### Реферат по лингвострановедению

#### **Religion in Britain**

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# Introduction

Barely 16 per cent of the adult population of Britain belongs to one of the Christian churches, and this proportion continues to decline. Yet the regional variation is revealing. In England only 12 per cent of the adult population are members of a church. The further one travels from London, however, the greater the attendance: in Wales 22 per cent, in Scotland 36 per cent and in Northern Ireland no fewer than 75 per cent.

Today there is complete freedom of practice, regardless of religion or sect. However, until the mid-nineteenth century, those who did not belong to the Church of England, the official 'established' or state church, were barred from some public offices. The established church still plays a powerful role in national life, in spite of the relatively few people who are active members of it.

# The Church of England

There are two established or state churches in Britain: the Church of England, or Anglican Church as it is also called, and the Church of Scotland, or 'Kirk'. In 1533 the English king, Henry VIII, broke away from Rome and declared himself head of the Church in England. His reason was political: the Pope's refusal to allow him to divorce his wife, who had failed to produce a son. Apart from this administrative break, the Church at first remained more Catholic than Protestant. However, during the next two centuries when religion was a vital political issue in Europe, the Church of England became more Protestant in belief as well as organization.

Ever since 1534 the monarch has been Supreme Governor of the Church of England. No one may take the throne who is not a member of the Church of England. For any Protestant this would be unlikely to be a problem, since the Church of England already includes a wide variety of Protestant belief. However, if the monarch or the next in line to the throne decided to marry a Roman Catholic or a divorcee, this might cause a constitutional crisis. It has always been understood that if such a marriage went ahead, the monarch or heir would have to give up their claim to the throne, and to being Supreme Governor of the Church. In 1936 Edward VIII, who had only just succeeded to the throne, abdicated in order to marry a divorcee. Today it is more likely that the monarch or heir would marry the person he or she loved, and would renounce the title of Supreme Governor of the Church. It might pose a constitutional crisis, but is less likely to be one for the Church. The senior Anglican cleric, the Archbishop of Canterbury, crowns the monarch but if the monarch renounced Supreme Governorship of the Church, this ceremony might be abandoned or radically changed.

As Head of the Church of England, the monarch appoints the archbishops, bishops and deans of the Church, on the recommendation of the Prime Minister, who might well not be an Anglican. The Prime Minister makes a recommendation from two nominee candidates, put forward by a special Crown Appointments Commission (composed of bishops, clergy and lay members of the Church). All Anglican clergy must take an oath of allegiance to the Crown, a difficult proposition for any priest who is a republican at heart. Thus Church and Crown in England are closely entwined, with mutual bonds of responsibility.

The most senior spiritual leaders of the Church of England are the Archbishop of Canterbury, who is 'Primate of All England', and the Archbishop of York, who is 'Primate of England'. They are head of the two ecclesiastical provinces of England, Canterbury and York. Both provinces are divided into dioceses, each under a bishop. Canterbury is the larger province, containing 30 dioceses, while York contains only 14. The choice of Canterbury and York is historical. Canterbury is the site of where St Augustine reestablished the Christian church in England at the end of the sixth century. The see of York was founded in the early seventh century by an envoy of St Augustine to this capital of Northumbria. (The Celtic churches which survived in Ireland and Scotland were well established two centuries earlier.)

The senior bishops are those of London, Durham and Winchester, but there is no guarantee of promotion according to seniority. George Carey, for example, the present (103rd) Archbishop, was previously Bishop of Bath and Wells, no longer considered a senior bishopric. Because of the growth in population, some bishops are assisted by deputies assigned to a geographical part of the diocese. These are 'suffragan' bishops. Each diocese is composed of parishes, the basic unit of the Church's ministry. Each parish has a vicar, or sometimes a team of vicars, if it includes more than one church.

The Archbishop of Canterbury is head of the Anglican 'Communion'. This Communion is composed of the various independent churches which have grown out of the Church of England in various parts of the world. In fact England accounts for only two of the 28 provinces of the Anglican Church. In theory, about 40 per cent of the English might say they were members of the Church of England. Far fewer ever actually attend church and only one million regularly attend, a drop of over 13 per cent since 1988. It is also a small proportion of the 70 million active Anglicans worldwide. More Nigerians, for example, than English are regular attenders of the Anglican Church. Within the worldwide Anglican Communion are some famous people, for example Desmond Tutu, head of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission and once Archbishop of Cape Town. It is said that most of the 'ruling establishment' of Washington belong to the Episcopal Church, the Anglican Church of the United States. The Scottish Episcopal Church, the Church in Wales and the Church of Ireland are members of the Anglican Communion but are not 'established' churches and have memberships of not more than about 100,000 each.

Once in every 10 years the Archbishop of Canterbury invites all the bishops of the Anglican Communion to a conference at Lambeth in London to exchange views and debate issues of concern. Rather like the Commonwealth Conference, the Lambeth Conference provides an opportunity for the sister churches from every continent to meet and share their different concerns and perspectives.

The Church of England is frequently considered to be a 'broad' church because it includes a wide variety of belief and practice. Traditionally there have been two poles in membership, the Evangelicals and the Anglo-Catholics. The Evangelicals, who have become proportionately stronger in recent years, give greater emphasis to basing all faith and practice on the Bible. There are over one million British evangelicals of different Protestant churches belonging to an umbrella group, the Evangelical Alliance. The Anglo-Catholics give greater weight to Church tradition and Catholic practices, and do not feel the same level of disagreement as many Evangelicals concerning the teaching and practices of the Roman Catholic Church. There is an uneasy relationship between the two wings of the Church, which sometimes breaks into open hostility.

Yet most Evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics are united in their deeper dislike of the liberal theologians within the Church of England. These have challenged the literal validity of several beliefs of the Church, and have argued that reinterpretation must constantly take place, partly as a result of recent biblical scholarship, but also because they maintain that theological understanding changes as society itself changes and develops over the years. In that sense, one can divide the Church of England in a different way, into conservatives and modernists. It is estimated that 80 per cent of the Church of England are of evangelical persuasion, and the balance is divided almost equally between Anglo-Catholics and liberals.

However, a large number of church-goers either feel no particular loyalty to any of these traditions, or feel more comfortable somewhere between these poles. Since most bishops are theologians, the liberals are more strongly represented among the bishops than sheer numbers in church membership justifies.

The Church of England is above all things a church of compromise. It is, in the words of one journalist, 'a Church where there has traditionally been space on the pew for heretics and unbelievers, doubters and sceptics'. It takes a long view and distrusts zealous theological or ideological certainty. It prefers to live with disagreements of belief rather than apply authoritarian decisions. It fudges issues where it can, to keep its broad body of believers together. Most of its members are happy with the arrangement. In that sense the Church of England is profoundly typical of the English character. It distrusts the rigid logic of a particular tradition of theology and prefers the illogical but practical atmosphere of 'live and let live' within a broader church climate. Consequently there is always a concern to ensure that all wings of the Church are represented among the bishops, and that those appointed as archbishops shall be neither too controversial in their theology, nor too committed to one particular wing of the Church as to be unacceptable to others.

The Church is governed by its bishops. In that sense it is a hierarchical organization. Nevertheless its regulating and legislative body is the General Synod, made up of three 'Houses', the House of Bishops (53 diocesan and suffragan bishops), the House of Clergy (259 representatives of the clergy) and the House of Laity (258 representatives of lay members of the Church). The General Synod meets twice yearly with two functions: (1) to consider matters concerning the Church of England, and to take any necessary steps for its effective operation; (2) to consider and express its opinion on any matters of religious or public interest. In order to reach agreement on any issue, General Synod requires a majority in each House, in the words of one religious commentator, 'a clumsy and largely ineffective cross between a parliament and a democracy. It is a typical Anglican compromise.'

This has been particularly true in the two areas of greatest controversy within the Church since the mid-1980s: the ordination of women and of homosexuals (and the acceptance of homosexuals already in the priesthood). In both cases the modernists are ranged against the conservatives. After a long and often contentious debate, the Church finally accepted the ordination of women in 1992, and the first were ordained in 1994, long after the practice had been adopted in other parts of the Anglican Communion. Some 200 clergy, fewer than expected, chose to leave the Church of England rather than accept women priests. They were almost all Anglo-Catholic. While great passion was aroused among some clergy and lay people on this issue, the large majority of church-goers did not feel strongly enough, either way, to force a decision. It is unlikely that any woman will become a bishop for some years. Having accepted women priests, a fresh controversy arose over the question of homosexuality with, if anything, even greater vehemence. This time the contest is primarily between modernists and evangelicals, but the essence of the debate is the same: biblical and traditional values versus contemporary social ones. The director general of the Evangelical Alliance claims that 'a vast number of churches stand by 2,000 years of biblical analysis which concludes that homosexual sex is outside the will and purpose of God'. The modernists argue that it is ludicrous to pick one out of many culturally specific prohibitions in the Old Testament, and that a judgmental posture excludes Christians who quite sincerely have a different sexual orientation and perspective from heterosexuals. Modernists say the church should listen and learn from them. It is a controversy likely to persist well into the twenty-first century.

The Church of England was traditionally identified with the ruling establishment and with authority, but it has been distancing itself over the past 25 years or so, and may eventually disengage from the state. 'Disestablishment', as this is known, becomes a topic for discussion each time the Church and state clash over some issue. Since 1979 the Church has been ready to criticize aspects of official social policy.

Nevertheless, the Church of England remains overwhelmingly conventional and middle class in its social composition, having been mainly middle and upper class in character since the Industrial Revolution. Most working-class people in England and Wales who are religious belong to the nonconformist or 'Free' Churches, while others have joined the Catholic Church in the past 140 years.

Because of its position, the Anglican Church has inherited a great legacy of ancient cathedrals and parish churches. It is caught between the value of these magnificent buildings as places of worship, and the enormous cost of their upkeep. The state provides about 10 per cent of the cost of maintaining the fabric of historic churches.

## The other Christian churches

The Free or nonconformist churches are distinguished by having no bishops, or 'episcopacy', and they all admit both women and men to their ministry. The main ones today are: the Methodist Union (400,000 full adult members); the Baptists (150,000); the United Reformed Church (110,000) and the Salvation Army (50,000). These all tend towards strong evangelicalism. In the case of the Methodists and Baptists, there are also smaller splinter groups. In addition there are a considerable number of smaller sects. Most of these churches are, like the Anglicans, in numerical decline.

In Scotland the Church, or Kirk, vehemently rejected the idea of bishops, following a more Calvinist Protestant tradition. Its churches are plain. There is no altar*,* only a table, and the emphasis is on the pulpit, where the Gospel is preached. The Kirk is more democratic than the Anglican Church. Although each kirk is assigned a minister, it also elects itsown 'elders'. The minister and one of these elders represent the kirk at the regional presbytery. Each of the 46 presbyteries of Scotland elects two commissioners to represent it at the principal governing body of the Church, the General Assembly. Each year the commissioners meet in the General Assembly, and elect a Moderator to chair the General Assembly for that year. Unlike the Church of England, the Church of Scotland is subject neither to the Crown nor to Parliament, and takes pride in its independence from state authority, for which it fought in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In keeping with its democratic nature, it admits women as well as men to the ministry.

Among all these Protestant churches, but particularly among the larger English ones, there has been a recent important development called the 'house church' movement. This began in the 1970sand has a membership of roughly 90,000, although attendance is far higher. This movement is a network of autonomous 'churches' of usually not more than 100 members in each. These churches meet, usuallyin groups of 15 or 20, in members’ homes for worship and prayer meetings. Most of those joining such groups are in the 20-40 year-old age range and belong to the professional middle classes - solicitors,doctors and so forth - who have felt frustrated with the more ponderous style of the larger churches. They try to recapture what they imagine was the vitality of the early church. But it is doubtful how long these house churches will last. If they are anything like some of the revivalist sects of the nineteenth century, they in their turn will lose their vitality, and discontented members may return to the churches which their predecessors left, or drift away from the Christian church altogether.

The Protestant churches of Britain undoubtedly owe part of the revival taking place in some evangelical churches to the vitality of the West Indian churches. West Indian immigrants in the 1950s and 1960s were not welcomed into Anglican churches, and many decided to form their own churches. Their music and informal joyfulness of worship spread quickly in evangelical circles. As Philip Mohabir, a West Indian, describes:

*Congregations that would have been cold, dull and boring, would now sing to* *guitar music, clap their hands, and even play tambourines. Those were things that only West Indian churches did...* . *Now people would raise their hands in the air and clap and even dance. English, white, evangelical Christians dancing and clapping their hands, praising God. That in itself is a miracle we West Indian Christians never thought would happen.*

The Roman Catholic Church only returned to Britain in 1850. During the preceding 300 years the few Catholic families, which refused to accept the new Church, were popularly viewed as less than wholeheartedly English. The English Protestant prejudice that to be Catholic is to be not quite wholly English only really disappeared in the 1960s.

The Roman Catholic Church grew rapidly after 1850, particularly among the industrial working class. By the mid-1980s it had about 5.7 million members, of whom 1.4 million were regular attenders. By the mid-1990s this had fallen to 1.1 million attenders, a decline of over 17 per cent. Alongside growing secularism in society, many have left the Catholic Church because of its authoritarian conservatism, particularly in the field of sexual mores. It is estimated that attendance will barely exceed 600,000 by the year 2005. The Catholic Church in England is composed of four main strands: immigrants from Ireland; working-class people in deprived areas among whom Catholic effort was concentrated in the nineteenth century; a few upper-class families; and finally middle-class converts, for example a bishop of London and two government ministers who all left the Anglican church and became Catholics over the Anglican ordination of women in 1992. The senior English cleric is the Archbishop of Westminster.

All the formal churches are in numerical decline. Each time there is a census of church attendance and membership, the numbers in almost every church have fallen. In 1970 there were an estimated 8.6 million practising Christians. By 1994 the figure had fallen to 6.5 million. At Christmas, the major festival, perhaps 5 million will attend church, but on a normal Sunday it is barely half this figure. One must conclude that numerical decline will probably continue in an age when people feel no apparent need for organized religion. But the decline may not be as dramatic as the figures suggest. Many church-goers have ceased to be regular simply because they often go away at weekends. Within the Church the debate is bound to continue between the modernists who wish to reinterpret religion according to the values of the age they live in, and conservatives who believe it is precisely the supernatural elements, which attract people in the age of science.

On the national stage the Church has made its greatest mark in recent years in the area of social justice. In 1985 the Church of England produced a report, *Faith in the City: A* *Call for Action by Church and Nation,* which examined inner-city deprivation and decline, and recommended measures both by church and state to reverse the trends. The Roman Catholic and Free Churches showed similar concern at increased social deprivation in the 1980s. Today the Church is no longer seen as an integral part of the establishment but as possibly its most formidable critic.

Besides these 'orthodox' churches which accept the doctrine of the Trinity, there are others which have their own specific beliefs, and are consequently viewed as outside orthodoxy. The Mormon Church which is strong in the United States, has doubled its membership to about 200,000 in the past 20 years. Other non-Trinitarian churches have also grown, part of an alternative form of spirituality which has been attractive to many people since the 1960s.

# Other religions

Apart from Christianity, there are at least five other religions with a substantial number of adherents in Britain. These are usually composed of either immigrants or the descendants of immigrants.

The oldest is the Jewish community, which now numbers barely 300,000, of whom fewer than half ever attend synagogue and only 80,000 are actual synagogue members. Today the Jewish community in Britain is ageing and shrinking, on account of assimilation and a relatively low birth rate, and is in rapid decline. A survey in 1996 revealed that 44 per cent of Jewish men under the age of 40 are married to or are living with a non-Jewish partner.

Between 20 and 25 per cent of Jewish women in this age range also marry outside the community. Even so, it is the second largest Jewish community in Western Europe. Two-thirds of the community live in London, with another 9,000 or so in Manchester and Leeds respectively, and another 6,000 in Brighton.

Jews returned to England in the seventeenth century, after their previous expulsion in the thirteenth century. At first those who returned, were Sephardic, that is, originally from Spain and Portugal, but during the last years of the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century a more substantial number of Ashkenazi (Germanic and East European) Jews, fleeing persecution, arrived. Ashkenazis form 70 per cent of British Jews.

As a result of these two separate origins, and as a result of the growth of Progressive Judaism (the Reform and Liberal branches), the Jews are divided into different religious groups. The largest group, approximately 120,000, are Orthodox and belong to the United Synagogues. They look to the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain for spiritual leadership. A much smaller number of Sephardic Orthodox still recognize a different leader, the Haham. The two Progressive groups, the Reform and Liberal Jews, which roughly equate with the broad church and modernists of the Anglican Church, have no acknowledged single leader, but they do have a number of rabbis who command a following among those who admire their wisdom. The Progressives account for 17 per cent of the entire community. Thirty-seven per cent of Jews claim no religious affiliation at all.

There is also a Board of Deputies of British Jews, the lay representation of Anglo-Jewry since 1760, to which 250 synagogues and organizations in Britain elect representatives. It speaks on behalf of British Jewry on a wide variety of matters, but its degree of genuine representation is qualified in two ways: fewer than half of Britain's Jews belong to the electing synagogues and organizations; and none of the community's more eminent members belongs to the Board. In fact many leading members of the community are often uneasy with the position the Board takes on issues.

As in the Christian church, the fundamentalist part of Jewry seems to grow compared with other groups, especially among the young, and causes similar discomfort for those who do not share its certainties and legal observances. The most obvious concentrations of orthodox Jews, who are distinguishable by their dress, are in the north London suburbs of Golders Green and Stamford Hill.

There are also more recently established religious groups: Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and Muslims. The most important of these, not only on account of its size, is the Muslim community. There are 1.5 million Muslims and over 1,000 mosques and prayer centres, of which the most important (in all Western Europe) is the London Central Mosque at Regent's Park. There are probably 900,000 Muslims who regularly attend these mosques. Most are of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin, but there are also an increasing number of British converts. Apart from London, there are sizeable Muslim communities in Liverpool, Manchester, Leicester, Birmingham, Bradford, Cardiff, Edinburgh and Glasgow. Islam gives coherence and a sense of community to people of different ethnic origins. It also gives Britain informal lines of communication with several Muslim countries.

During the past quarter century, since large numbers of Muslims arrived in Britain, there has been a tension between those Muslims who sought an accommodation between Islam and Western secular society, one might call them modernists, and those who have wanted to uphold traditional Islamic values even when these directly conflicted with secular social values. The tension has been made worse by the racism Asian Muslims feel in British society. Until 1989 it might be said that those Muslims who were relatively successful economically and socially were the prevailing example of how Muslims could live successfully in the West. However, in 1988 many Muslims were deeply offended by the publication of Salman Rushdie's book *The Satanic Verses,* which they considered to be blasphemous.

Many Muslims were offended by the reaction they saw from the rest of society and from government. The blasphemy law, mainly on account of its age, only applied to Christianity, so they were unable to prosecute Rushdie. But perhaps what they found most offensive was the patronising attitude of non-Muslim liberals, who lectured them on the values of a democratic society in a way which was dismissive of Muslim identity and feeling. Muslims found themselves in conflict with those who had previously been perceived as their friends, those of the secular left who had championed immigrant rights and most strongly opposed racism.

After the Rushdie affair other external factors also stimulated a Muslim revival, including the Gulf War (1991) and also the suffering of Bosnian Muslims (1994-6).

Within the British Muslim community as a whole, which like Jewish and Christian communities, is divided into different sects and traditions, modernists lost influence to traditionalist leaders. Mosque attendance increased and religious observance became an outward symbol of Muslim assertion. In 1985 only about 20 per cent of Muslims were actually religiously observant. By 1995 that figure had risen to about 50 per cent.

Yet the Islam of young British Muslims is different from that of their parents. It is less grounded in the culture of the countries from which their parents came. Young Muslims come from several different ethnic origins but they all share their religion and their British culture and education.

This is leading to a 'Britain-specific' form of Islam. As a result, in the words of one religious affairs journalist, 'For every child who drifts into the moral relativism of contemporary Western values, another returns home with a belief in a revitalised form of Islam. Many parents find the second just as difficult to come to terms with as the first.'

British Islam is sufficiently vibrant that a Muslim paper, *Q-News,* now appears regularly. One of its editors is a woman, Fozia Bora, itself a statement on the relatively liberal culture of British Islam. Indeed, a new sense of self-confidence emerged out of the initial feeling of alienation over *The Satanic Verses.* It is partly self-assertion against anti-Islamic prejudice, but it is also the comfort felt in a relatively tolerant environment. Fozia Bora believes that 'Britain is a good place be Muslim. There is a tradition of religious and intellectual freedom.' In the opinion of Dr Zaki Badawi, one of Britain's foremost Muslims, 'Britain is the best place in the world to be a Muslim – most Muslim states are tyrannies and things are harder elsewhere in Europe.'

Anti-Islamic feeling, however, remains a factor in racial tensions in Britain. In the words of the Runnymede Trust, which concerns itself with race relations, 'Islamophobic discourse, sometimes blatant but frequently subtle and coded, is part of the fabric of everyday life in modern Britain, in much the same way that anti-Semitic discourse was taken for granted earlier this century.'

There are other areas of Muslim frustration. Some want Muslim family law to be recognised within British law, a measure which would allow Muslim communities in Britain to follow an entirely separate lifestyle governed by their own laws. Others want state-supported Muslim schools, where children, particularly girls, may receive a specifically Muslim education in a stricter moral atmosphere than exists in secular state schools. The state already provides such funding for Anglican, Catholic and Jewish schools within the state system. It was only in 1997 that the first Muslim school obtained financial support from the state.

Smaller communities include about 450,000 Sikhs who mainly originate in the Indian Punjab. They live mainly in London, Manchester and Birmingham. There are over 200 *gurdwaras* or temples in Britain. There are about 320,000 Hindus living mainly in Leicester, London and Manchester. There are about 150 *mandirs* in which Hindus worship, the largest, in Neasden, north-west London, is also the largest outside India.

## Conclusion

From this report we can see that there are two established or state churches in Britain: the Church of England, or Anglican Church as it is also called, and the Church of Scotland, or 'Kirk'.

Besides these 'orthodox' churches which accept the doctrine of the Trinity, there are others which have their own specific beliefs, and are consequently viewed as outside orthodoxy.

Apart from Christianity, there are at least five other religions with a substantial number of adherents in Britain. These are usually composed of either immigrants or the descendants of immigrants.

Outsiders sometimes see possible tensions between one religion and another. They are less aware of the often greater tensions within each religion or sect between conservatives and liberals. In many religious groups there is a conservative wing which has little time for, or interest in, other religions and which disapproves of its own liberal co-religionists. By contrast, these liberals usually welcome dialogue and warm relations between religions, and enjoy the rich pluralism of a multi-faith society. But regardless of viewpoint, most people in Britain whether religious or not, consider the matter of faith to be a private and personal matter.

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