

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION AND THE NON-EPISCOPAL CHURCHES.

A STATISTICAL STUDY.

BY THE REV. THOS. J. PULVERTAFT, M.A., Vicar of St. Paul's-
at-Kilburn.

MANY years ago the writer was placed in charge of a flourishing Temperance Society and was handed the Pledge Roll. On analysis he found that the total was by no means representative of membership, for the Roll had not been revised for many years and there were a large number of duplicate signatures of those who had broken their pledge and signed again. Later he was asked to make a statistical survey of a group of Churches, and wrote to the Clergy in charge for the average number in attendance at the Sunday and Weekday services. On analysing the figures he was impressed by the difference between them and his own observations. Inquiry discovered that in the opinion of some of the Clergy "average attendance" meant adding together the largest number present at a service during the year and the smallest congregation. Dividing the sum by two, the average attendance was easily secured!

Wherever we turn in the pursuit of accurate figures in connexion with Church attachment we are met by difficulties. Take the case of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States. In the last published American statistics of Membership of the American Churches, we have the membership for 1926 given as 1,859,086. With the exception of the Roman Church the other figures profess to state the number of enrolled members and we naturally took the figure as denoting this fact. A well-known annual, *The Churchman's Year Book for 1929*, says: "There are about 4,500,000 adherents, of whom 1,200,987 rank as communicants." We are informed (*Review of the Churches*, July, 1929) that between 1916, when the number returned was 1,092,821, and 1926, the Protestant Episcopal Church changed its basis of computation of membership from Communicants only to Communicants plus all those whose names are on the Baptismal Rolls of the parishes. And last year when an inquiry was made by a Commission into the state of the dioceses in some eastern districts, the numbers were considerably reduced.

If we turn to the Mission Field we find similar perplexities. Take the proposed Union of Churches in South India. The totals given are:

	Communicants.	Other Baptized Persons.	Unbaptized Adherents.
Anglicans	106,362	228,142	61,379
Wesleyans	17,187	82,727	11,642
South India United Church	43,749	138,042	49,644

A glance will prove that the ratio between the figures given for the three Churches points to differing policies. Further examination of the details will make plain that local conditions to some extent account for the contrasting figures, for in the Diocese of Dornakal there are 29,000 Communicants, 74,000 Other Baptized Persons and 54,000 Unbaptized Adherents, whereas in the Diocese of Madras there are 12,000 Communicants, 38,000 Other Baptized Persons, and no return of Unbaptized Adherents. We mention these two sets of facts to prove the difficulties that await any effort to prepare comparative statistics.

A further complication arises when we consider the lands where there is a religious census and those where there is not any such census taken by the State. An eminent Antipodean Bishop has said that "the Church of England is the Residuary Legatee of all Australians who have no religious connexion." This may be true of Australia and other Dominions, but of Ireland it certainly is not true, for there, on the part of the vast majority, Membership of the Church indicates more than a nominal attachment to the Church. The following figures, which make no claim to infallibility, are the result of an inquiry into the returns made in some instances by the State, in others by the Churches concerned, and in some cases by an attempt to estimate the truth—as far as it can be gathered between conflicting returns. The most recent review of the Religions of the World is to be found in Slosser's *Christian Unity, Its History and Challenge*; but in spite of the manifest care evidenced by the compiler, in very many instances corrections are necessary.

Let us first review the Protestant English-speaking world.

EPISCOPAL CHURCHES.

	pop.	Communicants.	Census.
England and Wales	37,886,699	2,715,571	—
Scotland . . .	4,882,497	50,206	—
Ireland . . .	4,228,553	—	502,939
Canada . . .	8,788,483	—	1,407,939
Newfoundland . . .	263,033	—	84,665
Australia . . .	6,262,720	—	2,372,995
New Zealand . . .	1,344,469	—	514,607
U.S.A., say . . .	94,820,915	1,200,000	—
Totals . . .	158,477,369	<u>3,965,777</u>	<u>4,883,145</u>

In the Official Returns, *Church of England Year Book* (1929), we learn that the Church population of eight dioceses in Australia is 910,444 and the number of Communicants in these dioceses is 115,186. These vary from 5,573 out of a Church population of 153,285 in Perth to 29,832 out of a Church population of 31,905 in Bunbury. With these figures there must be something wrong, which we do not feel competent to remedy.

NON-EPISCOPAL CHURCHES.

	Membership.	Census.
England and Wales :		
Baptist	417,527	—
Congregational	451,000	—
Methodist	1,133,343	—
Presbyterian	85,109	—
Scotland :		
Baptist	23,079	—
Presbyterian	1,299,183	—
Methodist	16,499	—
Ireland :		
Presbyterian	—	425,623
Methodist	—	50,217
Canada :		
Baptist	—	421,731
Presbyterian	—	1,407,944
Methodist	—	1,159,458
Congregational	—	30,730
Newfoundland :		
Presbyterian	—	1,876
Methodist	—	74,205
Australia :		
Baptist	—	99,542
Congregational	—	75,513
Methodist	—	632,629
Presbyterian	—	636,974
New Zealand :		
Baptist	—	19,926
Congregational	—	7,977
Methodist	—	112,344
Presbyterian	—	299,545
United States America :		
Baptist	8,440,922	—
Disciples of Christ	1,377,595	—
Lutheran	5,258,623	—
Methodist	8,070,619	—
Presbyterian	2,626,284	—
Reformed Bodies	617,551	—
Congregational	881,696	—
Other Protestant Bodies	1,733,000	—
Totals	<u>32,432,030</u>	<u>5,456,234</u>

It must be remembered that the Lutheran figures embrace Members enrolled as well as all those entered in Baptismal Registers.

SOUTH AFRICA.

The position in South Africa presents peculiar difficulties, as the returns are incomplete and in some cases the coloured population is included with the white. The following represent the totals of the figures for Cape Colony, the Transvaal and Orange Free State. Whites and coloured are classed together :

Dutch Churches	1,090,809
Anglicans	613,026
Congregationalists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Baptists, etc.	1,336,010

It will be seen that the Non-Episcopal Protestants outnumber the Anglicans by nearly four to one.

THE CONTINENT OF EUROPE.

The Church of Sweden is Episcopal and is in communion with the Lutheran Non-Episcopal Churches. It is recognized by the Lambeth Conference as an Episcopal Church. *De facto* it is in communion with the Church of England, but the question of *de jure* communion has been challenged by a number of Anglo-Catholics. It is practically coterminous with the Kingdom and has a census membership of about 6,000,000.

The Non-Episcopal Churches of the Continent have their main strength in Germany, Norway, Denmark, Holland and Switzerland, and their total census returns exceed 50,000,000.

The conclusions to be drawn from the above figures may be summarized:—Omitting South Africa, the Anglican Communion has in the English-speaking lands a communicant membership of 3,965,777 and an adherent census of 4,883,145. These figures do not overlap. The Church of Sweden has a census strength of 6,000,000. The Non-Episcopal Churches in English-speaking lands and in Europe have a membership of 32,432,030 and a census adherence of about 5,456,234. These figures do not overlap. It is evident that a correct proportional comparison of these figures by reducing in some way or other the census to membership and communicant status is impossible, for the factor of 2·8 adherents for every member breaks down when tested in different lands. If an opinion can be formed on the figures it may be stated that roughly the Anglican Communion represents, at most, in the countries under review one eighth of the total Protestant forces.

THE MISSION FIELD.

In spite of all the efforts to standardize Missionary returns, anyone who examines those that have been made is at once struck by facts similar to those we have shown to exist in the South India returns. They are incomplete, the tests are not the same, and when we compare authorities we find considerable variation. Roughly, and we cannot say that it is more than roughly, it is estimated that there are attached to Anglican Mission Centres in Africa about one-sixth of those attached to the Missions of Non-Episcopal Churches. We confess that after struggling with the figures provided in books of reference and in Missionary literature we are totally unable to come to any more definite conclusion. It may be that our estimate of the relative strength of Anglican Missionary effort is too high—but one of the greatest needs of the statistics of Missions is a survey of African work and its codification.

When we turn to India the Government Census supplies us with a basis, but we have not deducted the British element in India from the direct fruit of Missionary work. The British-born residents in India numbered 115,000 at the last census.

There were at the last census 533,000 adherents of the Anglican Communion in India and 1,360,000 adherents of Non-Episcopal Churches. In Ceylon there are 44,000 Anglicans and 30,000 Non-Episcopal Christians. In China, out of a total Protestant population of 790,000, Anglicans numbered 53,387. In Japan there are 23,000 Anglicans to 260,000 Non-Episcopal Christians. In Korea 2,857 Anglicans to 94,000 attached to the Non-Episcopal Churches. Other interesting figures are, in Formosa there are 8,200 Presbyterians, in Malay 4,000 Non-Anglicans and 5,000 Anglicans, in the Dutch West Indies a population of 470,000 Protestants, in the Philippine Islands 2,000 Anglicans and 31,000 Non-Anglican Protestants.

It may be said that we have not considered the various Archipelagoes and the West Indies. The figures are very difficult to correlate and as regards the West Indies, we found it impossible to place any reliance on the statistics brought to our notice.

It is generally estimated by Missionary Authorities that the work of Anglican Missions judged by mission workers and native adherents represents about one-eighth of the total Mission work maintained by the Churches of the Reformation.

Two closing observations may be made.

(1) Compared, as far as comparison is possible, it will be seen that the Anglican Communion in English-speaking and Protestant lands represents about one-eighth of Reformed Christendom. The same proportion, broadly, is reflected in Mission work. In discussing all questions of Reunion the relative strength of the Churches concerned must be borne in mind, and it is clear that no sphere of work gives a better opportunity for Anglican statesmanship to make itself felt than the South India area by reason of the number of Anglicans and the position of the Anglican Church.

(2) On a review of the figures quoted it will be concluded that the Communicants in the Church of England and the Church in Wales with their forty-nine dioceses outnumber the Communicants in the more than 250 other Anglican dioceses. No more fallacious basis of growth and comparison can be found than by numbering dioceses, for they vary in size from a diocese with but four to five or six clergy to the Diocese of London with its more than 1,200 Clergy. The path of a statistician is full of pitfalls and an amateur cannot altogether escape them. He can only do his best with the material at his disposal and the present writer has striven to present the figures in an impartial manner. He hopes that some trained statistician will endeavour to place all the facts and figures before the Christian public, for it is essential, that when comparisons are made of the world position of the Anglican Communion and other Communion, a true statistical basis should exist. As it is, all kinds of loose statements are being made and there is no trustworthy compilation that will enable them to be tested.