoers said they knew their spiritual gifts, only two-fifths (40%) actually used them.
- A majority of the churches depended on external overseas sources for at least a quarter of their total finance.
- Many churches provided good "inspirational gatherings."
- Less than a third (30%) of churches were growing. Almost half (47%) were static and the remaining quarter (23%) were declining.
- Growing churches had good community links, strong leadership and a clear evangelism programme.

Some of these results are similar to British churches, especially the characteristics of growing churches.

SOURCE: Dirk Kaiser at the Lausanne International Researchers' Conference, São Paulo, April 2011; dkaiser@mat.org

SNOWFLAKES

Lack of young people. The lack of young people in church is well known, but the church is not alone in failing to attract young people. Few young people are involved or interested, for example, in maintaining steam engines in companies often formed after the Beeching cuts in the 1960s in many parts of Britain. Nearly all those running such enterprises are older people who remember the attractions of travelling by steam.

Philately is another activity short of young people. John Baron, Chair of the Association of British Philatelic Societies, wrote, "There's also a 'support-gap' for 18 to 30 year olds. The hobby provides little assistance or encouragement for this age group. ... Without young collectors, philately will face a challenging future, which could see the demise of stamp collecting in the long-term."

SOURCES: Personal conversation with steam train driver; article "The view from the crossroads", John Baron, British Philatelic Bulletin, Volume 48 Number 6, February 2011, Page 180.

Passwords are part of electronic life. The most common password used is "123456", the second most common is "password", the third is "12345678", the fourth "qwerty" and the fifth "abc123". Now you know! Half (50%) of passwords chosen use a simple key combination or common word. How long does it take a hacker's computer randomly to guess your password? That depends on its length, whether it includes uppercase letters and/or numbers or symbols, as the Table shows:

Time it takes a hacker's computer randomly to guess a password

Length	Lowercase	+ Uppercase	+ Nos & Symbols
6 characters	10 minutes	10 hours	18 days
7 characters	4 hours	23 days	4 years
8 characters	4 days	3 years	463 years
9 characters	4 months	178 years	44,530 years

SOURCE: Bloom berg Business Week, January 31, 2011, Page 36.

Megachurch pressure. Recent research in the United States suggests that churches whose methods are, or churchmanship is, dissimilar to that of nearby megachurches, are largely unaffected by them. However, churches with similar views, such as smaller evangelical churches in the vicinity, often find people are attracted to the bigger church because it provides better teaching and is more efficiently organised. This is especially true if the megachurch is conveniently located to the local freeway or motorway, since people will readily travel, on fast roads, several or even many miles to attend.

SOURCE: Article in ReligionWatch, Nov/Dec 2010, Vol 26, No 1, Page 3.

Britain's Classes. In a poll for the *Independent on Sunday*, a quarter (25%) of British people saw themselves as working class and three-quarters as middle class; no-one saw themselves as upper class. Of the middle-class, 7% thought they were upper

Old Quotes

"He who had always known Him as Father came to address Him as God that we who could only have known Him as God could come to address Him as Father." (Leith Samuel)

"Don't mistake the work of the Lord for the Lord of the work." (Pope John Paul II)

"You have not done enough, you have never done enough, so long as it is still possible that you have something of value to contribute." (Dag Hammarskjöld)

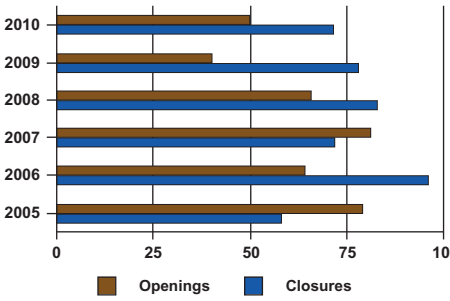
SOURCES: 1) Easter morning sermon 6th April 1969; 2) Unknown; 3) Markings, quoted in Longford, Hodder & Stoughton, 1978, Page 187.

P3|FUTUREFIRST|0611

P4|FUTUREFIRST|0611

Independent Bookshops. At the end of 2010 there were 1,159 independent bookshops in the UK, "indies" as they are often called, which will include some but not all of the country's 400+ Christian bookshops. However, in 2005 there were 1,269 indies. That drop of 110 shops disguises the fact that entrepreneurialism is still very active, as in that period there were 380 new shops opened against 490 closures.

Indie openings and closures, 2005-2010



The chart shows that openings beat closures in 2 years of the six. Why do indies close? The main reason given is internet competition, but being a community centre, especially if the shop also includes a café, seems to augur well for continuing business.

SOURCE: Article by Lisa Campbell in The Bookseller; 11th February 2011, Page 5.

continued from page 1

mean that existing buildings prove unsuitable and that worship will need to develop differently in the various locations, but which takes priority, the church building or the church people? That the number of ministers, especially part-time (and, in some denominations like the Church of England and Orthodox, non-stipendiary), is growing has to be an encouragement also, but may require more versatile means of training than currently available.

The British church is NOT on its "deathbed" but it is changing and traditional practices are changing too. Its future health may well depend to some extent on flexibility and adaptability while never abandoning the patterns of Scripture and never minimising the work of the Holy Spirit.

SOURCE: Church Statistics, edited Peter Brierley, ADBC Publishers, May 2011.

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REFLECTIONS

Sometimes people of exceptional ability are fast-tracked through their training and experiences so that they can achieve their potential at the earliest opportunity. This man had the opposite experience – his training was one of the longest in the world for what was to be a pivotal job in God’s plan. “Your ways are not my ways,” says the Lord.

He had the best academic training the world could supply in the 13th century BC, equivalent today to an Oxbridge degree or a doctorate. Clear thinking and the ability to express himself concisely and lucidly were going to be hugely important in his future role. Then Moses had perhaps 15 years as a young man, a kind of Prince, in Egypt, probably doing a variety of jobs in which he learned to practise teamwork and leadership skills.

However, after making a fatal mistake of expecting people to understand what they hadn’t been told, he had to flee the wrath of Pharaoh, and spent 40 years pasturing sheep. That is a very long time, but while the years as a Prince in Egypt honed his mental and academic skills, the years of exile in the desert were years of character formation and spiritual growth. In God’s economy these were vital years, although literally in the wilderness, developing patience, perseverance, tenacity, endurance and, especially, awareness of God’s presence, His power and His purposes.

Then the time came to put his leadership skills to the fore, his ability to confront authority, the miraculous actions to prove his status as God’s mouth-piece, and putting the exit master plan into operation. He had a natural authority, a close walk with his God, and a unique intimacy with his Lord (to whom else has God revealed His glory as He did in Exodus 33:22?). He was even able to proclaim that “the Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me” (Deut. 18:15).

Moses was a man of huge importance, crucial in God’s salvation plan, endowed with many critical gifts and abilities, a foresight “as though he saw Him who is invisible” (Heb 11:27). and yet with all that knowledge, experience and ability the most humble man then living (Numbers 12:3). The Prophet who was to be like him, born 1300 years later, was also “gentle and humble in heart” (Matt 11:29).

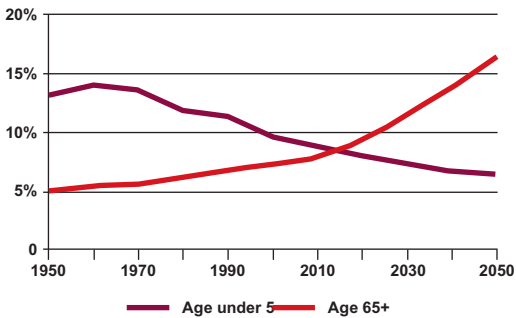
“Jesus is worthy of more glory than Moses, just as the builder of a house has more honour than the house itself” (Heb 3:3). Moses deeply cared for the people of Israel for the 40 years. He led them across the Sinai peninsula just as he had previously the sheep he had shepherded. God’s purposes do not stop there because the Gentiles have yet to be fully gathered in to the people of God – the whole house God plans to build, and over a time-span which our paltry three-score years and ten put into proper perspective.

Perhaps we sometimes or often feel frustrated and discouraged because, in spite of our wholehearted commitment and faith, nothing seems to be happening, either in our ministry or in our personal walk with God. Moses would say: “Be patient, persevere, recognise you are part of God’s wider plan and, in due season, you will receive the promise.”

LIVING LONGER

About a quarter of the world’s population is either under 5 or over 65, a broad proportion which has stayed much the same for the last 60 years and looks set to remain that way for the next 40 years to 2050. However, the proportions of the two groups change in an interesting way, as shown by the graph.

Proportions of world population aged 65 or over and under 5, 1950-2050



Whereas in 1950 there were three times as many children under 5 as there were people over 65 globally, that has changed with child numbers decreasing and elderly numbers increasing. The two will be about the same in 2015, and thereafter there will be more elderly and fewer children.

The elderly are living longer because of better health care and state provision, and with fewer children dying as infants, the general world fertility rate has decreased as women have fewer children (down from

2.6 in 2010 to 2.0 by 2050), and more are going out to work rather than spending time raising families. Hence part of the demographic change reflected in this simple chart is because of improved medical facilities and part because of changing economic circumstances.

When preparing for the Global Forum for Longevity held in March 2011, AXA Insurance undertook a survey asking business people about this change. Two-fifths (39%) saw it as a business opportunity, a fifth (11%) as a risk, and a third (32%) as both an opportunity and a risk. A small percentage (6%) didn’t see it as either and the rest (13%) hadn’t thought about it. For the church, the question is not so much about risk as opportunity, especially among the increasing numbers of those of senior years.

SOURCE: AXA Advertisement, The Economist, 26th March 2011, Page 23, and Economic Intelligence Unit survey, Jan/Feb 2011.



CHRISTIAN BRETHREN

Every few years Partnership, the group of UK churches which were formerly Christian Brethren (Open), undertake a worldwide survey of churches of similarly minded congregations or Assemblies. In 2010 their total globally was over 28,000 congregations with an adult attendance in excess of 2 million, up by a fifth in 5 years. How these figures vary by continent is shown in the Table:

Christian Brethren Worldwide, 2010

Continent	Congregations		Adult attendance		
	Number	% growth	Number	% growth	Per cong.
Africa	9,400	+6	1.04 mn	+36	110
America, South	3,500	+31	0.27 mn	+7	80
Asia	3,800	+10	0.18 mn	+17	50
America, North	5,600	+5	0.30 mn	+8	50
Europe	4,000	0	0.22 mn	+4	60
Oceania	1,100	+13	0.05 mn	+12	50
WORLD	27,400	+8	2.06 mn	+21	80

There is one full-time worker for every 3 congregations on average, and a further worker (like an itinerant Bible teacher) for every 3 full-time workers. As a consequence, most of the growth is lay led and local. The huge increase in Africa’s attendance is due to a doubling of numbers in Angola, perhaps as consequence of the ending of civil war and/or revival. Without Angola, a fifth of total Brethren worldwide, Africa’s percentage increase would be +18% and the world total +13%.

The top three lines in the Table reflect Southern Christianity, and are three-quarters (72%) of global Brethren, but only three-fifths (61%) of total congregations. For every 6 congregations there is an extra preaching point which is included here as a congregation. About two-thirds of the adult attenders (71%) are baptised believers.

SOURCE: The Brethren Movement Worldwide, edited by Ken Newton & Andrew Chan, Partnership, 2011, with data from Dr Neil Summerton.

Fathers

One recent report suggested that 80% of men in the UK watch an average of 2 hours pornography every week. If true, then that is likely to include at least some churchgoing males also. A specifically Christian survey undertaken for Christian Marriage Week in 2011 among a thousand church leaders found 11% of Christian leaders had been unfaithful to their spouses (although more female leaders than male), and half (50%) of leaders aged 25 to 55 had deliberately accessed online porn, rising to two-thirds (65%) of male leaders under 35 but only 12% of female leaders. Quite apart from the impact on the individual, what effect does this have in a person’s family or in their church? (Presumably they keep it as secret as possible to avoid setting an example!).

The National Survey of Sexual Attitudes found that 10% of men in general had had at least two partners in the previous 3 months and (over several years) a very small number had literally had dozens (average was 831), and that was back in 2000; almost certainly the numbers would be higher in 2011. Under age sex and multiple partners are rife among teenagers. The average number of pre-marital sexual partners among Christians sexually active before marriage in 2011 was 3. “Till death us do part” now sounds rather hollow in the light of the decreasing length of marriage (current general average is 11 years) while the easy opt-out of cohabitation is increasing – more than a third of those in their 20s in the UK live with someone to whom they are not married.

All this makes for difficult reading. The impact of pornography has been immense. In 2009 there were 900 billion web accesses worldwide – and there are only 6 billion people on the planet! Half of these were by men and one-sixth by those under 18. A quarter of all web searches are for sex. Is this availability one reason why many young people regard Christian ideals as irrelevant or has the abandonment of Christian ideals opened the door to indulgence in pornography? In an Australian study only 14% thought pre-marital sex wrong in 2009, but churchgoers clearly had a different attitude as 54% of monthly churchgoers thought it wrong.

The challenge to Biblical fatherhood is therefore very high, perhaps too high for some of the 43% figure of men in church attenders recorded in 2005. The Christian teaching on sexual fidelity

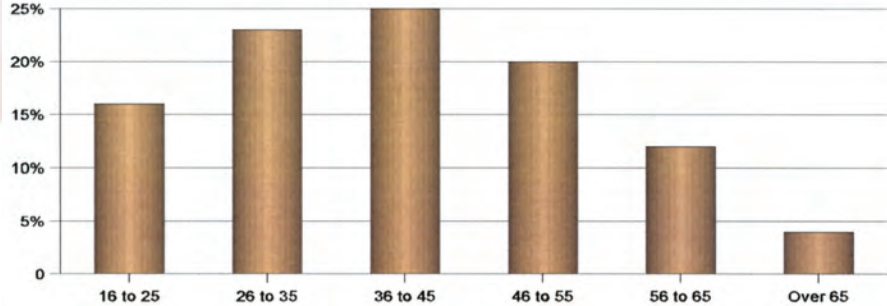
is not being challenged – it’s just that when people find they can’t live up to it, or fail to do so, that they feel hypocritical in coming to church, so stay away. Sometimes forgiveness between partners is required, but sometimes we have to learn to forgive ourselves, which is often very hard. Kent Vicar Eric Delve says, “Men are looking for a heroic figure. That’s why they follow footballers.” He would add that worship needs to stress Jesus more as a hero figure, but also as One who can “deliver us from temptation” and make it possible for them to achieve seemingly impossible standards.



“All my life, I carried a single image of my father,” wrote President Barack Obama, “one that I later tried to take as my own.” Many children are growing up in Britain today without a strong father figure – in a third of households without any father figure. David Cameron blames many of society’s ills on “deadbeat dads.” Father’s Day celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2010, and many would concur with Gordon Brown that “being a father is a man’s most important role.” The concern for the church is how to help this forward.

SOURCES: Article “Holy Matrimony”, Idea magazine, Evangelical Alliance, March/April 2011, Page 19; www.internet-filter-review, accessed 1st May 2010; Pointers, Christian Research Association Bulletin, December 2010, Vol 20, No 4, Page 14; Pulling out of the Noesdive, Christian Research, Eltham, London, 2006; Page 130; article “Dads – what’s your legacy?” in Faith & First, May/June 2011, Page 5; Dressed in Frail, My Father, Barack Obama; article “Developing Dad” by Sarah Womack in Society Now, Summer 2010, Page 22.

Age of Chinese Christians, 2007



extra, section on “The world in 2036,” 25 years ahead. It covers a huge range of material besides that section – looking at key issues by continent, and with special focus on businesses, finance and science.

For anyone wanting up-to-date information at their fingertips, this slim volume does just that. For example, it gives details on 30 different European countries, including growth rate, population and inflation. There is, somewhat naturally, little on church life, but a whole page is devoted to the 400th Anniversary of the AV.

Edited by Daniel Franklin, The Economist Newspaper, London, 2010 160 pages, ISSN 9-770954-307005-01, £5.50

This is the 25th volume in this series, and to mark that achievement this volume has a special,

Quick, easily available information, this is a recommended useful reference tool.

Chinese Christians

The number of Christians in China is open to much debate. The latest edition of *Operation World* puts the number at 105 million or 8% of China’s population in 2010. Tony Lambert of OMF International suggested the total was 75 million, also in 2010. The American *CIA World Factbook* put the total at 36 million in 2009 or 2.7% of the population. The official Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) in China gave the total as 16 million in 2009, but this excludes the many millions in the unregistered Home Church Movement.

In a 2011 article Rodney Stark, a long-time researcher at Baylor University in the United States and Distinguished Professor of the Social Sciences there, suggested a figure of 72 million for 2009 which would be deemed reasonable by most observers. He also reports on a study by Horizon Ltd, China’s largest and most respected research company, of Chinese Christians in 2007, based on a sample of 7,021 very carefully selected people in a strict statistically valid sample of households involving face-to-face interviews.

The study showed that Chinese Christians are split almost equally gender-wise, 48% male to 52% female. As might have been expected, a few, 6%, of Christians were members of the Communist Party, and 10% were part of the Communist Youth League. Almost two-thirds (63%) now lived in a rural area, and over two-thirds (70%) had been brought up in a village. The age of Chinese Christians is shown in the bar chart, very different from the ages of Western Christians, with almost two-thirds (64%) aged between 16 and 45 (in England, that percentage is 35%).

Three-fifths (62%) of Chinese Christians did not attend high school, but a quarter (27%) did. A further 11% attended a College, but only 4% actually graduated. As a corollary to this relatively poor level of schooling, with many

living in rural areas, was the finding that virtually half (48%) of the Christians in this sample were poor (income under £430 per year), a quarter (23%) were slightly better off (with annual income between £430 and 720) and the remaining 29% earned over £720 per annum. This gives an average of £510; those who were members of the Communist Party or Youth League earned on average £560 per annum, 10% more.

Stark says the findings suggest “no demographic limits to continued Christian expansion.” A similar exploration of those who reported they were Buddhist suggests that the number of these is also expanding.

SOURCE: Article “The Religious Awakening in China” in the Review of Religious Research by Prof Rodney Stark and Eric Y Liu, Vol 52, No 3, March 2011, Page 282.



Providing Facts for Forward Planning

SNIPPETS

1) 65% of people in the UK know nothing about the Prodigal Son.

2) An estimated 12 million people in Britain lack functional numeracy or literacy – a fifth of the population!

3) More people committed suicide in Japan in 2010 than the estimated loss of 28,000 people in the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

4) One in five children aged under 5 in the UK has a TV in their bedroom.

5) About 10% of UK church buildings are used as polling stations.

6) Total Subway restaurants worldwide at the end of 2010 was 33,750; the world’s biggest chain, McDonald’s, had 32,750.

7) 15% of the world’s electricity is produced by nuclear power plants.

SOURCES: 1) Quoted in YFC News Spring 2011, Page 3, originally from National Biblical Literacy Survey of 2009; 2) The Week, 9th April, 2011, Page 11; 3) World Prayer News, May/June 2011, Page 2, from Japan Christian Link; 4) The Week, 26th March 2011, Page 19; 5) The National Churches Trust Survey, April 2011, Page 5; 6) Time magazine, 21st March 2011, Page 5; 7) Time magazine 28th February, 2011, Page 44; 8).

Christians Across the UK

The newly released volume *Church Statistics* gives data on church membership for all 300+ denominations in the UK, revising the previously published total figure of 5.79 million to slightly more members (an extra 50,000) at 5.84 million in 2005. This new figure is 12.3% of the UK adult population, but it decreases to 5.51 million in 2010 (or 11.2%) and is likely to be about 5.19 million (or 10.3%) by 2015.

However, while the number of church members is decreasing, the number of churches or congregations is increasing (because of the number of new churches being started), and the number of ministers for those churches is also rising.

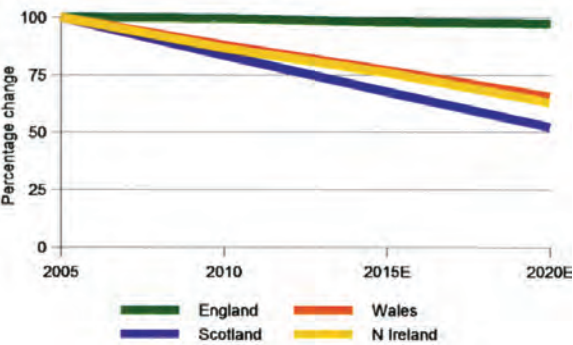
Church Planting

Between 2005 and 2010 nearly 2,700 new congregations have begun. A quarter of these are new Pentecostal churches, often black African churches, but there have been significant numbers of Fresh Expression congregations (about half the total number), and the rest have been (in order) newly started New Churches, Independent and Baptist Churches. On the other side, over 1,400 churches closed. The number of churches in Wales and Scotland fell between 2005 and 2010, and rose by only 60 in N Ireland, so most of the growth has taken place in England.

Church Membership

The graph shows the rate of change in church membership, treating 2005 as 100%. While all four UK countries see decline, that in England is much less, partly because numbers are larger (so it takes a proportionately large number of people to reduce the figure by a significant percentage), but also simply because declining numbers are being offset by the growing new congregations.

Fig 1: Rate of change in church membership within the UK



The difference in the rates of decline is very significant. While in England some of the large denominations like the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church are seeing their numbers fall, they are not doing so to anything like the extent that major denominations are declining in the other countries – the Church of Scotland in Scotland

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CONTENTS

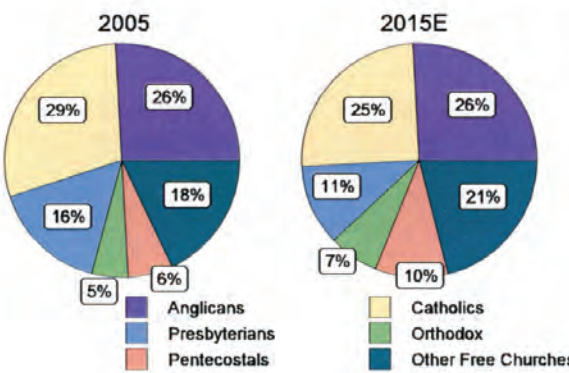
Christians Across the UK	P1
Idols of Today: Individualism	P2
Sixth Lausanne Researchers' Conference	P2
Muslim Believers	P2
21st Century Evangelicals	P3
Unreached Groups	P3
Central Asian Survey	P3
Living Longer	P5
Christian Brethren	P5
Fathers	P6
Chinese Christians	P6

(virtually halving [-48%] in the period 2005 to 2015 if the decline in the first part of this decade is repeated in the second), the Roman Catholic Church in N Ireland [-38%] and the Union of Welsh Independents or Annibynrwy [-34%] in Wales.

While some denominations in England also see catastrophic decline such as the Methodist Church [-41%] or the United Reformed Church [-26%], others are growing and compensating for their drop. Take out the Church of Scotland from Scottish membership figures and the decline 2005 to 2015 is only -9%. Take out the Roman Catholics from N Ireland and their decline is only -6%.

As a consequence of these changes, English church membership moves from being 64% of UK church membership in 2005 to 70% by 2015. If starting new congregations is the major part of the reason why English church membership is virtually holding its own, can such be undertaken in the other countries of the UK? The variation by denomination in the UK is shown in Fig 2.

Fig 2: UK Church Membership by Denomination



Church Ministers

The number of ministers increases from a total of 35,300 in 2005 across the UK to 37,600 by 2015. A similar pattern is followed as with membership – growth in England and decline in the other three countries. The English growth of nearly 2,500 leaders is seen mostly among the Pentecostals (+3,800), New Churches (+600), Independent churches (+300), Baptists (+200), Orthodox and Smaller Denominations (+100 each) offset by losses in the Church of England (-1,600), Roman Catholics (-600), and Methodists and Presbyterians (-200 each). Many of the black Pentecostal pastors are part-time.

So what for the future?

Major institutional loss in N Ireland and Scotland shows no church is ever safe from acute haemorrhage. On the other hand, the many new church plants in small congregations across different denominations shows that growth is possible, or, at least, loss can be contained. It may well

continued on page 4