

IDOLS OF TODAY CELEBRITY

It has become increasingly popular for celebrities to speak out about various political and social causes. That people readily listen to such advice is one clue to how important the idol of celebrity has become.

Many people seem to believe that they would be happy and their life would have meaning if they could only be a celebrity – famous, good looking, and wealthy. If they cannot become a celebrity



themselves, then people will seek to identify with a celebrity by embracing their opinions, practices, or style. This idol will drive many people to seek their “ten minutes of fame” by any means necessary, even those that may be demeaning or illegal.

People seem to believe that if one is famous – on TV, radio, film, etc. – then that person is special and his or her life will drive many meaning and value. One’s source of worth then comes from popularity, publicity or exposure. Although many celebrities testify to the emptiness that comes from celebrity, people still crave celebrity, believing that it brings the good life.

The idol of celebrity has infected the Church as well. Christians tend to give more credence to ministers who have TV programmes, radio broadcasts, books or a large ministry (in terms of numbers and finances). Worship leaders have become the music celebrities of the Christian world, providing worship “concerts”. More and more churches focus on having a young and charismatic (in celebrity terms) person to serve as the “front man” (or woman) of the worship band. When the celebrity preacher or worship leader is absent, then many attenders are absent as well.

In contrast to the idol of celebrity, John the Baptist and Jesus avoided the limelight, choosing seemingly insignificant and out-of-the-way places like Galilee to conduct their ministry. Francis of Assisi eschewed the trappings of wealth and celebrity, challenging those church leaders who instead embraced them. For Jesus, the way of the Kingdom was not the way of celebrity but the way of servanthood.

Dr Rod Woods, The City Temple

Christmas 2011

The Church of England is the only denomination that routinely collects numbers attending Christmas services. Over the last 10 years some 5% of the population has gone to an Anglican church for a Christmas service each year, and this is likely to be the same in 2011. This is about a third of total Christmas attendance over the festival (some 7 million people) – a huge increase (about triple) in the numbers going on an average Sunday.

Since a survey showed that only 12% of British adults know the Christmas story, this suggests that some attenders will not actually know the meaning of Christmas before they go, providing a great opportunity to explain, though some of the 5% will already be regular churchgoers during the year and others will be “regular” Christmas attenders. On the other hand, another survey found that half the population (46%) said that the birth of Jesus was irrelevant to their Christmas, seen mostly as an occasion for children.

ChurchAds.net produces a special advertisement each year to encourage attendance over Christmas – the theme for 2011 being “Christmas starts with Christ,” deliberately aimed at those who consider Christ irrelevant. It shows a very modern manger scene, with a Damian Hurst skull, a Faberge egg and a Swarovski crystal perfume bottle as the presents offered by the wise men.

Last year the Diocese of London used radio adverts to encourage Christmas attendance and found that numbers attending rose from 110,000 in 2009 to 130,000 in 2010.

Presents are always associated with Christmas today, but not all presents are wanted or used. A survey for the British Video Association found that a third (31%) of people get a gadget at Christmas which they never use (mostly because they have no time to do so). In 2010 e-books were a favourite present and, as sales of digital

reading devices have soared in the past few months, e-books are likely to be a favourite again in 2011. A quarter of the population (25%) had downloaded a complete e-book sometime when



asked in February 2011, a percentage bound to be greater now. *The Guinness Book of Records* 2012 is likely to be the best-selling hard cover printed book.

“If there had been three wise women ...

They would have asked for directions

They would have been on time

They would have assisted with the birth

They would have cleaned the stable

They would have brought more practical

gifts (disposable nappies).”

SOURCES: Articles in the *Church Times*, 10th December 2010, *Church of England Newspaper*, 28th January and 16th September, 2011, *The Bookseller*, 20th May 2011 and the *Daily Telegraph* 18th November 2010; email from Anne Coomes.

Transmission of Faith

Professor David Voas has undertaken some significant analysis of congregational research in both the UK and Australia. His focus was to look at the importance of grandparents in the process of faith transmission in families. In 2001, a survey of UK teenagers (those aged 10 to 14) found that 60% of them went to church if their grandparents did, but unfortunately did not analyse this percentage by whether or not their parents were churchgoers.

Do grandparents influence their grandchildren in church attendance or other cultural values? It will obviously depend on the amount and quality of contact. In the very small sample of good kings in the historical books of the Bible, slightly more grandchildren followed their grandparents’ behaviour than their parents’ behaviour.



Is this still true today? Grandparents are living longer so it is much more likely that grandchildren will grow up with living grandparents, and thus have the possibility to be influenced by their values and beliefs, or lack of them.

A large percentage, 93%, of married men attending church have a churchgoing wife, and 70% of churchgoing married women have a husband who attends with them. Churchgoing in a family is thus usually an acceptable arrangement between husband and wife. Parents are hugely important in passing on their religious beliefs and practices to their children. On average, about half of the adult

children of churchgoers attend church (the percentage increases with their age), while relatively few of the adult children of non-churchgoing parents do so. This may reflect the estimate that 74% of people coming to faith do so before they reach 19 years of age, and, assuming that those who come to faith are likely to be regular churchgoers, the habit of churchgoing is thus started when they are pre-adults.

As grandparents tend to be older, many are now single people (usually female) whose partner has died. When they went to church, they invariably went as a couple. The analysis showed that 38% of UK adults were churchgoers if their grandparents attended frequently, and that only 28% if grandparents hardly ever or never attended. Churchgoing adults whose own parents had rarely attended church were more likely to have non-churchgoing children (that is, their children were likely to follow their grandparents’ example not their parents), and vice versa if the grandparents went to church.

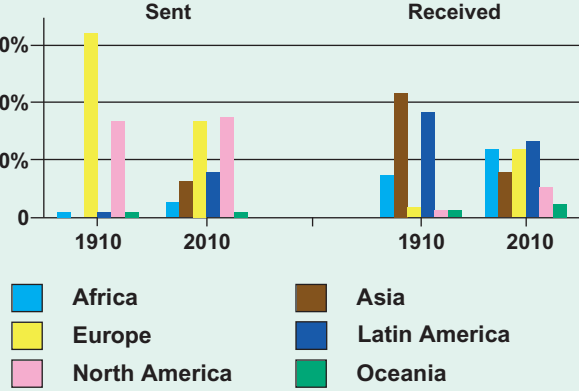
Thus grandparents may positively affect their grandchildren’s churchgoing behaviour, but such influence is mediated through the religiosity of the parents. Churchgoing children are more likely if both parents attended church, rather than just one. An analysis by denomination showed that Baptist parents tended to be more successful than others in raising churchgoing children, but that Methodists and URC were less successful, with

P2|FUTUREFIRST|1211

Mission Workers

The world of mission has changed greatly in the century since the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh. Not least may this be seen in the numbers of mission workers sent out and received by the different continents, shown in the diagram:

Numbers of Mission Workers, Sent and Received, by Continent, 1910 and 2010



The chart shows the increasing numbers and proportions sent out by the non-Western continents (Africa, Asia and Latin America), and a more even spread of receiving countries. The base numbers were 62,000 in 1910 and 400,000 in 2010, a seven-fold increase. A study of Latin American mission workers sent out showed that a third (36%) were Pentecostal and another third (30%) were interdenominational. While half (49%) served in other parts of Latin America, a sixth (17%) went to Europe in what is called “reverse mission”.

An example of how the Asian numbers sent out have increased may be seen from the experience of South Korea. In 1979 they had just 93 mission workers, 10 years later in 1989 they had nearly 1,200, by 1999 they had just over 7,000, and by 2009 18,000 working in 180 countries across the world! That is massive growth, not just in personnel but also in the finance needed to support them. There were also about 180 different agencies contributing in 2009, the largest of which is the Global Mission Society. Most of their workers (90%) are long-term, two-thirds (65%) are ordained.

In the UK, by way of comparison, in 2010 there were 5,500 mission workers sent out operating in about 180 countries across the world from about 160 different agencies. South Korea’s 2010 population was about 46 million compared with the UK’s 62 million; it had about 46,000 churches compared to the UK’s 51,000; but 14% of its population were church members compared with UK’s 9%. Their churches, however, put a central emphasis on proclamation, and supporting their emigrants across the world.

SOURCES: *Atlas of Global Christianity*, edited by Todd Johnson and Kenneth Ross, Edinburgh University Press, 2009; article in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, OMSC, Connecticut, USA, Vol 32, No 2, April 2008, Page 59; *World Churches Handbook*, Lausanne, 1997; Timothy Kiho Park in Chapter 5 and John Guarnieri in Chapter 10 in *Missions from the Majority World*, William Carey Library, Pasadena, USA, 2009.



the Church of England in between. Another study found that first-born children of Baptist ministers were more likely to become adult churchgoers than their younger siblings.

There are many grandparents attending church in England – one estimate is about 750,000 grandparents, almost a quarter of total church attendance!

A separate study, not by Voas, looked at whether Sikh parents passed on their faith to their children, and

SOURCES: Paper “Transmission of Churchgoing from Grandparents to grandchildren in England and Australia” by David Voas and Ingrid Storm, University of Manchester; *Reaching and Keeping Teenagers*, Peter Bre rley, Christian Research, London, 2002; *Married Children: Some indicato rs towards their Adult Faith*, Ken Sykes, November 2000; *Grandparents*, Christian Research, London, 2007.

Passing on the Sikh faith

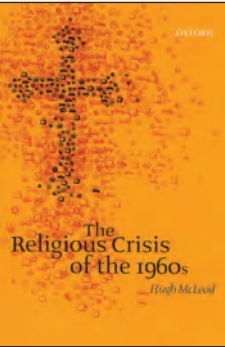
Another study looked at whether Sikh parents passed on their faith to their children, and interviewed 600 young Sikhs (aged 18 to 30). They found that 40% were going to Gurdwaras (the church equivalent) doing so to learn about Sikhism (there is a Sikh course equivalent to Alpha), and to meet friends, and especially to pray. They saw it as a place where they could relax, but few young people were in leadership even though some organised events for this age-range. The best Gurdwaras, attracting most young people, were organised by charismatic individuals. Sikh camps were also run in August, teaching about Sikhism, and providing social interaction. They found that young people were looking for authenticity, and that the summer camps and software linking them with their local Gurdwara leader were essential for this. Can churches learn from their experience?

SOURCES: Jasjit Singh paper “The Transmission of Sikhism to the Next Generation” at Young People and Religion Conference, London, May 2011.

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P3|FUTUREFIRST|1211

BOOK REVIEW



The Religious Crisis of the 1960s

by Hugh McLeod,

published by Oxford University Press, 2010,

ISBN 978-0-19-958202-0, 304 pages, pbk.

Hugh McLeod is Professor of Church History at the University of Birmingham. He sees the 1960s as a decade when church life in the UK changed decisively, from much greater respect for the church and commitment to it before that decade to much less involvement and attendance afterwards.

He differs from others, however, in assigning this change principally to a group of factors rather than a single factor. He suggests four major areas of change coming together were substantially the reasons for the crisis. These were the wide-ranging effects of affluence, impacting both home and neighbourhood life; changes in the areas of gender and sexuality; the impact of new movements and ideals, summarised perhaps by the date “1968”; and the conflicts arising from attempts at church reform and theological modernisation.

Each of these major themes is examined at length, with copious references to other authors and citing relevant statistical evidence. This is a well written and clearly argued book, quoting key studies of religious attitudes among university students (some directly), and suggesting more than one “mood” across the 1960s. He carefully delineates the work of the churches in the 1930s in proposing a number of social changes which ultimately came to fruition 30 or so years later.

While primarily focussed on the UK, the book also takes in changes elsewhere. There is an ample bibliography and a good index. This is an excellent book to understand better what has happened to the church across the 20th century, and how the 1960s were a key hinge in the drastic changes that have occurred.

Established 2009. UK subscriptions £18 per annum; overseas £30 per annum. Make cheque out to ‘Peter Brierley’, or contact for BACS details and send to Brierley Consultancy, The Old Post Office, 1 Thorpe Avenue, Tonbridge, Kent TN10 4PW. Email: peter@brierleyres.com www.brierleyconsultancy.com

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SNOWFLAKES

Amazon’s success. Amazon was literally launched in an American garage in 1995, and by the year 2000 it recorded a loss of £1 billion – “the biggest internet money loser”. Yet, partly by bringing out new products like the Kindle and pioneering cloud computing, it turned that loss around so that by 2010 it was worth £50 billion! Founder Jeff Bezos’ grandfather was a rocket scientist, and his father left his mother when he 18 months old. Bezos never gave up, learned from his mistakes, and took excessive care of detail. He believed he could do it – and he did! What can church people learn from his example?

SOURCE: *Management Today*, October 2011, Page 27.

Extra sex undermines marriage. An American study found that nearly two-thirds of high-school students had had sex by 16, but also found 70% of women and 55% of men wished they had waited. Of women who had had 3 partners before their eventual husband, only two-fifths (39%) were in a stable marriage by their mid-30s. In the UK, half (54%) of students have had sex by 16.

SOURCES: *The Effects of Pornography on Individuals, Marriage, Family and Community*, Dr Patrick Fagan, Family Research Council, Washington, Dec 2009, Page 25; IpsosMori survey for Channel 4, May 2011.

Belief and attendance. As a result of their Communist past, East Germans are much less religious than West Germans, and this has increased over the 17 years 1991 to 2008 as the Table shows. The number who had never attended church was marginally greater in West Germany in 2008 than in 1991, while in East Germany it was marginally less for the same period. The conclusion is that both parts of Germany are “rapidly becoming more secular” according to the Federal Government’s Data Report for 2011.

Country	Status	1991 %	2008 %
West Germany	Non-believers	11	16
East Germany	Non-believers	65	74
West Germany	Never attended church	21	24
East Germany	Never attended church	60	58

SOURCE: Article in *The Tablet* 22nd October 2011, Page 30.

The 7,000,000,000th child was supposedly born in Asia on 31st October 2011. The rate of increase in world population is shown in the Table, where WFR = World Fertility Rate:

World Population	Year reached	Years to reach it	WFR
1,000,000,000	1804	Many!	N/a
2,000,000,000	1927	123	5.0?
3,000,000,000	1960	33	4.8
4,000,000,000	1974	14	4.4
5,000,000,000	1987	13	3.5
6,000,000,000	1999	12	2.7
7,000,000,000	2011	12	2.5
8,000,000,000	2026	15	2.3
9,000,000,000	2045	19	2.0

This Table should also really include, if such were available, world mortality rates since the reduction in these is what has driven the

declining fertility rates – if women know that half their children will no longer die before they are 5 years old, they are prepared to have fewer. Better health is also important in the ageing process so that people are living longer – 11% of the world’s population was over 60 in 2010 and this is expected to double to 22% by 2050.

SOURCES: Article in *The Economist*, 22nd October 2011; *Population Estimates*, UN Population Division, March 2009; *The Aging World* by Anil Bagchi (website).

Bible Translations. At the end of 2011, some 2,500 languages will have a portion of the Bible in their own language, and about a fifth of these a complete Bible. There remain an estimated 2,250 languages in which translation work has yet to begin, covering 350 million people, or 5% of the world’s population. There are about 1,850 languages in which translation work is continuing.

SOURCE: *Bible in Transmission*, Bible Society, Summer/Autumn 2011, Page 23.

Six years on a mobile phone is the average time a person spends in their life-time, based on a survey by the mobile website Recombu.com, or 2 hours 20 minutes a day. One-third (30%) of that time is spent texting, a quarter (24%) spent on social networks (like Facebook or Twitter), a fifth (22%) talking, 7% looking for apps, 6% catching up with celebrity gossip, 6% shopping and 5% visiting dating websites.

SOURCE: Article in the *Daily Telegraph*, 18th October 2011, Page 8.

Loss of virginity. A survey of a randomly chosen 1,000 people found that only 8% were virgins (9% men, 6% women). One fifth (20%) had lost their virginity aged 15 or under, a fifth (19%) aged 16, a quarter (28%) when 17 or 18, and the remaining quarter (25%) when older. On average the men had had 16 partners, women 9. Two-thirds of the men (69%) had had some one night stands, but only half (54%) of the women. Five-sixths (85%) of the men masturbated (average 8 times a month), two-thirds (71%) of the women (average 3 times). Most (90%) of the men had watched porn, but only two-thirds (64%) of the women. 11½% of those over 16 described themselves as gay, lesbian or bisexual. As Rev Rod Woods of the City Temple said, “We are a society saturated with sex,” a disastrous situation likely to incur divine judgement.

SOURCES: Channel 4 survey by IpsosMORI, May 2011; Office for National Statistics, *The Week*, 8th October 2011.

Smaller churches help most. Adults in churches with 50 or fewer people give on average 21½ hours a month in helping their local community, while adults in churches with between 51 and 150 people give only one hour a month, and those in churches with more than 150 provide only 40 minutes on average. The larger the church, the greater the number of passengers. However, the larger the church, the greater collective total number of hours contributed. The range of ways in which people helped was very wide, from Mothers and Toddlers (the most popular) to debt counselling, parenting help, senior citizens’ lunch clubs and street patrols. The total annual value estimated from such contributions averaged over £6,000 per church, ranging from £4,000 for the smallest churches to £30,000 for the largest.

SOURCE: The Cinnamon Network commissioned TCN research in *Quadrant*, September 2011.

All Blacks’ Victory. No other international sports team has won so many games – in 107 years of test match rugby, the New Zealand All Blacks have won 75% of their games, including the 2011 World Championship. How do they

do it? John Bull interviewed key coaches, and Mark Campbell toured with the team, and they concluded there were five key ingredients for creating a culture of high performance:

- Engage people behind a great cause or challenge
- Set very high standards in key areas of performance
- Grow responsibility and leadership at all levels (including giving people the freedom to act on their initiative)
- Give high quality feedback to support improvement
- Build commitment to a common cause (“team before ego”).

How much would these be applicable in your church?

SOURCE: Article in *Management Futures*, www.managementfutures.co.uk, downloaded 2nd October, 2011.

Belief in God. The latest British Social Attitudes study shows that belief in God in Great Britain is not as strong as it was. The Table gives the percentages for the three-quarters of the sample (77%) who felt they could answer the question. The jump from 1998 to 2008 in “never have believed” seems too high to be credible given the earlier figures.

Statement	1991 %	1998 %	2008 %
Believe in God	69	68	54
No longer believe in God	16	15	20
Never have believed in God	15	17	26
Base (=100%)	1,222	815	1,975

SOURCE: *Religion or Belief*, Briefing Paper 1, David Perfect, Equality and Human Rights Commission, Manchester, 2011, Table 11.

William Booth’s Prophecy. The founder of the Salvation Army made the following prophecy for the 21st century:

- Religion without the Holy Spirit (that is, tradition without power).
- Christianity without Christ.
- Forgiveness without Repentance.
- Salvation without Regeneration – going to church but not being “born again”.
- Politics without God.
- Heaven without Hell.

SOURCE: Handout at The Church at Prayer Conference, 8th July 2009.

The Stresses of Life. According to American research, adults find themselves most stressed and least happy in their lives when they are in their late 40s and early 50s, the so-called “mid-life crisis”. Partly this is due to circumstances as well as personal psychology. Married people are happier than unmarried, but being married does not compensate for being unemployed. People with children in the house are less happy than those without. People with more education are happier – but only because they earn more. The happiest people are those in their 70s and 80s, reminiscent of Shakespeare’s “Seven Ages of Man”. Women are slightly happier than men, on average. Extraverts are usually happier than introverts. Unfortunately the study did not ask about religion. Does faith balance out circumstances, personality or age?

SOURCE: Article “The U-bend of life” in *The Economist*, 18th December 2010.

P4|FUTUREFIRST|1211



REFLECTIONS

King Josiah played a critical part in the final 56 years of the Kingdom of Judah. He was the last “good” King who followed the Lord wholeheartedly, and all the more so when, at age 26, a major discovery was made by Hilkiah, the High Priest at the time.

In the process of sorting out the Temple money for repairs, the priests found an ancient document, probably a copy of the book of Deuteronomy. The High Priest realised its huge importance; the King was informed and asked for it to be read to him.

Josiah understood the significance of what he heard. He immediately sent to the prophetess Huldah, who re-inforced what the scroll said about punishment for breaking God’s law, but told Josiah it wouldn’t happen while he was King, because of his penitence and humility.

Josiah then instigated a drastic programme of reform, and a demolition of all that his evil father had built. He destroyed Baal vessels, Asherah statues, prostitutes’ houses, poles and pillars, high places, roof altars, worship places at city gates, Jeroboam’s altar and other shrines in Samaria, the temples of Solomon’s wife’s and so on. He eliminated the idolatrous and foreign priests and horses dedicated to the sun. He prohibited child sacrifices and mediums and wizards.

This was as thorough a programme as anyone could wish, extending beyond his own territory of Judah. Having set his eyes on reform, he kept to it for probably several years. While the above is negative, there were two positives: he celebrated the Passover properly, for the first time in probably 400 years, and established the words of the Law.

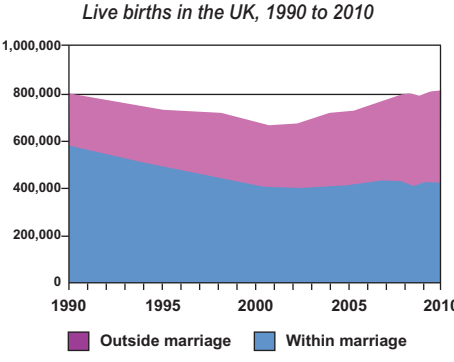
As a result of all this, Josiah obtained the highest commendation possible: “‘Before him there was no king like him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him.” (2 Kings 23:25)

Why is King Josiah important for us? He is an example of total commitment to the Lord, heart, soul and mind. He did what he felt was his duty as thoroughly, diligently and efficiently as he was able. He went beyond his expected brief, trying to help those outside his direct responsibility. He gave time and energy to his task, and inspired others to do the same. He was a man of integrity, transparent in his reasons for actions taken. His inspiration was the message of the Scriptures, and his reaction was immediate. His influence was real, and it lasted while he was alive, but he was unable to change Judah’s culture of false worship beyond his own reign. He had no regard to his personal popularity during his purges. He hated evil and looked for its elimination. He had a passion for his nation to return to God.

SCHOOL NUMBERS

There are some 17,400 Primary Schools in England, 36% of which are Church Schools, the large majority Church of England. In addition there are 3,400 Secondary Schools, 17% of which are Church Schools, the majority Roman Catholic. There are also another 4,000 Independent, Special or Nursery Schools. Primary Schools accounted for 4 million children in 2010, Secondary Schools 3.3 million and Independents etc another 0.7 million, a total of 8 million, 83% of children aged 3 to 18.

Total numbers of pupils increase or decrease according to the number of children being born, which is usually measured by the fertility rate. Currently that is 2.0 children per woman aged 15 to 44, slightly less than the replacement level of 2.1, but much higher in 2010 than the 1.6 it was in 2000. More children are currently being born year by year, as the graph shows (with a very small dip in 2009):



The graph shows a declining number of births from the peak in 1990 (799,000), itself a reflection of the previous “boom” in the 1960s, and an increasing number of births since 2002, partly due to the births from immigrants (where the fertility rate is 2.5 against native women’s rate of 1.9), and partly because more women are having babies in their late 30s and early 40s. Whether 2010 will turn out to be a peak year (807,000) or just a step in an increasing number is impossible to predict though economic hardship and increasing immigration control may suggest the former rather than the latter.

The graph also clearly shows the increasing proportion of babies born outside marriage, from 28% in 1990 to 40% in 2000 to 47% in 2010, almost half of all births (47% in England, 58% in Wales, 50% in Scotland and 51% in N Ireland, the English percentage being lower largely again because of the births to immigrants, which are mostly within marriage).

More babies means, in 5 years time, more Primary School places, and, in 11 years time, more Secondary School places. So forecasting these numbers, and measuring the fertility rate, is very important both nationally and regionally. The trend is important for

These may be helpful

Books and reports received

Halfway to Heaven: Four Types of Fuzzy Fidelity in Europe, Ingrid Storm, University of Manchester.

Not in Education, Employment or Training Statistics, Department of Education, every quarter.

Adoptions in England and Wales, annually from Office for National Statistics.

Christian Youth Work: Service to Church or Community?. Naomi Stanton, Open University.

Odd English

No word in the English language rhymes with month, orange or silver.

“Dreamt” is the only English word that ends in the letters “mt”.

“Typewriter” is the longest word that can be made using the letters of only one row of the keyboard.

Only two words in English have all five vowels in order – abstemious and facetious.

SOURCE: Email from David Longley, 10th June 2011.

P5|FUTUREFIRST|12|11

Church Magazines

Probably there are few people who collect church magazines, but Gordon Neal has amassed an amazing collection of nearly 5,000 issues, mostly from the UK but including 50+ from outside. Since 2001 he has also been collecting Church Newsheets, but has far fewer of these. 100 of his magazines date back to the 19th century, a quarter to the last quarter of the 20th century, with more than half from the 21st century.

Naturally he has a series of copies from some churches, while just one from others. Altogether he has collected 4,695 magazines and newsletters from about 630 different churches. He has analysed their characteristics:

- Just over one in 20, 6%, are in colour

- Nearly three-quarters, 72%, are A5 size

- One-fifth, 19%, are in old paper sizes like foolscap and quarto

- Just 9% are A4 in size

- Three-fifths (59%) are Anglican, but whether this is truly representational is not known (only 40% of English churches are Church of England)

- A further fifth (21%) are Baptist, and the rest come from many denominations, but very few from New, Orthodox or Pentecostal churches.

Two-thirds (65%) come from heavily urban areas (West Midlands, Manchester and London). As urban churches are generally larger than rural churches, is the dominance of urban sources because larger churches have more resources (finance and personnel) or because the “market” for distributing the magazine is greater closer to hand?

Most interestingly, however, is his analysis of their content. Based on a small sample of the total magazines held, two-fifths (39%) are items involving both the Church and the local community, such as social outreach, fund-raising events, mission, and so on. A quarter (27%) are purely Church-centred items, and about half as much (13%) are just community items. The remaining fifth is mostly advertisements (16%), items about individual people (3%) or general interest items, such as science or technology, and puzzles.

Only about a sixth (16%) of his sample had insets, suggesting perhaps that many more use the services of agencies like Parish Pump which produces suitable items each month, downloadable for a subscription.

Is this an area of opportunity which churches could use more imaginatively? The Parish Church of Tonbridge, a benefice comprising four churches, has started producing an A4 colour magazine called Perspectives which is distributed throughout the parish. A letter from the Vicar asked people if they would like to take it regularly (and pay for it if able). Many did even though they may not be connected to their local church – or any church!

Religious Spirituality

Many people are unclear about what the words “religiousness” and “spirituality” mean. The Australian 2009 Social Survey, asking people if they were religious or spiritual, gave very similar results to a 2010 survey of English students (reported in the April 2011 issue of *FutureFirst*) – nearly half (47%) say they are spiritual and a smaller percentage (39%) say they are religious, with only 18% claiming to be both, and a third (32%) saying they are neither.

Spirituality

From these surveys, spirituality is seen as something people control or shape for themselves rather than it being shaped by a religious organisation. Spirituality is somehow about “inner being” rather than community or society, and is expressed by “buying” resources (like a meditation course or going on a pilgrimage or yoga classes). The World Values Study suggests that spirituality is higher in Catholic and Orthodox countries, and is thus more to do with a belief in the spirit world, such as angels, or saints.

Spirituality differs from religiousness in that, if a person feels they are spiritual, they will still continue to feel that as they get older, whereas those who say they religious are more likely to stop calling themselves that as they get older, despite the fact that people have more confidence in religious institutions as they age. Typically they might say, “I’m not religious (that is, I don’t go to church or read the Bible) but I do believe in God and pray when I’m in trouble.”

Religiousness

Why do people become less religious? Is it because they are less involved with communities of faith? A loss of faith in God? Is it because religion is seen more as a choice, such as which sport shall I play? Does “God” figure less in people’s view of the world? Could it be because religion is often “debunked” in schools and early independence encourages young people to discard the “old-fashioned, out of date” views of their parents whether on religion or any other topic?

All these ideas have been suggested, and others add that the recent Arab Spring is not primarily religious, even if spirituality plays a part. Is spirituality a kind of modern take on nationality? Could being religious be seen as much more personal, while being spiritual is more corporate (in contrast to the above definition)? If so, is this partly because of the spread of neo-Pentecostalism and evangelicalism which have embraced religion in a highly personal way (so David Martin)?

Involvement with a religious person such as one’s parents may well be the prelude to engagement. Some have suggested that Methodist decline is partly because they expected parents to pass on the faith to their children and that hasn’t happened. Denominations taking a more individual approach, like the Pentecostals, are growing. In other words, being “religious” implies experience, perhaps an external authority, a relationship with, say, the Bible.

Christian students

A study of Christian students found they are more likely to use the word “spiritual” to describe themselves (66%), rather than “religious” (47%), but with a third (31%) saying they are both, and 18% saying they are neither. When asked if they had become more religious since coming to University, 10% said they had, 75% said they had stayed the same, 12% said it was less, and 3% weren’t sure.



However, being a “Christian” was seen as a floating signifier of something, unattached to any specific institutional entity. It was associated more with patterns of behaviour. Being “evangelical” was less important as a centre of identity but more as a set of reference points helping to guide their University experience of life. The label is disliked, but not necessarily the beliefs the label implies (even if these are not always agreed).

Other key issues for young people such as global warming, poverty, the sustainability of the economic system, lack of food, energy and so on are largely viewed outside a person’s religion or religiousness, and it is this separation of religion from life, as if it were simply another issue to be tackled, that is perhaps the most worrying feature of the complexity of spirituality and religiousness. Commitment to a Person is far removed from acceptance of ideals as behavioural patterns to be followed.

SOURCES: Speakers at the Sixth International Researchers Conference, Brazil, April 2011, especially Rev Dr Philip Hughes; *On Secularisation: Towards a Revised General Theory*, Prof David Martin; speakers at the Young People and Religion Conference, Religion and Society, King’s College, London, 18th May 2011, especially Dr Mathew Guest with “Religion and University Students”.

P6|FUTUREFIRST|12|11



Providing Facts for Forward Planning

SNIPPETS

1) Only 4% of the

Christmas cards sold in 2011 will contain a Christian message.

2) 88% of British adults do not know the details of the Christmas story.

3) Half of the countries of the world are at or below replacement-level fertility.

4) “We now produce the same information in a single week as we did in the whole of 2002,” Dame Lynne Brindley, CEO of the British Library.

5) 70% of books in the average household remain unopened.

6) Tokyo, the world’s largest city in 2010, had then a population of 37 million. The second largest, Delhi, had 22 million people.

7) One in 7 English churchgoers in 2010 went to a church where the total congregation was 500 or larger.

SOURCES: 1) and 2) Article in the *Church of England Newspaper* 30th September, 2011 by Francis Goodwin, ChurchAds.net; 3) “Country Comparison: Total Fertility Rate”, CIA World Factbook 2010, quoted in *Unnatural Selection*, Mara Hvistendahl, Public Affairs, New York, 2011, Page 257; 4) Article in *Management Today*, October 2011, Page 54; 5) Article in the *Daily Telegraph*, 7th October, 2011, Page 13; 6) *The Economist*, 19th February 2011, Page 19; 7) *Religious Trends* No 5, 2005/2006, Christian Research, Eltham, London, Table 8.12.3.

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CONTENTS

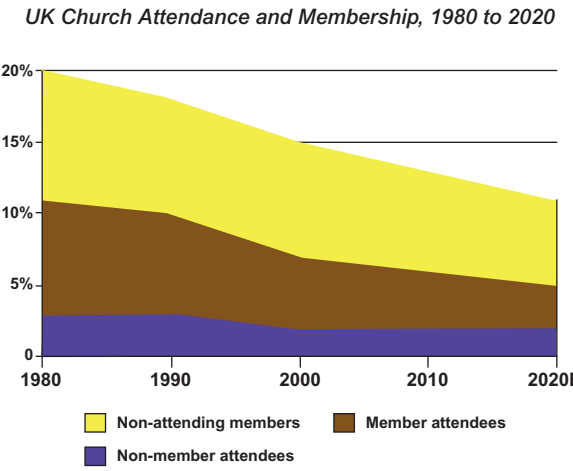
A White Ace of Spades?	P1
Christmas 2011	P2
Transmission of Faith	P2
Mission Workers	P3
Passing on the Sikh faith	P3
Reflections	P5
School Numbers	P5
These may be helpful	P5
Church Magazine	P6
Religious Spirituality	P6

A White Ace of Spades?

The latest British Social Attitudes Survey (BSA) suggests that only 54% of British people believe in God, a rather low percentage given that the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in their initial Integrated Household Survey indicated that 71% still called themselves Christian in 2010, which is marginally down from the 72% in the 2001 Population Census. The BSA percentage of those who have stopped believing in God has increased 4% in the last decade to 20% in 2008, which suggests the ONS percentage might, after all, be reasonable, as some would say you can be a cultural Christian without a personal faith in God.

A whole range of words can be used to describe those holding these different positions. Professor David Voas has introduced the term “fuzzy” Christians, while others use the longer-serving terminology of “nominal” and “notional” Christians. The latest membership figures, culled across all 340 denominations in the country, published in *UK Church Statistics*, indicate that 11% of the adult population were church members in 2010, down from 13% in 2000, and likely to become just 9% by 2020. There is no questioning the evidence of decline.

Christian people may be divided into two broad groups – those who regularly attend church and those who don’t. In this context “regular” means at least once a month, which the 2005 English Church Census put at 7.3% of the population. Those who attend regularly can also be broken down into two groups – those who are also church members and those who are not. The graph shows the proportion in these two groups, and those who are “nominal”, defined here as “a church member who rarely attends”, perhaps doing so just at Christmas.



Demographic information about church members (as opposed to church attenders) is scarce, and broadly confined to a study by the Church of England of its Electoral Roll members which found the majority were elderly. Many of these are in the “nominal” category. It seems to be an observable fact that younger people attending church are

often quite happy to do so, while being reluctant to take on membership with its implications of further commitment.

The graph shows that membership (the top two strands) is clearly declining, as already stated, halving from 17% in 1980 to the projected 9% in 2020. It also shows the decline in attendance (the bottom two strands), likewise halving from 11% in 1980 to a projected 5% by 2020. The category which can be seen in the graph to decline most rapidly is the middle strand – those who are both members and regular attenders – going from 8% in 1980 to a projected 3% by 2020, dropping by two-thirds.

Is this decline simply due to ageing and the inability to attend as often as previously? It may be – part of the reason for the popularity of *Songs of Praise*, just celebrating its 50 years as a TV programme, is that literally millions who watch it are over 65 (as measured by the BBC). Some of these will be house-bound, or in sheltered accommodation, or dependent on transport to get to church.

On the other hand, some would say that regularly attending members are the most committed members of their congregation. An important survey carried out by the big Willow Creek Church in Chicago a few years ago found that it was among this group that tiredness and boredom with church attendance were often strong. The pillars of the church are tired of being pillars! The warnings in Hebrews about the importance of “going on” in the Christian life indicates this is not a new problem, though probably in many cases such tiredness and boredom can be justified.

There is one other facet to the above analysis which is also interesting. The percentage of the population who would call themselves “Christian” was estimated at 77% in 1980, declining to a projected 68% by 2020. If one excludes from these percentages those who regularly attend church and those who are church members, one gets a percentage of people who might be termed “Notional Christians”, who could be defined as “those who call themselves Christian but who never attend church, are not church members and do not necessarily make any effort to follow the Christian ethic.” This percentage was 57% of the population in 1980 and has remained unchanged since, still being 57% when projected to 2020.

If almost three-fifths of the population say they are Christian without attending or joining a church, how do we reach them? Many will say they are Christian because they live in a “Christian” country and are not Muslims, Buddhists or Hindus. Many will be unaware of what a Christian really is and will be ignorant of even the basic facts of the gospel and the Scriptures. Only 12% of British adults knew the meaning of Christmas! Are they just white Aces of Spades, simply not the real thing, needing to be reached for Christ just as urgently as total unbelievers?

SOURCES: *Religious Trends* No 1, 1998/1999, Christian Research, 1997. *UK Church Statistics*, ADEC Publishers, June 2011; Reveal where are you?, Greg Hawkins and Cally Parkinson, Willow Creek Resources, 2007; *Religion or Belief*, Briefing Paper 1, David Perfect, Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2011.