WHERE IS CHRISTIANITY HEADING?

Posted on February 3, 2009 by Eddie

Category: Church: UK

Two completely differing views of the future of the Church in Britain have come across my sights today. Firstly, Tear Fund have published something saying that church attendance has increased in the UK (I mentioned this last week - but there was nothing on their web site at that point).

> *â€˜We have noticed that in the last year, there has been a significant increase in monthly attendance, bringing the figure for autumn 2008 to 15 per cent after a number of years of reported decline,â€™ says Matthew Frost, Chief Executive of Tearfund.Â â€˜Similarly, the proportion of UK adults attending church at least once a year has increased from 21 per cent in 2007 to 26 per cent in 2008, which is an increase from around one in five adults to around one in four.*
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> *â€˜Our understanding is that more people are attending now than before, even if that is only a couple of times a year rather than every week.Â This might mean going to church at one of the high points in their familyâ€™s year, such as Christmas or Easter, or attending Sunday services or midweek events.*
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> *â€˜This is of course immensely encouraging, because it shows that people are associating church and a belief in God with hope and joy, and a positive way to spend their time.â€™ (read the full press release here).*

On the other hand, I've come across three articles by iMonk predicting the end of evangelicalism:

> *I believe that we are on the verge- within 10 years- of a major collapse of evangelical Christianity; a collapse that will follow the deterioration of the mainline Protestant world and that will fundamentally alter the religious and cultural environment in the West. I believe this evangelical collapse will happen with astonishing statistical speed; that within two generations of where we are now evangelicalism will be a house deserted of half its current occupants, leaving in its wake nothing that can revitalize evangelicals to their former â€œglory.â€*
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> *The party is almost over for evangelicals; a party thatâ€™s been going strong since the beginning of the â€œProtestantâ€ 20th century. We are soon going to be living in a very secular and religiously antagonistic 21st century in a culture that will be between 25-30% non-religious.*
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> *This collapse, will, I believe, herald the arrival of an anti-Christian chapter of the post-Christian west and will change the way tens of millions of people see the entire realm of religion. Intolerance of Christianity will rise to levels many of us have not believed possible in our lifetimes, and public policy will become particularly hostile towards evangelical Christianity, increasingly seeing it as the opponent of the good of individuals and society.*

This is from the first of three articles that you should read.

Part 1 - The Coming Collapse

Part 2 - What Will Be Left

Part 3 - Good or Bad?

HT: John Meunier

All of this on an afternoon when I am trying to predict the trends which will have an impact on Wycliffe over the next ten years. Do I go with Tear Fund or with iMonk, or do I pick a midline. Your thoughts would be welcome.