

# The Religious Questions in Contemporary Europe

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 09 December 2007

Preacher: Dr. David Ley

[ 0 : 00 ] I want to talk about a topic I've never spoken about before and really don't have a lot of knowledge of, but I do have a considerable interest in.

And it's been triggered by reading this book, God's Continent. And what I'm going to talk about today really is my review and my various themes that I've extracted from this book.

I'll say a little bit more about the author in a moment. But I want to start off with a hook on which to hang this talk. And the hook is from Lausanne Cathedral, which if you have a handout you can see an image of Lausanne Cathedral.

Lausanne, I think for evangelicals, has a particular meaning, certainly for those of my generation. We remember the great conference that occurred there in 1974. A conference of global evangelicals.

[ 1 : 12 ] And a covenant that was written that talked about how to go forward presenting the gospel to the world.

there were representatives there from 150 countries, different denominations. And yet, tremendous unity of purpose was apparent.

And that conference really uplifted spirits, I think, in the evangelical world. And so gave Lausanne this kind of aura of the place where this tremendously significant event occurred.

And Lausanne has a very long, of course, Christian history, a long Protestant history. It's just along Lake Geneva that you can see in the background of the photo.

It's just along the lake from Geneva with its great reform history. This is where John Calvin established a city-state, a Christian city-state.

[ 2 : 21 ] The cathedral in Lausanne is on a hill overlooking the city. And you really have a sense of its watchful presence, its arms over the city, as it looks across Lake Geneva to the French Alps on the other side of the lake.

It's one of Europe's most beautiful Gothic cathedrals. In the 16th century, it was taken over from the Catholics by the reformers.

And that is its glorious history. And I think, at first take, that is probably the most apt summary to talk about Christianity in Europe, is that it has a glorious history.

But today, I have a friend who teaches at the University of Lausanne. He's a liberal Protestant. Very explicit about his faith, and quite liberal with it.

He attends the cathedral. And when I was last in Lausanne, he took me to the cathedral, and he was lamenting the decline of the congregation. Saying that on Sunday now, fewer than 50 people worshipped at this vast cathedral.

[ 3 : 41 ] And they were mainly over 65 years old. So here is one take on the condition of religion in Europe.

And if any of you travel to Europe and go to the great cities, go to the big churches, the cathedrals downtown, you'll see a number of them have actually been recycled to other uses.

A number of them are set up to be more or less permanent places for various choral and classical musical events.

So that's the theme I want to think about this morning. And so Lausanne Cathedral just is the hook around which I want to, as it were.

That's the metaphor that we'll be thinking through. Now, our guide on this tour is Philip Jenkins. You can see his photo there.

[ 4 : 41 ] We like to give these people a personality. One of the reasons I put his photo is he's alarmingly young-looking. And I say that because so far he's written 21 books.

So, Jim, someone's pursuing you. I don't wish to know that. This book, *God's Continent, Christianity, Islam, and Europe's Religious Crisis*, a new book that's out this year. I've got it at chapters. And though I'm sure he'd be quite happy for me to do so, I will plug it a little bit. Because if you're interested in this topic at all, this is a very, very readable book. And I think a very balanced book as well. And I think his judgments are quite astute. Another reason I'm keen on this author is that he's Welsh.

He's a Welsh-American, I guess we would say. A historian, educated at Cambridge, teaching at Pennsylvania State University. And he puts out about a book a year.

[ 5 : 57 ] He is a quite remarkable figure. I looked at his CV on the website. It mentioned he's done several hundred media interviews, of course, on topics like this, of enormous interest.

He's given public testimonies to government committees. And he's given hundreds of public lectures. So he is a busy man. Earlier this year, his last book, *The New Faces of Christianity, Believing the Bible in the Global South*, won Christianity Today's Annual Award for the best book on missions and global affairs.

So in other words, I have no idea on his personal theology, but it's a theology that is not hostile, which is a rare thing to find amongst university authors on topics like this.

So in this book, he looks at, in a sense, the thesis, to what extent is Lausanne Cathedral truly a metaphor for the state of religion in Europe.

And he also looks at the other side of that equation, which is the rise of Islam in Europe as well. So that's what we'll be looking at this morning.

[ 7 : 21 ] And you can see there's an outline here. We'll start off with some bad news. Then we'll look at some good news. This is in terms of the situation, the status of Christianity in Europe.

And then towards the end, I'll say a little bit, again, drawing largely from Jenkins, on the rise of Islam in Europe. Europe has been described as the most secular continent on Earth.

That's just worth taking in for a moment, because that's not what we would have immediately have thought Europe as. Books are appearing with titles like this one, *The Death of Christian Britain*, by Callum Brown, came out in 2001.

Now this is a remarkable state of affairs. For as we know, Europe has been the heart of Christianity for a thousand years or more.

Something I'm going to come back to a few times today is the whole issue of the birth rate in Europe, because we'll see how in some interesting ways it's tied into this whole question very, very directly.

[ 8 : 42 ] The nations of Europe all have a very low birth rate. A birth rate which is way below the replacement rate.

That is, there are fewer children being, there are not enough children being born to replace the national population. That's true in Canada as well.

It's true, in fact, in almost all countries in the global north. And the populations of Europe would be declining rapidly were it not for immigration, as indeed would be the case in Canada.

In parts of Germany, the birth rate today is now lower than during the last year of the Second World War. And of course, most of the men were at the front.

Society was incredibly disrupted. The cities were being bombed. That was not a great time to be having children. And there were very few children born. But today, in parts of Germany, the birth rate is lower than that.

[ 9 : 52 ] Forty percent of women who are college graduates in Germany today will not have any infants. Almost half of college graduates have no children in Germany.

In 1982, Gunther Grass, the novelist, published a novel called *Headbirths*. The Germans are dying out.

And you'll remember the film that was around a year or two ago, *Children of Men*, which was based on P.D. James' novel, rather loosely based on the novel.

P.D. James, you probably know, is a good old man, an elderly lady in the UK. And P.D. James' book, *Children of Men*, is set in Britain in 2027, but it has a very particular characteristic to it.

There are no new births. No children have been born for a number of years. So, you see, these are not just straws in the wind. This is part of an anxiety in Europe about its declining birth rate and its demographic future.

[11:11] Now, why these rates are so low is a subject of much discussion. One thesis, and this, in fact, is the thesis that Grass explores in his novel, is that couples are now just too worldly and career-oriented to put up with the inconvenience of having children.

I'm quite sure the full story is more complicated than that. But, it does seem as if new household, new family forms today make it more difficult, less convenient for children to be a part of the equation.

And this is an area, I think, where we might see a growing contrast in the future between a Christian and a secular world in terms of family formation.

where one would anticipate that the role of children, the role of families, plays such a significant role in the Orthodox Christian tradition.

So, to fill this population gap in the past 30 years, Europe, which has always been a continent of emigrants, sending people overseas for hundreds of years, has now become a continent of immigrants.

[12:41] And among these immigrants are many Muslims. From North Africa, from the Middle East, from South Asia, Turks have moved to work in Germany, North Africans have moved to France, Pakistanis to the United Kingdom.

Western and Northern Europe now has 15 million Muslims, a third of them living in France. This is under 5% of the European population, but in France it's 8%, and the numbers are growing much faster than the traditional European born.

So, in this scenario, Philip Jenkins asks, is Europe a graveyard for Christianity? Is Europe a graveyard for Christianity?

Or, is it a laboratory? A laboratory that other parts of the world can view where new forms of faith emerge in a dominantly secular environment?

Well, first of all, let's say a bit about godless Europe before we move on to the good news. There are many surveys that have been taken across Europe, and they underline what everybody knows to be true.

[14:19] Church attendance has dropped like a stone in the past generation. In 2002, a survey across Europe showed that about 20% of the population, and this of course would include the immigrant population, 20% agreed with the statement, religion plays a very important role in my life.

Typically, the lowest rates of religious affiliation are in Scandinavia and in Eastern Europe, with the very notable exception of Poland, that I'll come back to in a moment.

In the United Kingdom in 2004, 44% of the people said they believe in God, less than half of the population.

5% are regular churchgoers, but 72% say they are Christians. There's a lingering culture of Christendom, in other words, that that higher number would make some kind of nominal affiliation, though most of them don't believe in God or attend church.

But they would still say they're Christian. And perhaps that's a hopeful sign, that allows some pre-evangelism. So you say you're a Christian, what does that mean to you?

[16:01] That would be an interesting follow-through. Now, over time, the Protestant states of Northern and Central Europe have shown the most rapid decline.

But in the last 20 years, since the early 1990s, the Catholic countries are now following exactly the same path. We might think of something rather parallel here in Canada, where Catholicism in Quebec was retained as a kind of, at the very least, a form of cultural identity after the decline of faith in the more Protestant provinces was already clearly underway.

But it's quite clear that Catholic teaching, certainly Orthodox Catholic teaching, is not being held, because in fact the lowest birth rates in Europe today, or in Europe outside Eastern Europe, are in strongly Catholic countries like Spain and Italy, where the rate is even lower than the low rates of Northern Europe.

Now this demise of Catholic affiliation is, as I say, very recent, going back to the early 1990s. Even in Ireland now, the most faithful Catholic nation in Europe, there are clear signs of the population moving away from traditional belief.

The big Catholic seminary in Ireland is called Maynuth. It's about an hour's drive outside Dublin. I was there a few years ago, because it's part of a campus, a university campus.

[17:54] I was giving a talk at the campus, and I was shown around the seminary. It is a vast, vast structure, and it was built, and for many, many decades accommodated 500 young men who were

studying to become priests.

When I went around it, it was almost empty. You went around these corridors, these great stone corridors, and you just didn't see people.

It was sort of like a mausoleum. And in fact, in 2004, in the whole of Ireland, only 15 priests were ordained.

Fifteen in the whole of Ireland. One cause of avoidance of the priesthood and the church has been sexual scandal.

By 2006, 250 priests in Ireland alone were under investigation for child abuse. Stunning, stunning statistic.

[ 19 : 02 ] Very troubling. The outcome of these kinds of changes is quite literally a new religious landscape, as churches are closed and transformed to other uses.

It's reported that this decade, our present decade, in London, 500 churches of all denominations have been converted to other uses.

We're moving into a post-Christian age. A British poll stated that 40% of Britons could not say what event was commemorated at Easter.

And yet 72% of them are Christians. Christians. Why? What's happening here? Well, there is no simple answer to this question.

The response that's usually given is people throw out the phrase secularization. They see the decline of religious faith, the decline of the spiritual, as part of the modernization process.

[ 20 : 16 ] Modernization, secularization. they go back to origins in the latter half of the 19th century, and the great culture wars of Northwestern Europe in the period from 1850 to 1900.

The kinds of debates that were caused, first of all, in universities and in high culture by people like Darwin, by Marx, by a group called the utilitarians in Britain.

These kinds of intellectuals, who created a new intellectual landscape that in subsequent decades, as it were, rolled out to the rest of society.

Again, the Quebec story might be helpful to get a sense of what's going on here. Again, those of you of my generation or older will remember Quebec's quiet revolution, as it was called, in the 1960s.

This was a period with tremendous expansion of education, the rise of the welfare state, a halving of the birth rate in ten years, astonishing kind of social change, and also decline of religion.

[ 21 : 36 ] this was the decade that Catholics really left the parish churches. And this is seen as the transition from quote, traditional to modern society, all of these characteristics together.

It's interesting, for example, that in Ireland, the decline of Catholicism has coincided with rapid economic growth in the last twenty years. indeed, there was a period in the 1990s when Ireland, always the poor man of Europe, always the poor man of Europe, there was a period in the 1990s when per capita incomes in Ireland were higher than in the United Kingdom.

Now, there's a huge anomaly to this argument, if you extend it globally, and the huge anomaly is the United States, because not many of us would say that the United States was not a modern country.

It is a massive economic power, and yet religious belief remains high in the U.S., and interestingly, it is the only country in the global north that still has a birth rate at the replacement level.

world. And guess which state in the United States has the highest birth rate? I think I heard the answer.

[ 23 : 13 ] Utah. Utah. Utah. And if ever you wanted to see the relationship between religious belief, I won't comment in what, but religious belief and ideology, a set of values about family life, you can see it there.

So undoubtedly, undoubtedly, there are linkages between family, views on the family, and religious belief.

Now, let's leave the bad news behind and go through some of the counter-tendencies that Philip Jenkins sees. he begins by noting, and I think this is an important point, that we know most about while people form their popular ideas about religious belief today, primarily from the media.

And the media is far from a value-free presenter of news. It is, in fact, the bad news about religion that the media seems to fixate upon.

It rarely gives positive or balanced coverage. Educators, too, are more likely than not to have an anti-faith bias, even if they're supposed to paper that over in the classroom.

[ 24 : 53 ] Now, we know that that is true in Canada. It's even more true in Europe that one sees, as it were, the agents of secularism, the agents of an anti-faith position, are strongly represented in the media and in education.

So that's the first point, I think, is that there is good news, but it's not often reported. We don't get to hear it. The second point is that there is still a significant remnant in Europe.

And I use that word quite deliberately because we've seen how often in the Bible God works with a remnant. We think of many stories where prophets or leaders are concerned that there's an abandonment of the orthodox position.

But God comes through through prophecy to remind people that he's in charge, that there is still a faithful remnant, that he will work with that remnant. Well, within Europe, that remnant of real Christian believers is about 60 or 70 million.

Still a lot of people who believe even if in percentage terms it's fairly low. Poland is a very interesting example here. It's an anomaly in Europe with a very vigorous Catholic church and young men literally lining up to enter the seminaries.

[ 26 : 37 ] Now, in the last five years, many young Poles have traveled for work in other countries.

The largest single group has gone to the United Kingdom. There are now six to seven hundred thousand Poles in Britain. And just in the last five years, they're transforming the Catholic Church. Philip Jenkins has got a number of stories of declining Catholic parishes with small numbers coming out to two or three masses on a Sunday.

And now there are six or seven masses in those churches to accommodate the Polish immigrants. So, be thankful for the Poles.

The next point is there is still a latent faith in Europe. God. There is this residual religiosity that might yet be rekindled.

[ 27 : 43 ] We see this remarkable 72% of people in Britain who identify themselves as Christians. What does that mean to them? At the very least, it's got to mean some degree of openness, some degree of openness to the fact that there is a God that Jesus came at Christmas, died, rose again.

There's some kind of residual basis to work with there. Of course, in a number of European countries like Britain and Germany, the principal church is still the state church.

There is a relationship between church and state, which takes, for example, bishops into the House of Lords in Britain, and perhaps some of them should stay there.

That would be very helpful. Perhaps we should send our bishops to the family. So there is this latent faith, but now let's get on more to the two areas which I think are quite positive, renewal movements and immigrant Christians.

First of all, the renewal movements. Evangelicals, Charismatics, and Pentecostals in Europe doubled in number between 1970 and 2000.

[ 29 : 10 ] So you've got this overall pattern of decline, but in the Evangelical, Charismatic, Pentecostal renewal traditions, numbers actually doubled.

there are a number of public events and new movements, often ecumenical, which reflect this new vigor.

Some of you will know about the Tazé community in France, a center for contemplation, historic forms of worship, that attract about 100,000 people each summer, principally young people, for weekend events.

In the United Kingdom, each spring, there's an Evangelical conference called Spring Harvest, and that has now grown so large, close to 100,000 people, that it now meets in a number of separate locations.

Another sign of renewal is the Alpha Series, originating in Holy Trinity Brompton, an Anglican church in London, just down the street from Harrods.

[ 30 : 30 ] So when you go to London, you can spend a half day at Harrods, and a half day at Holy Trinity Brompton, and contrast and compare.

The large churches in Britain are primarily Evangelical, and Holy Trinity Brompton, with 2,500 worshippers each Sunday, is one of the ten largest churches.

It has planted seven daughter churches. The Alpha course emerged there in the early 1980s as a ministry ministry to the spiritually curious in a post-Christian age.

So in other words, there was the recognition, we cannot assume anything anymore. We're in a post-Christian age, and we need new forms of presentation of the gospel to this population.

As we all know, the Alpha course has proven remarkably successful, and about seven million people have attended Alpha courses globally, one and a half million in Britain alone.

[ 31 : 47 ] in fact, Jenkins gives a story that the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Paris has described Alpha as one of Protestantism's two biggest gifts to the Roman Catholic Church.

I knew someone would die. The other one, interestingly, he says, is the charismatic movement. So on the south side of Hyde Park, you have Holy Trinity Brompton.

On the north side of Hyde Park, just a few stops away on the London underground, is All Souls Langham Place, a major evangelical presence in central London for decades, and known, of course, well to this church at the pulpit occupied for so long by John Stott.

I went to the All Souls website just to see what they do there. There's an attractively wide network of ministries associated with both Holy Trinity Brompton and also All Souls.

All Souls, for example, uses its buildings as a community centre for the neighbourhood roundabout in central London. It has an orchestra that has a travelling programme called Prom Praise that's venues include the Royal Albert Hall.

[ 33 : 15 ] It has a primary school that serves 230 children in central London. It has a programme called the Aslan programme that works with the homeless.

And out of all souls emerge the London Institute of Contemporary Culture, offering training courses, and also of course the Christianity Explored programme with Rico Tice that we use here.

Rico Tice will be back this next year for a mission. And I included in your handout a page from the website of the London Institute for Contemporary Culture.

And what I want you to notice there is the core question. There's no room for small visions. The core question, how can we reach the West?

And that requires first an analysis of what the West amounts to. And as I say, this whole understanding of a post-Christian society in which very different forms of presentation are necessary because so little can be assumed anymore.

[ 34 : 36 ] if you go to the middle of the page and after the quote in italics, the Institute believes that the answer to the challenge of mission in the West and beyond can only begin to be met by radically rethinking the way the Church envisions and equips the people we already have, so that they can make a difference where they already are.

In the UK, for example, only 7.5% of the population go to church once a month or more, but this represents 4.5 million people. On average, each of these people knows 100 others.

We have the people to reach the UK. Tragically, however, Christians have simply not been envisioned, resourced, and supported to see and to take the opportunities they have to make a significant difference for Christ at work, at school, in clubs and colleges and neighbourhoods.

And so, the last but one paragraph, our strategy, therefore, focuses on making whole life discipleship a central operational component of UK church culture, thereby equipping ordinary Christians to live and share the gospel in the world.

Somewhere else on the website, there's a statement by John Stott that comments that in the evangelical church we have put a lot of emphasis on conversion, but the great commission was not to go and make converts, but to go and make disciples.

[ 36 : 23 ] And the whole issue of discipleship requires a programme of teaching and learning and visioning, that certainly includes evangelism, but goes beyond that to think about what discipleship means today.

Let me move on now to immigrant initiatives. This is another very important development in Europe, as in Canada. I spoke to you a year ago on the rise of new immigrant churches in Vancouver.

A truly exciting development, not least because of the commitment level we see in these churches. And it's the same story in Europe, with the arrival of Africans, Latin Americans, West Indians, and Christian minorities from the Middle East and other parts of Asia.

There are here some extraordinary stories, and I'm just going to give you two of them, associated with the arrival in particular of Africans to Europe.

The first story is to do with a church called the Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for all nations. Like that?

[ 37 : 43 ] This church was founded by a Nigerian student in Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine, in 1994, by a student.

It was founded with seven members. Within a decade, it had 30,000 Ukrainian adherents, including the mayor of Kiev.

It has 50 daughter churches in the Kiev region, and another hundred elsewhere in Ukraine. Church planting is now proceeding in other countries of Europe.

So this is a young Nigerian student in Ukraine who got this going. Another Nigerian established the Kingsway International Christian Center in London around the same time.

Its building is called the Miracle Center, which might give you an idea of what goes on inside. It now accommodates 5,000 worshippers and offers double the capacity of St. Paul's Cathedral.

[ 38 : 55 ] Its animated website, and it is a very lively website, reads, Who told you the church was boring? And clearly that's the thesis it seeks to undermine in its worship.

four of the ten largest churches in Britain today are pastored by Africans, typically with a charismatic or Pentecostal style of worship.

In the 2005 church census it was revealed that 44% of churchgoers in London are black, and another 15% are other visible minorities.

Britain now has at least 1,500 overseas missionaries sent from the global south. One of the nice stories here is of two missionaries from a Christian region of north eastern India who have been sent by their church to Wales.

Now Wales and the strict Welsh Presbyterians sent their own missionaries to northwest Europe and northwest India in the 19th century and were the instrument for Christianizing that region.

[ 40 : 17 ] And now as Welsh Presbyterianism is in a moribund state, here are converts or a daughter church sending missionaries back again.

This story is repeated elsewhere in Europe's large cities. Paris now has 250 Protestant churches, most of them black African.

In Rome, 150,000 Filipinos and Latin Americans have brought new life to Catholic congregations. The energy and the vision of these assemblies is often breathtaking.

in Germany, in the port city of Hamburg, a Ghanaian founded a church in the early 1990s that has now planted a dozen other congregations in Germany and 60 back in Ghana.

Of course, these churches in Germany are not full of Ghanians. There are very few Ghanians in Germany. They have crossed the language divide, crossed the race divide, crossed the cultural divide, and have actually connected with Germans.

[ 41 : 35 ] Of course, we know a lot about the life in the global south. We, too, at St. John's, are beneficiaries of that. There are some common features of these rapidly growing immigrant congregations.

As I said, they are not limited by borders. They cross national borders, they cross class borders, they cross race borders. They are commonly, but not always, charismatic, believing in healings and often speaking in tongues.

Many of them are independent, and that is an area that can lead to problems, because a cult of personality can emerge around a powerful leader, the founder of the church.

And there are tremendous temptations to such leaders, which are not the same if you're in a denomination where leadership is more protected by established procedures and structures.

And sadly, the founder of the Kingsway International Church in London currently has some challenges from the British Income Tax Department.

[ 42 : 53 ] And fourthly, and I want to give you an honest rendering here, not just sort of, you know, all glam, there are bizarre fringe groups around some of these churches.

And these fringe groups have provided very rich cannon fodder for the sensational media. But the churches, whether they're orthodox, evangelical, or immigrant charismatic, have three key realizations.

One, they are a minority group in a secular and indifferent society. Two, they have big visions.

And three, they have creative ministry models. So if you look at these different immigrant groups, these are, I think, some common features to them.

Lastly, and more briefly, let me say a bit about the rise of Islam in Europe. The last illustration in your handout reminds us that Islam has been in Europe before.

[ 44 : 10 ] this map, there had to be a map, of course, from a geographer, shows the original spread of Islam in the 7th and 8th century from its core in Saudi Arabia right around the Mediterranean and, of course, into Spain.

Spain. And in 732, Arab armies entered France from their base, their control of Spain, and they were eventually turned back at the Battle of Poitiers in 732, not many days march from Paris. So here, as early as the 8th century, there's a strong military movement of Islam northwards. Almost a thousand years later, Turkish armies of the Ottoman Empire spread through southeast Europe and back into Spain. Their greatest advance was in central Europe right up to the gates of Vienna, where they were defeated by the king of Poland in the great battle in 1683. It said that in celebration of this victory, the Viennese bakers, you know the Viennese bakers are to this day something to savour, the Viennese bakers made a pastry shaped like the Islamic crescent and baked it.

[ 45 : 45 ] And so was born the croissant. So you think of the religious statement you're making. Muslims entered the Russian Empire during this period and today are 10-15% of the Russian state, a much higher proportion in Russia than in Western Europe.

Possibly by 2050, Muslims will comprise 20% population of France and Germany. Now does this matter? The media, of course, give us a particular take of Muslims.

What we see are the terrorist fringe. But what about Muslims in Vancouver? The largest groups here are Iranians and East Miley's from East Africa.

Both are very Western Muslim and very moderate. And this is true of many Muslims in Europe as well. Here, in fact, many Iranians are cultural rather than religious and have, in fact, fled fundamentalist Islam in their home country.

a remarkable survey in France showed that only about 5% of Muslims attend mosques regularly. And a third pray daily.

[ 47 : 17 ] In other words, there are signs of religious decline in the second generation amongst European Muslims. It's not only Christianity that has to engage the forces that house our secularization.

there is a good deal of evidence of assimilation of Muslims. Their birth rates, for example, are dropping rapidly as well, just like other Europeans.

Westernization is occurring. More European and moderate interpretations, Euro-Islam as it's called, are emerging.

And even in their home countries, the birth rate has dropped precipitously in the last decade. Both Algeria and Turkey now have birth rates below replacement rates.

So in other words, there are significant and rapid changes occurring within Islam as well. But one element, and this is where I'm going to draw to a close, is a turn to orthodoxy in European, indeed in global Islam, especially in disappointed young men of the second generation.

[ 48 : 41 ] And also, surprisingly, alienated young white Europeans. There's a French sociologist who said that alienated French students used to become Marxists, now they become Muslims.

The levels of conversions are surprising. This was something that quite surprised me in Jacob's study. With the number of French and German converts to Islam, between 50 and 100,000 in each country.

Militants are dominated by the Wahhabi movement that originated in Saudi Arabia. It's been spread into Europe by Saudi oil money that has trained imams and built sometimes palatial mosques.

This militant brand reacts against Western, especially American, foreign policy in the Middle East, and against what they see as a corrupt and hedonistic secular culture in the West.

Of all of the Islamic groups in Europe, Pakistanis seem the most receptive to this line of preaching, and they, of course, are most numerous in Britain.

[ 50 : 03 ] The attitudinal gap between Muslims and non-Muslims is wider in England than in other parts of Europe. For example, in 2006, fewer than 20% of British Muslims believed that Arabs were responsible for the 9-11 attack in New York.

Fewer than 20% of British Muslims believed that Arabs were behind that event. That's how big the attitudinal gap is. In contrast, in France, where there have been riots again recently, as there were the huge riots of 2005, those riots don't seem to have a religious base.

They were really class struggles of the excluded rather than religious struggles. We have to be careful in our own naming here, and the BBC has a policy, it doesn't talk about Muslim riots.

And the argument is, when the Afro-Americans rioted in American cities in the 1960s, did we call those Christian riots?

Even though, of course, there's a high proportion of Christian belief amongst African Americans. So, too, we have to be careful not to create almost a self-perpetuated reality here.

[ 51 : 36 ] At the end of the day, Jenkins has a modest optimism that the positive signals he sees in European Christianity will bear fruit.

And I'll just quote his final sentence. Quite possibly, the current sense of doom surrounding European Christianity will drive a renewal movement in the near future.

Death and resurrection are not just fundamental doctrines of Christianity, they represent a historical model of the religion's structure and development.

Thank you. So, Bill, question time?

All right. Let's see if you have got any points. I'm quite well aware that some of you here will probably have some examples of what I've been talking about, so feel free not just to ask questions but to make comments as well.

[ 52 : 43 ] There are a lot of these lands have become Christians as well. Yes. Yeah, they are. I haven't seen information on that, but the most notable one, Jim will know about this, is the Bishop of Rochester, is it?

Who is the son of Pakistani immigrants? Bishop of Rochester in the Indian Church. Yes. I was going to add to that also, the airwaves in Egypt are working hard, Christian, it is, working hard at getting the news out of the gospel, and they're getting all sorts of people responding.

And they're looking for support, you know, they have the real struggle, financially. Yes, that is an angle that's missing in this presentation, is the evangelical work amongst, Christian work amongst Muslims.

Thank you for that support. Somebody else who had that hand up? Yes, Harvey? Talk about how strong in Europe, I take it, how strong in Europe is there are other movements that say, I think the precedence was the 19th century, let's use Christianity to restore our Europeanism, and defend ourselves from that which waters down our European culture.

I take it that there, is that significant? Should we appreciate that or be wary of it? I think there's a certain amount of caution there, because some of the right-wing movements of the 1930s tried to do that, draw the Christian church into the constitution of a new folk culture, and I think that that fascist experiment in countries like Spain, for example, has made, has created some caution.

[ 54 : 51 ] immigration. There are right-wing political parties in Europe, which are at the very least critical of immigration, and I think in that private beliefs have much stronger views than that.

I'm not aware, I certainly don't know all of them in detail, but I'm not aware of the use of Christendom as part of their vision building.

Of course, there is the debate in the EU about whether they should allow Turkey to become the minister, and that is being very strongly opposed, I think, by Southwazie, for instance, and probably French opinion in general, and Merkel, I think, in Germany is also very much against it.

Yes, the two countries with the largest Islamic populations in Europe, both of them are very uneasy about Turkey joining the EU, because what that would allow, of course, is within EU countries there is a free movement of labor without passport control.

People can work anywhere in Europe. So there would undoubtedly be significant movement of workers out of Turkey if that were the case.

[ 56 : 24 ] Yes, that is an important part of the discussion. Religion plays an important subtext in that discussion. But it's interesting you said that Turkey, in fact, birth rate there was dropped.

Yes. Which amazes me. Yes. You think of an Islamic country it's overwhelmingly Islamic. Yes. It's having a huge birth rate.

Iran now has a balloon replacement birth rate. I mean, it's just astonishing how this phenomenon is spreading.

Turkey, however, is a secular state and I think we would do well to take that seriously, particularly Europe, in that they are not militant, the PKK were, and the Kurds still are, somewhat.

But they are looking for their own state, not a place to immigrate to. And I think they need to be supported. I also think they have become terribly dispirited in my visits there about ever ever getting into the EU.

[ 57 : 36 ] They say they want us to do these three things, so they do these three things, and then they think out three more. And this is exactly what has happened to them. This is not an exaggeration.

There is yet this other thing that you have to do to qualify. And they are desperately not wanting to be identified with Arab Muslims. We don't behead people in the marketplace.

You know, this kind of stuff. And the militants are not coming from Turkey. They are coming from the Arab world, and perhaps beyond. And I'm thinking Pakistan as I say that.

But I think we need to support that secularism. You know, every mosque is independent of every other mosque. There is nobody that speaks for Islam like the Pope speaks for Christianity or specifically Catholicism.

And this also, I think, can be used positively. What you have said about charismatic leaders is, of course, a danger with Islam, as it is with fundamentalist Christian groups.

[ 58 : 49 ] But the idea that there is not one big chunk of Islam all supporting the same person or the same leader. There's got to be an advantage in there somewhere if we could find out what it was.

My problem with my Muslim friends is that they're tribal Muslims. They have no real religious interest at all. But, you know, to be an Afghan is to be Muslim.

They cannot think of being anything else. The same with one of my Persian friends. you know, it doesn't fit. We're Muslims, you know, haven't been to a mosque in years, are not getting married by whoever it is that marries them.

And yet, they couldn't imagine giving it up for anything else. And I think that tribal Muslim group, we need to be able to find a way into that because they are right around us.

Yes. I've been following your discussion on Christianity 3 online about Casey Finland where I was born, about a pastor who did his own beliefs and used to serve as a woman pastor.

[ 59 : 59 ] He was charged by the government and a three of his church leaders also. I think all of them have criminal records now. They were forced to pay fines. And the discussion seems to be there's a growing fear perhaps that governments in the state, even in countries where there was a strong state church are going to be clamping down on religious or human rights grounds on free expression of Christianity.

Germany's already branded cults. And Christian churches, evangelical churches have cults. Of course, Scientology might be fixed. But is this a growing trend?

What do you see happening? Yes. Jenkins has a short discussion of this and uses several examples to talk about the way in which the values of secular Europe are moving further and further away from the values of Christian belief.

And another example of this, though I haven't been following this in detail, but it seems from what I've read that the British government has put more demanding expectations on churches in threatened over the same-sex blessings issue than has happened in Canada with churches.

There's even some legal uncertainty whether there is the right to refuse a same-sex blessing. The legal, in terms of a new law, which are rights laws.

[ 61 : 33 ] So I think that this is an area where we would expect to see more and more as the state reflecting its population moves further into a post-Christian era.

It's simply going to forget or dispense with the values upon which western states were built. Yes? David, is it true that the greatest declines in Christian activity have been in those countries where Christianity was entrenched in the state church?

And if this is so, is it due to the seepage of unhealthy political influence into the church through the control of its leadership?

that's an interesting thesis. I don't know which countries did not, I mean, the Catholic church, would you see that as a space?

USA versus Europe. Oh, I see, I see. Well, not every European country has a state church.

[ 62 : 51 ] I mean, it would be an interesting comparison to see whether there are differentials. I don't know the answer to what I'm saying for this, but that's an interesting question to pursue.

My hunch is that in the European context, it wouldn't be a key factor. I mean, Poland really is the anomaly in Europe, and I suppose before that, Ireland, it's difficult to see different institutional arrangements there and with other Catholic countries.

Within the Protestant countries, I don't have enough information on the precise church-state relationship to give you a quick answer.

in connection with the defiance of the Protestant churches of Europe, you would have to take into account the spread of liberal theology, which at bottom, and I won't be very radical, or simplify inevitably as I do this, but basically the liberal theology has identified with what it has seen as the

development of human culture.

It has assumed that religiosity is natural to everyone, and also that loving behavior, that is to say, altruistic behavior, behavior which concerns itself with the welfare of others, is natural to everybody if people are nurtured and encouraged to grow and develop in a natural way.

[ 64 : 53 ] This, of course, has linked liberal liberals very often with various forms of socialism which are battling various forms of traditional culture which, so the liberal theologians have alleged, keeps people from growing up in the natural way.

And the fighting point there has been the doctrine of original sin among Protestants. I mean, those who affirm original sin have been attacked as committed, right from the word go, to a pattern of nurture which is unnatural to people, and will actually instill into them the weaknesses, the moral weaknesses and vices, which liberal theology says would not be there if nurture was natural. Isn't it? Well, liberal theology thinking and behaving this way and structuring church life in a way that turns the churches into communities that offer in quotes natural nurture in different ways, liberal theology has become a pawn in the hands of power politics.

And the last of the most striking example of this was the German Christians in Nazi days. But it's been an endemic weakness in Protestantism in Europe ever since the middle of the 19th century when liberal theology got a grip.

And that's all part of the story that's it. If you're going to explore the relations between church and governors, governments, it's really part of the sadder story of the church being swallowed by post-Christian secularizing trends in the culture, which simply pulled Christianity out of shame.

[ 67 : 18 ] And then the liberals thought they were leading the culture. But in truth, the culture was leading them. It is. It's quite a story. I mustn't say any more about it.

But do let's remember this is a major factor as we think of the decline of Protestant religion in Europe. Perhaps I can say one more thing. The upsurge, and it is something of an upsurge, of evangelical religion in the last half century, not only in North America, though it has happened in North America, but in other parts of the world as well.

This has something to do with leaders turning their back on liberal theology, fighting it, rejecting it, and going back to the old truth about original sin and our lostness without Christ and our need of something called conversion.

And so you've got all around the world this new template of evangelicalism built around the reality of conversion, new birth, life change that brings deliverance from sin, from the guilt of sin, from the power of sin.

And that is transcultural. That's happening all over the place. China, Africa, North America, I guess. It's happening on a small scale in Britain with these immigrant wealth bodies and with charismatic and evangelical British churches.

[ 69 : 03 ] It's a very significant feature of the scene, I think, and perhaps we should hope that Philip Jenkins will get around to write the book about it. Thank you, Jim.

Sorry. One last question. I think our time is up, isn't it, Bill? Jean, though, has wanted to ask a question. I think what you said about education is very important because in 1944, there was an Education Act in Britain and all the children learnt about the Old Testament and the New and whatever school you were at.

Now my great nephews don't know anything. They just know about a Hindu because that's more colourful. And when I taught certificate of religious knowledge, they learnt Acts and Luke.

This was before they left school. Today, my nephews are all doing ethics and other questions with nothing to do with the Bible at all. It's completely changed. I'm sure this has had a tremendous input into their reading.

Okay. What is the truth? Thank you, David.