

EUROPE IS GREYING

Demographically, Europe has problems! Mr Jérôme Vignon, Director of the European Commission's Directorate for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities wrote in an article: "The European Union is facing unprecedented demographic changes that will have a major impact on the whole of society. The issues are much broader than older workers and pension reforms ... (and) will affect almost every aspect of our lives."

Fertility Rate

The universal measure of population replacement level is 2.1 children per woman on average, easily calculated by dividing the number of births by the number of women aged 15 to 44 (roughly

the years 2005, 2025 and 2050, calculated with the same percentage breakpoints in each map. They show a rapidly ageing continent.

Immigration

In practice populations will be augmented by an influx of migrants. Some will come from Christian countries, some from Muslim, some from other lands. Some will come deliberately to evangelise their country of adoption (what is called "reverse" mission). The 2010 edition of *Operation World* will estimate there are 1,500 "reverse Christian missionaries" in the UK in 2008 from 50 countries. Some of these "reverse mission" efforts at church planting are very successful. For example, the Redeemed Christian Church of God is now the third largest Pentecostal denomination in

attendance from a global perspective outside such recent studies as the World Values' Survey and the European Social Survey. Europe has the lowest percentage saying they attend a religious service at least once a month among both those aged 18 to 30 (20%) and those 50 or over (35%) against world values of 36% and 44% respectively.

In regard to specifically European trends, it is worth noting that in two countries the percentage of young people attending is greater than the percentage of older people – Bulgaria and Bosnia/Herzegovina, which are relatively close together. The same is true of the Asian countries of Armenia and Georgia, all of which have been through some horrific political upheavals in recent years.

Changing proportions of those 60 or over in Europe, 2005-2050



2005



2025



2050

their child-bearing age). If this is below 2.1 the population is declining, and if above, it is increasing. If the value is too low then it is very difficult for the population to grow quickly; the proportion of elderly people increases and the consequent ratio of elderly to the workforce makes it difficult for the government to get sufficient income tax to pay for services provided. Elderly people need more medical care (in the UK, for example, there are expected to be 1.7 million people with dementia in 2050). So the fact that the fertility rate is only 1.2 in Poland, and 1.3 in Germany, Greece, Italy and 8 other European countries in 2005 is actually very serious for those countries, as it will take 80-100 years to correct the downward trend. The overall rate in Europe is 1.4.

Greying Europe

The consequence of low fertility rates in Europe is the same as elsewhere – an increase in the number of elderly in the population. This is illustrated in the maps showing the proportion in each country's population aged 60 or over across Europe for

the UK, started in the UK in the 1990s, and with 30,000 members in 2006, across 230 churches. A detailed analysis of European immigration was published by Rev Dr Darrell Jackson in 2008 looking at the theology of migration and how churches might respond to the migrants.

Birth rates

The birth rate among women who are migrants is likely to be different from that of native women in a particular country. The "Friends of Muslims" organisation suggests that if Muslim immigrants have as many children as possible "a third of all children in Europe [could] be Muslim by 2025." It may be, however, that Muslim families will find it as difficult passing on their faith to the next generation as Christian families have done, despite Muslim families being more rigorous in observing their faith.

Religious attendance

There is little information about religious

attendance from a global perspective outside such recent studies as the World Values' Survey and the European Social Survey. Europe has the lowest percentage saying they attend a religious service at least once a month among both those aged 18 to 30 (20%) and those 50 or over (35%) against world values of 36% and 44% respectively.

Changing proportions of those 60 or over in Europe, 2005-2050

INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Although the latest edition of the *UK Christian Resources Handbook* does not have fresh statistics on numbers of pupils at independent Christian Secondary Schools, figures showing trends from 2001 are available from the previous edition.

In both the 2002 and 2007 editions some 39 Christian schools were listed which gave details of their pupils' numbers and fees. Just over half (20) of these schools provided boarding for boys and nearly three-quarters (28) for girls, with, on average, 199 boys and 104 girls at each school, at an average annual cost (in 2006) of £16,100, a 20% increase over the five years since 2001.

All the schools, except one "boarders-only", take day pupils as well or only. The average school had 209 boys and 145 girls in 2006 (giving total pupils of 408 boys and 249 girls, 657 in all). The average annual cost for a day pupil was £9,500, up 42% on the cost in 2001. Thus the average income was of the order of £9m on average for these schools.

Almost half the schools (17) had an infant and/or junior school associated with the secondary school, while almost as many (15) just had pupils from the ages of 11 to 18. Seven schools took pupils from 13 to 18. The average annual day pupil fees for these three groups of schools were, respectively, £6,700, £6,800 and £11,700.

Faith schools are an important part of the Christian heritage in our country, and the schools just described are an integral element of the 6,914 government funded primary and secondary faith schools in England and Wales in 2006, of which 4,659 (67%) were Anglican, 2,053 (30%) Roman Catholic, 26 Methodist, 1 Greek Orthodox, 1 Seventh-day Adventist, and 129 of other denominations (2%), plus 36 Jewish, 7 Muslim and 2 Sikh schools (1% in total).

SOURCES: *UK Christian Handbook*, 2002/2003 and 2007/2008 editions, Christian Research, 2002 and 2007, Schools section, *Religious Trends* No 5, 2005/2006, Table 5.3.1; www.pluralism.org..

WHAT PEOPLE SAY

"My dad used to work in a tiddy-wink factory, but he said it was counter-productive."

Why do Tesco's make the sick walk all the way to the back of the store to get their prescriptions while healthy people can buy cigarettes at the front?

Why don't you ever see the headline 'Psychic Wins Lottery'?

If flying is so safe, why do they call the airport the terminal?

SOURCES: *Wordwatching: How to break into the Dictionary*, Alex Horne, Virgin; questions via Glenda Weldon,



There were about 790,000 babies born in the UK in 1950, 4% of whom were born outside marriage (by definition to a single person or a couple cohabiting). Thirty years later, in 1980, there were 750,000 births, with 12% outside marriage, and almost 30 years later again, in 2008, there were again 790,000 births, but this time with 45% outside marriage.

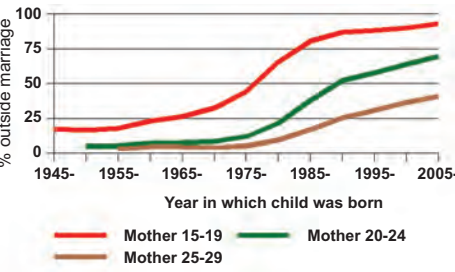
Women mostly have babies between 15 and 44. If one looks at the number of babies born to women aged 15 to 19 (that is, as teenagers), which in 2008 accounted for just 6% of all births, then the percentage of these born outside marriage in 2008 was 93%, a huge increase on the 16% born outside marriage to teenage mums in 1945. The red line on the graph plots this increase. It shows that the percentage increased sharply for babies born to teenage mothers between 1975 and 1990.

Likewise the percentage of babies born outside marriage increased for mothers aged between 20 and 24 from 5% in 1950 to 9% in 1975, and to 72% by 2008. This increase is shown in the green line in the graph, and again the main increase took place for babies born between 1975 and 1990.

Likewise for children born to mothers aged 25 to 29 – the percentage born outside marriage was 3% in 1955, 7% in 1980 and 43% in 2008, with the rate of increase between 1980 and 2008 being much more continuous rather than especially accelerating over one particular period. This is shown in the brown line in the graph.

Similar lines could be drawn in the graph for women having children when they were 30 or older and would show similar increases to that given for women aged 25 to 29.

Percentage of babies born outside marriage b y age of mother at their birth and the year their child was born



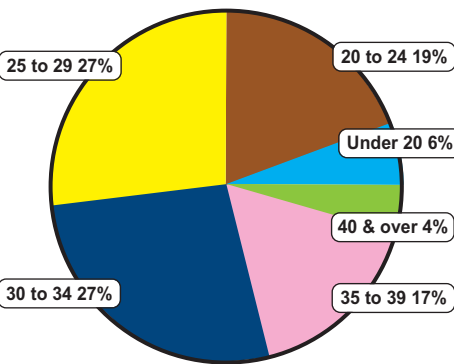
Over the last 80 years successive cohorts of mothers have had increasing proportions of their children outside marriage at any given age. Up to 1965, women aged 25 to 29 were least likely to have children outside marriage, but since then the smallest percentage is for women



aged between 30 and 34. In the last 50 years, since 1960, the percentage having babies outside marriage has more than doubled for mothers under 30 (and tripled for those aged 20 to 24).

The graph does not show how many babies are born in any particular year, but the pie-chart shows the percentage of all babies born in 2008 by age of mother. More than half, 52%, of babies are born when their mother is under 30.

Percentage of births by age of mother, 2008



Attitudes have changed over the last 30 years especially. In 1980, many thought that people who wanted babies should be married, but that was less true in 2000 (and even less true today). In 2001, the British Social Attitudes' report showed that religious people more than non-religious thought babies should be born to a married couple (64% to 38%), and likewise for married or widowed people to those separated or cohabiting (66% to 33%). However, all these percentages had decreased over the previous 12 years since 1989 when the same questions were initially asked in this annual study. Then they were, respectively, 78% religious, 57% non-religious, 78% married/widowed, and 47% separated/cohabiting. The percentages would almost certainly be smaller in 2008.

Children born to a couple outside marriage will mostly be brought up in lone parent or cohabiting households. These two types of household are noticeably absent among churchgoers. In 2009, 12% of English households were cohabiting people and 9% were lone parents. In churches these two percentages are respectively, 2% and 1%, a vast difference – and a vast challenge if we are to encourage more of these into our church life. This is especially important as many lone parents and cohabitants are in their 20s, the age-group least represented in our churches.

SOURCES: Population Trends, Office for National Statistics, Autumn 2009, Number 137, Page 67; British Social Attitudes, 18th Report, National Centre for Social Research, Alison Park et al, 2001; Page 34.

SNOWFLAKES

Belief in the Virgin Birth. 34% of British adults believe that "Jesus was born to a virgin called Mary", and 32% think the story is fiction. 56% believe Jesus was born in Bethlehem, but only 28% believe that angels visited shepherds to announce His birth.

SOURCE: Reported in the *Baptist Times*, 11th December, 2008.

Christians in China. *The National Geographic* magazine reckoned that 8.4% of China's 1.3 billion people were Christian, or 112 million, in 2008, rather higher than some estimates, marginally higher than the 102 million estimated for the year 2008 from the *World Christian Encyclopaedia*, or the 109 million from the *World Religion Database*.

SOURCE: *National Geographic* magazine, May 2008, Pages 60f.

Charity shops boom. In tough times, more people purchase goods in charity shops. They are used by 6 million people, and the visiting frequency has increased. Two-thirds, 65%, of shoppers purchase books; half, 45%, buy clothes; and a third, 32%, buy household items. Why do they visit these shops? Two-thirds, 66%, say it is to support the charity, but also because prices are low (47%) and you get good value for money (44%). However, charities operating these shops have found that donations are less – Oxfam says it has had 12% fewer donations in the year ending April 2009. Some churches operate such services; could more do the same as a way of building bridges in their local community?

SOURCE: *Charity Times News* of an online survey of 2,100 adults in May, 2009 on behalf of Ecclesiastical Insurance.

Church planting among Muslims. An innovative piece of research compared some of the ways in which those seeking to plant churches among Muslims acted, compared with whether they had been able to plant a church or not. Those who had seen a church planted: (a) were more likely to equip believers to answer basic apologetic questions (82% to 33%), (b) encouraged believers to be involved in evangelism (70% to 17%) and (c) to share their testimony (69% to 29%), (d) used scripture as a textbook for leadership qualifications and training (69% to 14%) and (e) were committed to regular sustained prayer and fasting (67% to 20%).

BOB: Article "Practices that significantly correlate with fruitfulness" by Bob Fish, Don Allen and Eric Adams in *Seedbed*, Volume 23, Number 2, August 2009, Page 10.

Funeral music. A survey of 30,000 funerals found that hymns were used in just over a third of them. The most popular song requested was *My Way* by



Frank Sinatra. Priests rejected one in 10 requests for songs. This contrasts with a survey in the men's magazine *Sorted* which found that regular male churchgoers prefer "proper macho songs" or hymns, of which the top three are Onward Christian Soldiers, And Can It Be, and Guide Me O Thou Great Redeemer.

SOURCE: Note by Jill Wood in *Inside Out*, September 2009, Issue 55, Page 29; Press release by Reuters, 6th May 2009.

Digital natives are how Prof Michael Hume of Lancaster University describes young people aged 16 to 24 – "the internet is part of the fabric of their world." A survey funded by Nominet Trust, a charity encouraging the safe use of the web, found three-quarters, 75%, of those in this age-group "couldn't live" without the internet. Four out of five use it to get advice, and a third felt no need to talk to someone face-to-face because of the resources online.

SOURCE: BBC News Channel, accessed 16th October 2009, giving details of report published by online charity YouthNet.

Episcopal Church declines. The saga of the Episcopal Church in the United States continues, but in the interim, its numbers continue to decline, as the Table shows:

Item	2007	2008	Change
Average Sunday Attendance	727,822	705,257	-3%
Active baptised members	2,116,749	2,052,292	-3%

This rate of decline is almost twice as fast as that seen by attendance in the Church of England (in Britain) which averaged -1.7% between 1998 and 2005.

Half the American churches had an attendance of 69 or fewer, while half had more in 2008. That figure is almost twice as many as in the Church of England in 2008, when it was 36. These figures show there are many small Episcopal churches in America, but many more pro rata in the UK!

SOURCE: Report in the *Church of England Newspaper*, 23rd October, 2009, Page 6.

THESE MAY BE HELPFUL Books and reports received

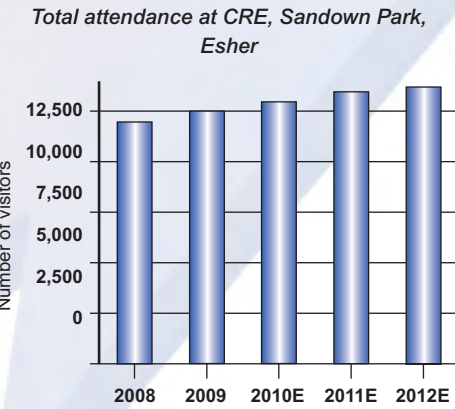
Christians and the Euro, Ashley Beck, 2009 Faith in Europe, 81, Thorney Leys, Witney, Oxon OX28 5BY, ISBN 978-0-9563026-0-1.

The Rabbit and the Elephant, Why Small is the new Big for Today's Church, George Barna and Tony and Felicity Dale, Tyndale House Publishers, Illinois, 2009, ISBN 978-1-4143-2553-8.

Christian Resources Exhibitions

The Christian Resources Exhibition (CRE) has come a long way since it was first started in the centre of London in 1984 by Gospatric Home. Now run by the Bible Society, as part of its new "Enterprise Unit", under Colin Saunders, it has an exciting programme of future venues, while still holding the main annual Exhibition at Sandown Park in Esher, Surrey each May. Attendance at Esher, the numbers, including the exhibitors, peaked at 11,400 in 1994, having risen rapidly from 8,900 in 1991, but then dropped some -3% per year down to 9,800 by 1999, although attendance at regional CREs grew in the same period.

Recent and future years of attendance as predicted by the International CRE are shown in the chart.



A 2009 survey of Sandown visitors showed 5% were 30 or under, 15% 31 to 45, 44% were 45 to 60 and 36% were over 60, making the average age about 54, the same as the average age of a church minister. Nearly half (48%) were male. Attenders travelled quite a distance to come – on average nearly 40 miles. Just over half (52%) had attended the previous year as well. A quarter (25%) were full-time church leaders. Visitors liked the Exhibition in 2009, four-fifths (78%) saying that their expectations had been met. We encourage you to attend or exhibit in 2010 and experience similar success.

SOURCES: *Religious Trends* No 2, 2000/2001, Table 5.8.1; Future Development Presentation handout, 29th October, 2009.

St James Congregation Survey, Bernice Hardie, July 2009, bernice@bernicahardie.co.uk.

Sex and the iWorld, Rethinking Relationship beyond an Age of Individualism, Dale S Kuehne, Baker Academic, 2009, ISBN 978-0-8010-3587-6.



REFLECTIONS

“What is that in your hand?” As far as Moses was concerned, this was a fairly easy question to answer. After all it was obvious – he had his shepherd’s staff. In effect it was his badge of office. Anyone who happened to meet him would know at once what he was. Today, too, we can sometimes define people’s occupations by what they are holding or wearing, for example, stockbroker/businessmen in city suit and briefcase, postman by his delivery bag and cycle (perhaps), policeman by his uniform, or minister by her white collar.

Then came the instruction from God, “Throw it on the ground.” We too may sometimes receive a direct command – start a new service, give some money to that cause, extend your work in this area. Like Moses, we obey. That’s when Moses got a huge fright, not for the first time when talking with God. Hearing His voice out of a burning bush must have scared Moses enormously, and now he was faced with a writhing snake. He knew the snake wasn’t there just a moment ago, and, in any case, his staff was now nowhere to be seen.

God is the God of the unexpected. He breaks the two loaves and five fish and feeds 5,000 people! You open the envelope and there’s a cheque for £20,000. You are expecting 20 to come and 300 try to crowd in. The miracle takes place and we betray our faithlessness by our surprise.

“Now pick up the snake”. Moses does so and it’s his own familiar staff once again, although I suspect he treated it with extra special care after that – he never knew when it might become a snake again! Having seen the extraordinary we are brought back to the world of the ordinary. The next envelope only contained £20, and the new service settles down to an attendance of 50.

But we should never forget the flashes of the divine. What is that in your hand? What resources do you have? What are your strengths? What are the strengths in your team members? Like your blessings, count your resources one by one, and then praise the Lord for what He has done, move forward in faith and expect the unexpected.

The Worst Places for a Child to Grow Up

In a special report in its magazine *Insight*, World Vision earlier this year gave details of the 10 worst places in the world for a child to grow up. The statistics given in the Table are simply stated, but the actual detail of what they imply is harrowing. Nine of the 10 countries are in Africa. The countries are ranked with the worst at the top.

Country	Population (millions)	Life expectancy (years)	Under-5 mortality rate	School life expectancy (years)	Population below poverty line
Sierra Leone	6.3	41	26%	7	70%
Afghanistan	32.7	44	26%	8	53%
Chad	10.1	47	21%	6	80%
Equatorial Guinea	0.6	61	21%	10	n/a
Guinea-Bissau	1.5	41	20%	7	70%
Mali	12.3	50	20%	7	36%
Burkina Faso	15.3	52	19%	5	46%
Nigeria	146.3	47	19%	8	70%
Rwanda	10.2	50	18%	9	60%
Burundi	8.7	52	18%	7	68%
Total/Average	244.0	47	20%	8	64%
World	6,800	67	8%	11	33%

It is easy to see the results of the poverty in these countries: twice the average percentage are below the poverty line, they collectively have between two and three times the average child mortality, children attend school for only three-quarters of the time that children attend across the world as a whole, and the average life is 20 years shorter than the average citizen on planet earth experiences. The question is, what can we, or our church or agency, do to help alleviate such dire circumstances?

“Official” Future of UK Church

It is not very often the Office for National Statistics forecasts figures for religion in Great Britain, but they have done so in the 2008 edition of *Social Trends*. They give the percentages shown in the Table for the population.

Belonging to a religion	1996 %	2006 %	2009 %	2019 %
Christian	53	48	46	41
Other religions	4	6	7	9
Non-religious	43	46	47	50

The Christian denominations most likely to decline are seen as the Anglicans, Presbyterians, Baptists/Methodists (the last are put together), with the Catholics staying about the same. Other denominations are likely to grow as are those designated “of no denomination”, but with these not compensating for the huge drop in the number of Anglicans.

In “other religions” Muslims and Hindus are seen as growing, with Muslims more than double the number of Hindus, but the remainder collectively staying about the same proportion, about 1.5%.

This replicates the findings of the British Social Attitudes of an increase in the non-religious paralleled by a decline in the number of Anglicans of about the same proportions.

SOURCE: *Social Trends*, No 38, 2008, www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_social/Social_Trends38/Social_Trends_38.pdf

What do people pray for?

In an (unidentified) rural church in central England called St Mary’s, visitors are invited to complete a postcard-size prayer card requesting the prayers of the local priest and congregation. Over a thousand of these were collected in 2007, analysed and the results presented at a conference on Implicit Religion held in Denton, North Yorkshire in May 2009. Every third person made two requests.

Three-quarters, 75%, asked for prayer for other people (many for those who were ill or had died) and just 5% for themselves (mostly their relationships with others). In addition, one in six, 16%, asked for prayer for some kind of global concern (often conflicts or disasters), and an additional 4% asked prayer for animals, mostly those known to the prayer writer.

Overall, illness was the subject of 29% of requests, death 20%, broad “open intention” requests 18%, relationships 7%, global church growth 5%, conflicts 4%, work 3%, recreation and travel 1% each, and general requests 12%.

What does this say about the church’s visitors? That Christian prayer is essentially an altruistic activity? While many of the requests were not at variance with mainstream Christian theology, the dominance of death is interesting as many of the requests sought either to communicate with the dead person or to request that they “be protected and looked after”. Such analyses help to inform church leaders and others about the concerns and beliefs of ordinary people, noting that their “theology” is centred around individual contexts and life experiences.

SOURCE: Implicit religion and ordinary prayer, Tania ap Iŷon, Welsh National Centre for RE, Bangor, t.apisio@bangor.ac.uk

Continued from page 1

We can no longer assume that believers are basically Christian. Opinion polls over recent decades suggest that the characteristically Christian beliefs – particularly in Jesus as the Son of God – have been in decline and are now held by a minority. Many people will acknowledge a belief in something, but that something is less and less likely to be recognisable as religious doctrine.

Among the fuzzy faithful with religious or spiritual beliefs, we can distinguish two cognitive styles. What we might call ‘popular heterodoxy’ involves beliefs about fate, the afterlife, a higher power and the like that derive from sources including astrology, Eastern religion and folk religion as well as conventional Christianity. Such melanges are not particularly coherent, but those who hold them tend not to reflect deeply on their worldviews. By contrast some people are conscious of being spiritual seekers and will think more about these issues. Their numbers are relatively small, however.

Fuzzy practice

Finally, while religious observance usually rests on belief, there are other motivations for churchgoing. People accompany religious parents or spouses, go for the music, or hope to qualify their children for church-affiliated schools. Religious ceremonies for rites of passage remain popular (if less so than previously), and some services with a strong social dimension (e.g. harvest festivals and the like) draw large congregations. Christmas attracts two and a half times as many people to the Church of England as appear on a normal Sunday, with tradition and nostalgia being more likely explanations for high turnout than sporadic religious enthusiasm. In addition to occasional participation at services, private prayer is relatively popular.

Conclusion

Fuzzy Christians are by definition neither particularly religious nor non-religious. What is striking is how little religion seems to matter to most of them. In most of western Europe, the very large majority of the fuzzy faithful see religion as unimportant. Their dominant attitude towards religion is not one of rejection or hostility. Many are willing to identify with a religion, are open to the existence of God or a higher power, may use the church for rites of passage, and might pray at least occasionally. It seems apparent, though, that religion plays little part in their lives. Could that change? It may be the largest challenge facing churches today.

SOURCE: British Social Attitudes Survey.

Urban Young People

In a large survey of the city of Melbourne, Australia, it was found that over a third, 36%, of its population was between 15 and 34, and that of these 5.3% attended a church in 2006.

The overall equivalent English percentage attending church in 2005 was 4.1%. However, in Inner London the percentage of those aged 15 to 34 was the same 36% of the population, while 6.6% attended church, and in Outer London 29% of the population was in this age-group, and 5.6% attended church. In Birmingham on the other hand, 27% of the population is between 15 and 34, and 6.0% attended a church in 2005.

This suggests that our urban churchgoing is stronger than in Australia, assuming these three cities are typical, and that in England at least those aged 15 to 34 are more likely to be in church if living in a city than if in a rural area.



In Scotland in 2002, 31% of Glasgow’s population was between 15 and 34, and 7.9% were in church. In Edinburgh 30% of the population was in this age-group and 5.2% were in church, while in Dundee the percentages were, respectively, 26% and 7.9%, and in Aberdeen 28% and 4.8%. For Scotland as a whole the percentages were 27% and 6.1%. The urban/rural divide for this age-group is far less wide than in England, and urban church life for this age-group varies quite considerably.

SOURCES: *Pointers* Vol 19 No 2, June 2009, Christian Research Association, Australia; *Religious Trends* No 4 2003/2004 for Scotland and No 6 2006/2007 for England, Christian Research, London.

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REVIEW: WORLD RELIGION DATABASE

Todd Johnson is the Director of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and the Co-editor of the World Religion Database (WRD), www.worldreligiondatabase.org.

The WRD covers every country of the world. Originally based on the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, it updates and extends it in many ways. Todd has done a brilliant job in making the WRD a superb resource for researchers, Christian workers, church leaders and religious academics.

The range of detail is impressive: (a) an analysis of the population of each country; (b) historical and future population (1900 to 2050); (c) demographics on birth rate, death rate, adult literacy, life expectancy, household size, floor space, corruption index, etc.; (d) data on society – the number who are blind or deaf, number of doctors, hospitals and hospital beds, the murder rate, number of schools and universities, computers, faxes, newspapers, phones, radios, TVs, people with AIDS/HIV, etc.; (e) details of the religions in the country – the unique strength of the WRD [18 different religions are used, even if zero in some countries]; (f) the population of major cities and towns; and (g) the peoples of each country with their language, majority religion and size.

The Church of England claims 26 million people as the number of baptised people in the UK. The WRD treats this as their official source, but not all of these now regard themselves as belonging to the church and so did not tick the Christian box on the 2001 Census form. Result? The WRD puts the Christian percentage as 81%, the Census as 72%, with the difference virtually entirely in the group of people who have left the Church of England (as other research has shown). Which source should the WRD trust or use? The WRD opts for denominational information (in this instance) and does not judge between the two.

A huge implicit strength in the WRD is the attempt on a worldwide basis to compile numbers for the different religions in a broadly compatible manner for each country. The numbers have flaws, but the same editors are looking at the whole and trying to use the same values and criteria for each set of data. Do they make mistakes? Of course – the UK is listed under ‘Britain’! Will everybody agree with their estimates? No. Does that make the database unreliable or useless? Not at all.

It currently gives data in detail for each country for 2000 and 2005 and will extend this at five-yearly intervals. In 20 years time there will be a wonderful range of data, the trends of which will be hugely important. There simply is no other source as comprehensive, and Christian and religious commentators will find it invaluable, despite hang-ups on definitions and individual numbers.



Providing Facts for Forward Planning

SNIPPETS

1) Almost half the people in the world, 46%, have a mobile telephone account, and a quarter of these have 2 or more.

2) The average 10 year-old in the UK is familiar with between 300 and 400 consumer brands, but cannot name 15 wild birds.

3) The oldest lady in Britain, Jeanna Calmest, died in August 1997 but was born in February 1875, 122½ years earlier. She was a life-long smoker, only giving it up when she was 119!

4) Only 20% of students who were highly churchd as teenagers were still spiritually active by the age of 29. That 20% have a “serious discipleship of the mind”.

5) 41% of children at a party prefer to play computer games.

6) The Royal Mail uses 342 million red rubber bands each year.

7) 300,000 people walk down Oxford Street every day – and spend an average of £510 each daily (across its 312 shops in 2008).

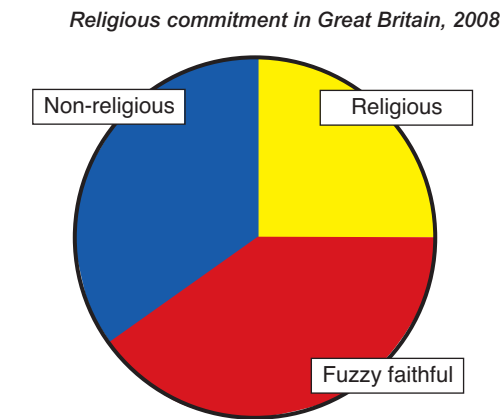
SOURCES: 1) *The Bookseller*, 18th September 2008, Page 24; 2) *Good Value*, Stephen Green, Penguin, 2009, Page 135; 3) UCL Lunch-time lecture on “The new biology of ageing” by Professor Dame Linda Partridge, Dept of Genetics, Evolution and Environment, University College London; 4) George Barna quoted in *Mission Frontiers*, Sept-October 2009, Page 37; 5) Birdseye survey by YouGov poll, reported in *The Daily Telegraph*, 21st October 2009; 6) *The Observer*, via The Week, 24th October 2009, Page 20; 7) *The Bookseller*, 4th September 2009, Page 28.

Fuzzy fidelity: threat or opportunity?

Dr David Voas,
Simon Professor of Population Studies, University of Manchester

We tend to see the world in black and white. People are either believers or unbelievers, practising or non-practising, religious or non-religious. The situation is not nearly so simple, of course. Despite the decline in both believing and belonging, residual involvement is considerable. Many people remain interested in church weddings and funerals, Christmas services and local festivals. They believe in ‘something out there’, pay at least lip service to Christian values, and may identify with a denomination. They are neither regular churchgoers nor self-consciously non-religious: what they show is fuzzy fidelity.

The chart shows the distribution of the British population. A quarter of people have a religion, believe in God (if tentatively) and attend services (if only occasionally); a third have none of these traits, and in between we find the fuzzy faithful.



Far from being an exotic new movement, the uncommitted form the largest religious group in the country. Fuzzy Christianity could be the national church, were it not for the fact that its followers are without organization and leadership and show little taste for either. The question is who will convert whom: will the drift away from commitment continue, or can the churches reclaim some of the strays?

Nominalism or fuzzy affiliation

People may belong to this intermediate category of being neither religious nor non-unreligious for a variety of reasons. Probably the most common is nominalism: to be Christian (and perhaps specifically Anglican, Catholic or Methodist) in name only. Many apparently non-religious people do

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choose an affiliation if asked, depending on the wording and context of the question.

Peter Brierley has investigated Christian nominalism over a long period. More recently, Abby Day has described three main subgroups that she calls natal, ethnic and aspirational nominalists:

- *Natal* nominalists see their Christianity as a matter of family heritage. Typically they were baptised and attended church when they were young.

- *Ethnic* nominalists use the label ‘Christian’ to describe their cultural heritage. They wish to distinguish themselves from Muslims and others.

- *Aspirational* nominalists describe themselves as Christian – or perhaps more often as C of E – for the sake of respectability.

Heterodoxy or fuzzy belief

Some of the fuzzy faithful may be non-churchgoers with traditional Christian beliefs. More commonly, though, they are likely to be unorthodox to a greater or lesser degree. Surveys show apparently high levels of belief in imported religious ideas such as reincarnation, but also in folk superstition: horoscopes, clairvoyance, ghosts, and so on. Such ‘beliefs’ may be uninformed, held superficially, seldom acted upon and relatively volatile.

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