

Traditional and Non-traditional Beliefs among Christian Worshipers



Results from Wave 2 of the U.S. Congregational Life Survey

Jack Marcum

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

jack.marcum@pcusa.org



U.S. Congregational Life Survey

- Wave 1: April 2001
- Wave 2: Fall 2008 and Spring 2009
- Funded by Lilly Endowment, Louisville Institute, PC(USA)
- Based on prior research in Australia and New Zealand



What Makes the US CLS Unique?

- Includes random sample of congregations
- All worshipers complete survey
- Survey distributed in worship
- Provides resources for congregations
- Provides benchmarks for comparison



Four Surveys

- Attendee Survey
- Congregational Profile
- Leader Survey
- Associate Leader Survey (new in Wave 2)

Results in this presentation are from the attendee survey



Traditional Christian Beliefs 1



	Mainline n = 284	Evangel n = 162	Catholic n = 387
	% responding <i>true</i> ‡		
There is a life beyond death***	82%	96%	90%
Jesus will return to earth some day***	73%	96%	80%
Only followers of Jesus Christ can be saved***	33%	78%	27%
After his crucifixion, Jesus was raised bodily from the dead***	78%	94%	91%
God can suspend the laws of the universe to intervene in human affairs***	58%	82%	58%
‡Other options: <i>not true, unsure</i> ; on all of these, <i>unsure</i> is more frequent other response			
*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001			

Traditional Christian Beliefs 2



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	Mainline N = 284	Evangel N=162	Catholic N= 387
<i>Do you believe in:</i>	% responding yest		
Miracles?***	86%	98%	95%
Heaven?***	87%	98%	95%
Angels?***	78%	99%	92%
Hell?***	64%	96%	82%
*†Other options: <i>no, unsure; on all of these, unsure is more frequent other response</i> *p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001			

New Age Beliefs



	Mainline N = 284	Evangel N=162	Catholic N= 387
	% responding <i>true</i> ‡		
The position of the stars and planets influences people's lives (astrology)***	15%	2%	13%
After death our souls return to earth in another body (reincarnation)***	10%	5%	9%
Extraterrestrial beings in spacecraft have visited the earth*	9%	10%	10%
<i>Do you believe in:</i>	% responding <i>yes</i> †		
Extrasensory perception? **	35%	25%	36%
‡Other options: <i>not true, unsure</i> ; on all of these, <i>not true</i> is the more frequent other response			
†Other options: <i>no, unsure</i> *p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001			

New Age Experiences 1



	Mainline n = 284	Evangel n = 162	Catholic n = 387
<i>In last five years, how often have you:</i>	% responding <i>often</i> or <i>sometimes</i> †		
Practiced Eastern meditation?*	16%	5%	13%
Felt the presence of a guardian angel?	69%	69%	73%
Sought direction from a horoscope, tarot, fortune teller or similar method?	9%	6%	13%
†Other option: <i>never</i> *p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001			

New Age Experiences 2



	Mainline n = 284	Evangel n = 162	Catholic n = 387
<i>In last five years, how often have you:</i>	% responding <i>often</i> or <i>sometimes</i> †		
Explored or used psychic healing or crystals?*	6%	1%	6%
Read books or attended seminars connected with New Age Movement?	13%	6%	8%
<i>Do you regularly read:</i>	% responding <i>yes</i> ‡		
Your horoscope or astrological forecast in a magazine or newspaper?	18%	7%	21%
†Other option: <i>never</i> ‡Other options: <i>no, unsure; no most frequent</i> *p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001			

Indexes



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<i>Index</i>	Possible Range	Actual Range	Mean/ Median	s.d.	α
Traditional Christian Beliefs Life after death; second coming of Jesus; resurrection of Jesus; God can intervene in human affairs; miracles; heaven; hell	1-3	1.1-3	2.8/3.0	.36	.37
New Age Beliefs Astrology; ETs from UFOs; reincarnation; ESP	1-3	1-3	1.8/1.8	.37	.76
New Age Experiences Guardian angels; Eastern meditation; sought guidance from tarots or horoscopes; psychic healing or crystals; read New Age books; read horoscope regularly	1-3	1-3	1.4/1.3	.35	.53

Index Means, Medians by Denominational Groupings



<i>Index</i>	Mainline	Evangelical	Catholic
Traditional Christian Beliefs			
Mean	2.65	2.94	2.81
Median	2.86	3.00	3.00
New Age Beliefs			
Mean	1.79	1.88	1.78
Median	1.75	2.00	1.75
New Age Experiences			
Mean	1.50	1.37	1.48
Median	1.33	1.33	1.33

Correlations among Indexes



<i>Index</i>	TCB Index	NAB Index	NAE Index
Traditional Christian Beliefs (TCB) Life after death; second coming of Jesus; resurrection of Jesus; God can intervene in human affairs; miracles; heaven; hell		.12 (.001)	-0.02 (.479)
New Age Beliefs (NAB) Astrology; ETs from UFOs; reincarnation; ESP			.11 (.003)
New Age Experiences (NAE) Guardian angels; Eastern meditation; sought guidance from tarots or horoscopes; psychic healing or crystals; read New Age books; read regularly horoscope			

Regression Analysis



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	<i>Dependent Variable</i>		
	TCB Index	NAB Index	NAE Index
<i>Variables in the Regression†</i>	<i>b coefficients</i>		
Gender (1 = female; 0 = male)	.057*	.039	.078**
Income (5 ordinal categories)	-.006	.017*	-.021**
Marital status (1 = married; 0 otherwise)	-.009	.006	-.062*
Catholic‡ (1 = Catholic; 0 otherwise)	.151***	.002	-.020
Evangelical‡ (1 = Evangelical; 0 otherwise)	.265***	.044	-.117**
Intercept	2.772	1.827	1.406
R ²	.098	.016	.072
F	12.364***	1.809	8.583***
†Other variables in the models (none significant): age; education ‡Omitted category is mainline			
*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001			

Broad Conclusions

- Majorities accept each of the Christian beliefs, except for one about salvation apart from Jesus
- Relatively few worshipers hold New Age beliefs or have had New Age experiences
- Exception: Guardian angels
- Lesser exception: ESP



Denominational Conclusions 1

- Christian beliefs vary across denominational groupings, depending on the issue; but:
 - More evangelicals hold traditional beliefs on every issue; and
 - Catholics tend to be closer to evangelicals on issues, with the exception of God's ability to suspend the laws of nature and salvation outside of Christ



Denominational Conclusions 2

- New Age beliefs/practices also vary by denominational groupings, such that:
 - Evangelicals tend to be the most skeptical, except regarding UFOs and guardian angels
 - Catholics and mainliners look more similar to each other than to evangelicals for many New Age items; exceptions include use of horoscopes (mainline closer to evangelical), reading New Age books (Catholic closer to evangelical)

