

The New World follows the old West

North America and Australia and New Zealand in Oceania have been colonised by Christian Europeans and these regions were largely Christian at the beginning of the twentieth century. In recent decades, both these regions are experiencing a rising wave of Irreligion. In this trend away from religion, the New World seems to following the old western world of Europe.

In 1900, 97 percent of the population of North America was Christian. That ratio has declined to around 79 percent in 2010. This is mainly because nearly 15 percent of the population has now become Agnostic or Atheist. In 1900, only 1.2 percent of the people there could be characterised thus. Their share was less than 5 percent even in 1970. There has been some rise in the share of Muslims and of the adherents of other—mainly Indian and Chinese—religions, especially in the decades following 1970. But the more significant change in the religious profile of the region is in the rise of Irreligion.

The phenomenon is more pronounced in Canada, where nearly 21 percent of the population has become Irreligious now in 2010; share of the Irreligious in the USA is nearer 14 percent. Canada also has relatively larger presence of the followers of Islam and other, mainly Asian, religions who now form 2.3 and 6.4 percent of the population, respectively. These shares in the USA are 1.5 and 3 percent, respectively. Thus, notwithstanding the considerable migration into North America in recent decades, share of non-Christian migrants in the population is not very high. Decline in Christianity there is mainly because of the loss of faith among Christians of European origin.

Australia and New Zealand—the two countries of Oceania colonised by people of European stock—were nearly entirely Christian at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 2010, the share of Christians has declined to 73 percent in Australia and 61 percent in New Zealand and that of the Irreligious has risen to 20 and 32 percent, respectively. Like Canada in North America, New Zealand in Oceania has a relatively higher share of the Irreligious. There are also about 2 percent Muslims in Australia and 1 percent in New Zealand. Both countries have about 5 percent share of others, mainly Asian, religionists.

Interestingly, other countries of Oceania, which are inhabited mainly by the indigenous people, have not come under the sway of Irreligion. Native populations of these countries, which have been nearly fully converted to Christianity, continue to follow the faith. Most of these countries, therefore, remain largely Christian. The only remarkable exception is Fiji, which has a large but declining presence of Indian Religionists. Hindus (including Sikhs and Jains) form 28.4 percent of the population of Fiji in 2010; their share in 1970 was near 41 percent.

Loss of faith thus seems to be an attribute of the European people, not only within old Europe but also in those regions of the New World where they have settled. In the earlier part of the twentieth century, parts of Europe became Irreligious under the influence of Marxism; in recent decades, the same phenomenon is occurring, perhaps as a culmination of the excessive commitment to the ideals of reason and individualism.

Religious profile of North America

Population (in thousands) of different religions in North America					
	1900	1970	1990	2000	2010
Total	81,626	231,540	281,988	309,630	344,529
Christians	78,812	211,420	240,458	260,624	271,554
Non-R/Atheist	1,012	10,999	25,332	30,153	50,275
Jews	1,516	6,994	5,885	6,024	5,602
Muslims	10	842	3,810	4,450	5,492
Others	276	1,285	6,502	8,379	11,607
Percent share of different religions in the population					
Christians	96.55	91.31	85.27	84.17	78.82
Non-R/Atheist	1.24	4.75	8.98	9.74	14.59
Jews	1.86	3.02	2.09	1.95	1.63
Muslims	0.01	0.36	1.35	1.44	1.59
Others	0.34	0.55	2.31	2.71	3.37

There are no Crypto-Christians in North America. Sources of data are as indicated in our [earlier blog](#).

Like Europe, North America is a Christian continent

North America was colonised by the European people. They brought their Christian faith with them. Therefore, at the beginning of the century nearly 97 percent of the population of the continent was Christian. Of 82 million people in 1900, 79 million were Christian. Among the rest, about 1.5 million were Jews and about 1 million professed no religion. There were only 10 thousand Muslims and 276 thousand adherents of other religions in the whole of North America then.

Like in Europe, Irreligion has been spreading

The most significant change in the religious profile of North America seen in the Table above is in the growth of Irreligion, especially in recent decades. The share of the Irreligious in the population of North America rose from 1.24 percent in 1900 to 4.75 percent in 1970 and has since risen to 14.59 percent. This is similar to, though somewhat milder than, the trend in North and West Europe from where many of the early immigrants into this part of the American continent have arrived. It is mainly because of rise in the numbers of the Irreligious that the share of Christians in the population has declined from around 97 percent in 1900 to 79 percent in 2010.

But rise of Muslims is not as rapid as in Europe

Share of Muslims in the population of North America has risen from almost nothing in 1900 to 1.6 percent now, and much of this rise has happened in recent decades. The increase, however, is not comparable with what is happening in many parts of Europe.

Expelled Jews found shelter in North America

In the earlier half of the twentieth century, Europe went through a phase of decimation and expulsion of Jews. Some of them found shelter in North America. Their share in the population, therefore, went up from 1.9 percent in 1900 to 3 percent in 1970; it has since declined to 1.6 percent. The absolute number of Jews in 2010 at 5.6 million is below their population of nearly 7 million in 1970.

Others

Besides Christians, Jews, Muslims and the Irreligious, North America has a considerable population of the adherents of other religions. In 2010, there are 11.6 million such adherents in the continent. In comparison, Europe has only 5.6 million persons in this category. These ‘others’ in North America form 3.37 percent of the population; in Europe, only the United Kingdom has a comparable presence of such adherents.

Others are of Asian origin

The number and share of ‘others’ in North America has been rising since 1900, but the increase has been more rapid in recent decades, probably because of the increased immigration from Asia since the 1960s. Most of the persons in this category are adherents of Asian religions. Of their total population of 11.6 million in 2010, 5.3 million are Buddhists or followers of various Chinese religions and 2.5 million are Hindus, Sikhs or Jains. Besides them, there are 1.7 million New Religionists, who are perhaps followers of the multiplicity of religious movement and cults that have been mushrooming in the United States of America, 1.2 million Ethnic Religionists and half a million Baha’is. Numbers of all these adherents have increased considerably since 1970, though there has been a decline in the number of Baha’is during the last decade. In 1900, there were only a few adherents of these religions in North America.

	Other Religions in North America				
	1900	1970	1990	2000	2010
Hindus	1	120	975	1,327	1,835
Sikhs	0	8	400	528	607
Jains	0	0	5	7	100
Buddhists	40	216	2,060	2,701	4,454
Chinese R*	75	120	816	921	856
Ethnic R	145	83	289	444	1,221
New R	0	112	590	842	1,710
Baha’is	3	162	629	786	561
Spiritists	0	0	131	151	242

*Daoists and Shintoists have been added to Chinese R.

Religious profile of the USA and Canada

	USA			CANADA		
	1900	1970	2010	1900	1970	2010
Total	75,995	210,111	310,384	5,592	21,324	34,017
Christians	96.41	90.99	79.88	98.42	94.42	69.13
Non-R/Atheist	1.32	4.89	13.93	0.20	3.41	20.69
Jews	1.97	3.19	1.65	0.29	1.38	1.41
Muslims	0.01	0.38	1.51	0.00	0.20	2.34
Others	0.28	0.55	3.03	1.09	0.59	6.44

Total population in thousands; other rows give percent share of the named community in the total population.

Irreligion is much more prevalent in Canada

North America comprises mainly the United States of America and Canada. Of these two, Canada has been affected more strongly than the USA by the current wave of Irreligion sweeping through the western world. Share of the Non-Religious and the Atheists in the population of Canada is now nearly 21 percent compared to about 14 percent in the USA. In 1970, the Irreligious formed about 5 percent of the population of USA and 3.4 percent of Canada. In 1900 also, share of the Irreligious was higher in USA than in Canada.

Canada has a higher presence of Muslims

The share of Muslims in Canada at 2.34 percent is also higher than in the USA at 1.51 percent. In 1900, and even in 1970, there were not many Muslims in either of these two.

Share of 'others' is also higher in Canada

Adherents of religions other than Christianity and Islam have a share of nearly 6.5 percent in Canada and only about 3 percent in the USA. This is because of the considerable presence of Indian and Chinese Religionists. In 2010, there are 1.2 percent Hindus and Jains and another about 1 percent Sikhs in the population of Canada. There are also about 1.5 percent Buddhists and 2 percent Chinese Religionists. These adherents together add up to 5.7 percent of the total population. Nearly all of this immigration from Asia seems to have happened after 1970. In the USA, Hindus, Sikhs and Jains form only 0.6 percent of the population and Buddhists about 1.3 percent. Share of Chinese Religionists in the USA is only 0.04 percent.

Canada thus has much more of Asian immigrants than the USA. But the sharp decline in the share of Christians to just 69 percent of the population is mainly because of the spread of Irreligion in that country. In the USA, the share of Christians is relatively higher at nearly 80 percent. Incidentally, the USA also has a considerable share of African-Americans and of immigrants from Latin America, who are largely Christian and have continued to retain the faith. Canada does not have many Africans or Hispanics.

Smaller countries of North America

Besides the USA and Canada, Bermuda, Greenland and St. Pierre are counted in the region. These three together have a total population of 128 thousand. All three are largely Christian. In Bermuda, presence of Spiritists and the Irreligious is relatively high, reducing the share of Christians to around 90 percent. In Greenland and St. Pierre, Christians form more than 95 percent of the population.

Religious profile of Oceania

Population (in thousands) of different religions in Oceania					
	1900	1970	1990	2000	2010
Total	6,197	19,199	26,242	30,190	36,593
Christians	4,835	17,744	21,853	24,919	28,019
Non-R/Atheist	45	873	3,159	3,659	6,006
Ethnic R	1,253	150	214	261	369
Muslims	13	71	222	300	549
Others	51	361	793	1,051	1,650
Percent share of different religions in the population					
Christians	78.03	92.42	83.28	82.54	76.57
Non-R/Atheist	0.72	4.55	12.04	12.12	16.41
Ethnic R	20.22	0.78	0.82	0.86	1.01
Muslims	0.20	0.37	0.85	0.99	1.50
Others	0.82	1.88	3.02	3.48	4.51

There are no Crypto-Christians in Oceania. Sources of data are indicated in our [earlier blog](#).

Like North America, Oceania is also turning Irreligious

Like the older Christian world, this part of the new world is also passing through widespread loss of faith in the recent decades. Share of the Irreligious in the population of Oceania has risen from less than 1 percent in 1900 and 4.6 percent in 1970 to 16.4 percent now in 2010. Share of Christians in the region at 76.6 percent now is somewhat below their share in North America.

Ethnic Religionist have nearly disappeared

By the beginning of the twentieth century, most of the countries of Oceania had been either colonised by Christian Europeans or their native populations had been converted to Christianity. Only a few countries were left with any significant presence of native ‘Ethnic’ Religions. Of these, Papua New Guinea alone had a large enough population to matter in the continental total. Of 1.2 million Ethnic Religionists in Oceania in 1900, 1.1 million were in this country, where they formed 96 percent of the population. This large population of Ethnic Religionists in Papua New Guinea also meant that they formed more than 20 percent of the population of Oceania. The noticeably low share of Christians in Oceania in 1900 was because of this considerable share of the native ‘Ethnic’ Religionists. By 1970, their number in Papua New Guinea had declined to 114 thousand. Consequently, the share of Ethnic Religionists in Oceania declined from 20 percent to 0.8 percent and that of Christians grew to above 92 percent. Number of Ethnic Religionists in Papua New Guinea and in the whole of Oceania has slightly increased since 1970, but their share remains less than 0.3 percent. This is in a region where the whole population must have followed ‘Ethnic’ religions before the European colonisation.

Muslim share is rising but remains low

Muslim presence in Oceania has been rising in recent decades, but their share in the population in 2010 is only 1.5 percent. Their share was 0.2 percent in 1900 and 0.4 percent in 1970.

Others in Oceania

In 1900, Oceania had 51 thousand adherents of religions other than Christianity, Islam and Ethnic Religions; they included Jews, Hindus, Buddhists and Chinese Religionists, etc. Together they formed more than 0.8 percent of the population, suggesting that the region was already attracting some migration from Asia. Share of these ‘other’ religions has increased considerably since then and now they form 4.5 percent of the population. Of 1.6 million persons in this category in 2010, 566 thousand are Hindus (including Sikhs and Jains), 587 thousand Buddhists and 157 thousand Chinese Religionists (including Daoists and Confucianists). There are also 104 thousand New Religionists and 110 thousand Baha’is in Oceania.

Other Religions in Oceania (‘000)

	1900	1970	2010
Indian R	14	219	566
Buddhists	7	16	587
Chinese R	12	19	157
Jews	17	67	117
Baha’is	0	29	111
New R	0	0	104

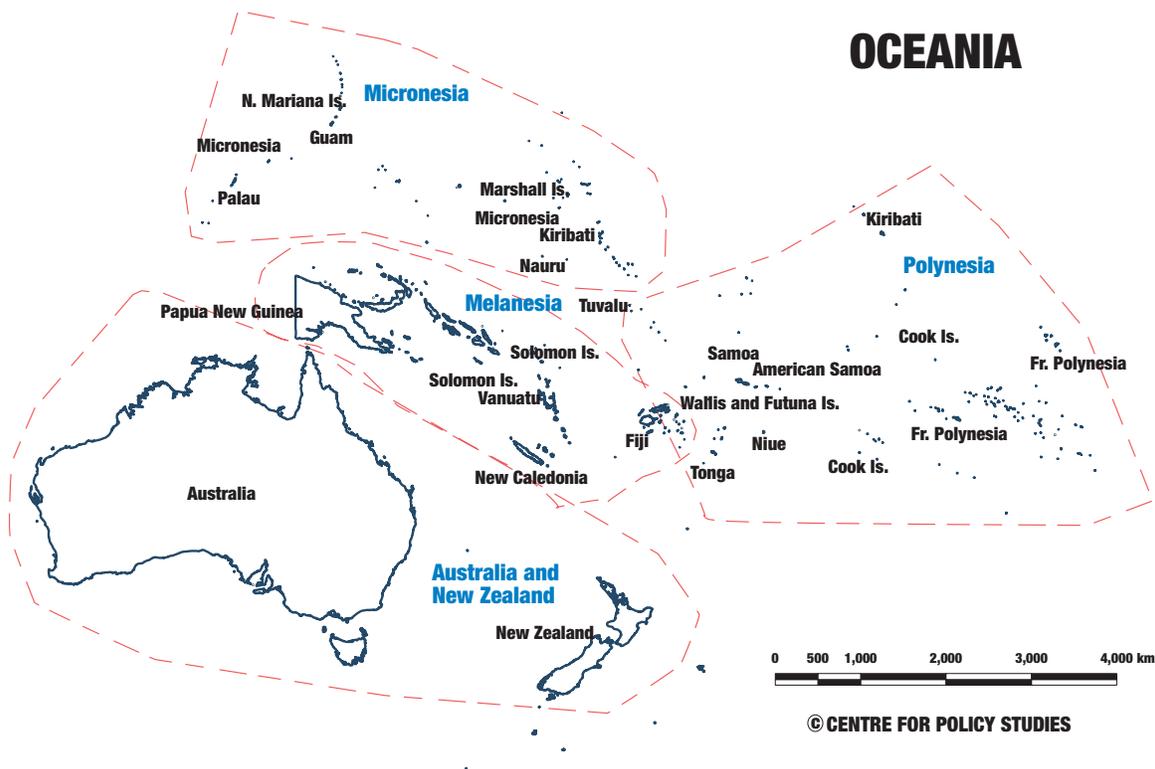
Regions and countries of Oceania

Australia and the Pacific islands

Oceania is the name given to the Australian continent and several Pacific Ocean islands in its vicinity. The region comprises 22 countries besides Australia. But only three of these—Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea—have significantly large populations. Of the total population of 36.6 million in Oceania in 2010, 33.5 million is in these three countries. Fiji and Solomon Islands are the only other two countries with more than half a million population. The remaining 18 countries together have a total population of only 1.7 million in 2010.

Regions of Oceania

Oceania is often divided into four sub-regions: Australia and New Zealand form a sub-region in themselves. Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and New Caledonia are in Melanesia. Polynesia and Micronesia comprise smaller island states. These sub-regions are known to have ethnic and ecological similarities. Australia and New Zealand are inhabited mainly by people of European stock, while the other three regions continue to have mostly indigenous populations. The latter have also been largely converted to Christianity. We shall notice below that the recent wave of Irreligion has affected only Australia and New Zealand, while the native Christian converts of other countries continue to retain their faith.



Religious profile of Australia and New Zealand

	AUSTRALIA			NEW ZEALAND		
	1900	1970	2010	1900	1970	2010
Total	3,770	12,532	22,268	816.2	2,820	4,368
Christians	96.56	92.88	72.77	98.25	95.41	61.03
Non-R/Atheist	1.02	6.08	20.26	0.64	3.52	31.87
Ethnic R	1.33	0.04	0.28	0.49	0.32	0.94
Muslims	0.27	0.20	1.97	0.00	0.04	1.03
Others	0.83	0.80	4.73	0.62	0.72	5.13

Total population in thousands; other rows give percent share of the named community in the total population.

Irreligion has grown in both countries

As seen in the Table here, both Australia and New Zealand were Christian countries in 1900. Adherents of native Ethnic Religions had either been eliminated or converted by then. The two countries remained largely Christian in 1970 also, though the share of the

Irreligious in the population had grown to 6.1 percent in Australia and 3.5 percent in New Zealand. Lack of faith has become rampant in recent decades. In 2010, 32 percent of the people of New Zealand and 20 percent of Australia have turned Atheist or Agnostic. Share of the Irreligious in Australia is similar to Canada; in New Zealand, it is larger than even Netherlands, which is the most Irreligious country in North and West Europe now.

Nearly all of the Irreligious of Oceania are in these two countries

Of 6.0 million Agnostics or Atheists in Oceania in 2010, 5.9 million are in Australia and New Zealand. There are only 103 thousand of them among more than 12 million persons in the rest of Oceania. Of the other countries, only New Caledonia, a French territory with considerable European population, has a relatively high prevalence of Irreligion with 10.4 percent of its population of 251 thousand turning Atheist or Agnostic in 2010.

Muslims have a small but rising presence

Muslims form nearly 2 percent of the population of Australia and 1 percent of New Zealand in 2010. Their presence is thus fairly low. But much of this has arisen in recent decades. There were not many Muslims in these two countries even in 1970. Muslim presence in other parts of Oceania, except Fiji, is miniscule. Of 549 thousand Muslims in Oceania in 2010, 484 thousand are in Australia and New Zealand and 53 thousand in Fiji, leaving only 12 thousand Muslims in the remaining population of about 12 million.

Other Religions

Share of religions other than Christianity and Islam has risen in recent decades. They now form 4.7 percent of the population of Australia and 5.1 percent of New Zealand. These ‘Others’ are largely followers of Indian and Chinese Religions or Buddhists. There are also some Jews, Baha’is and New Religionists. Indian Religionists here include Hindus, Sikhs and Jains. Of 566 thousand Indian Religionists in Oceania in 2010, 321 thousand are in Australia and New Zealand. The remaining 245 thousand are almost all in Fiji. Nearly all of the Buddhists and Chinese Religionists of Oceania are in Australia and New Zealand. Notice the rise that has taken place in the number of Indian Religionists, Buddhists and Chinese Religionists in Australia and New Zealand since 1970 indicating rising migration from Asia.

	1900	1970	2010
Indian R	0	6	321
Buddhists	6	13	562
Chinese R	12	12	143
Jews	17	66	116
Baha’is	0	12	27
New R	0	0	99

Jews

Of 117 thousand Jews in Oceania, 111 thousand are in Australia, where they form nearly half a percent of the population; there are only 5 thousand Jews in New Zealand and only a few of them in other countries of Oceania.

New Religionists

Of 104 thousand New Religionists in Oceania, 95 thousand are in Australia. They also form nearly half a percent of the population. Of the rest, 4 thousand are in New Zealand and about 5 thousand in the rest of Oceania.

Baha'is

Of 111 thousand Baha'is in Oceania in 2010, only 27 thousand are in Australia and New Zealand. Of the rest, 60 thousand are in Papua New Guinea, where they form 0.9 percent of the population. They have share of more than 2 percent in some of the smaller countries of Micronesia.

Papua New Guinea

	Population in thousands			Percent Share		
	1900	1970	2010	1900	1970	2010
Total	1,119	2,315	6,858	100.00	100.00	100.00
Christians	45	2,185	6,503	4.02	94.38	94.82
Ethnic R	1,074	114	233	95.94	4.94	3.40
Baha'is	0	9	60	0.00	0.40	0.87
Non R/Atheists	0	2	42	0.00	0.09	0.61
Others	0	4	20	0.04	0.19	0.29

Indigenous populations have been converted

Papua New Guinea is the second most populous country of Oceania. Its population of 6.9 million in 2010 is one and half times that of New Zealand. Unlike Australia and New Zealand, Papua New Guinea is inhabited largely by indigenous, though ethnically heterogenous, populations. In 1900, nearly 96 percent of the population followed native 'Ethnic' Religions. By 1970, they had been largely converted to Christianity and the share of Ethnic Religions had declined to less than five percent. Since 1970, their share has further shrunk to 3.4 percent. Christians now form 94.8 percent of the population.

Irreligion has not spread to Papua New Guinea

Unlike Australia and New Zealand, Irreligion has not made much headway in Papua New Guinea. Share of the Irreligious in the population has increased from nearly nil in 1970 to just 0.6 percent in 2010. Indigenous populations, it seems, do not turn Irreligious; the few Irreligious in the country are probably among the expatriates from Australia and Europe.

Baha'is

In 2010, there are 60 thousand Baha'is in Papua New Guinea and they form 0.9 percent of the population. The number has increased to this level from about 9 thousand in 1970.

Others

Among 20 thousand 'Others' in the Table above, there are 11.2 thousand Buddhists and 5.1 thousand Chinese Religionists. Chinese have been having a presence in this country for long. There are also several persons from the neighbouring Southeast Asia countries.

Fiji

Fiji had been converted already in 1900

Fiji comprises several small islands in the Melanesian sub-region of Oceania. It is inhabited largely by indigenous Fijians and by persons of Indian descent. The indigenous had been largely converted already in 1900, when 86.5 percent of the population was

Christian. The remaining 13.5 percent comprised Muslims, Hindus or Sikhs, perhaps all of them from India.

	Population in thousands			Percent Share		
	1900	1970	2010	1900	1970	2010
Total	120	520	861	100.00	100.00	100.00
Christians	104	263	550	86.50	50.46	63.88
Muslims	3	41	53	2.17	7.78	6.20
Indian R	14	213	245	11.33	40.96	28.43
Non-R/Atheists	0	3	9	0.00	0.49	1.04
Others	0	2	4	0.00	0.31	0.44

Indians began arriving in late 19th century

Indians began arriving in Fiji from 1879 onwards as indentured labourers brought by the British colonial authorities to work in sugarcane fields. The indenture system continued up to 1916. After 1900, some un-indentured free Indians were also allowed into Fiji. The Indians were mostly Hindus from north India, but there were also some Muslims among them and a few Sikhs. Between 1900 and 1970, the share of Hindus and Sikhs increased from 11.3 to 41 percent and that of Muslims from 2.2 to 7.8 percent. Since then, share of both the Indian Religionists (including Hindus, Sikhs and Jains) and Muslims has been declining. The former now form 28.4 percent and the latter 6.2 percent of the population. The decline is partly because of emigration of Indian Fijians in the face of rising political tensions since the 1980s and partly because of the higher natural growth of native Fijians.

There are not many Atheists or Agnostics in Fiji

There are only about 9 thousand Agnostics or Atheists in Fiji forming about 1 percent of the population. It seems Irreligion is spreading only among the Europeans or people of European stock. It seems to have no attraction for the indigenous people of these parts or for the Indians and other Asians here.

Other Religions

Of 3.8 thousand adherents of ‘other’ religions in Fiji, 2.3 thousand are Baha’is. They form 0.27 percent of the population. Their share was around 0.7 percent in 1990.

Other Countries of Oceania

Solomon Islands

As we have mentioned, Solomon Islands is the only other country of Oceania with more than half a million population in 2010. In 1900, nearly 80 percent of the population followed native Ethnic Religions. By 1970, 94 percent of the population had become Christian. Now the country comprises 95.4 percent Christians and 3.2 percent Ethnic Religionists. Muslims, Buddhists and the Irreligious have a share of about 0.3 percent each and there are 0.6 percent Baha’is.

Smaller countries

The remaining smaller countries of Oceania—mostly inhabited by indigenous populations—are largely Christian. As mentioned earlier, only New Caledonia has a relatively high share of the Irreligious; it also has a fairly high presence of Europeans.

Conclusions

North America

1. North America was colonised by the European people who brought their Christian faith with them. The region, therefore, was nearly 97 percent Christian at the beginning of the twentieth century. There were also 1.9 percent Jews and a few of other religions.
2. In the course of the twentieth century, there has been some growth of other religions. In 2010, Muslims have a share of 1.6 percent and other—mainly Asian—religions comprise another 3.4 percent. Share of Jews has declined slightly to 1.6 percent.
3. But the larger change in the religious profile has happened because of the spread of Irreligion. In 1900, the Irreligious had a share of 1.2 percent in the population; that proportion has risen to 14.6 percent in 2010. Much of this rise has taken place after 1970.
4. Because of this widespread loss of faith in the region, the share of Christians in the population has declined precipitously from 96.6 percent in 1900 to 78.8 percent in 2010.
5. The decline has been even more pronounced in Canada, where Christians now form only 69 percent of the population. Their share in the USA is higher at around 80 percent.
6. This decline in Christianity is because 20.7 percent of the population of Canada has now turned Irreligious; that proportion in the USA is 13.9 percent.
7. Canada also has somewhat higher proportion of Muslims and of the followers of Asian Religions, who form 2.3 and 6.4 percent of the population, respectively, in 2010. The corresponding ratios in the USA are 1.5 and 3.0 percent.

Oceania

8. Like North America, Australia and New Zealand in Oceania have also been colonised by Christian Europeans. Their indigenous populations were eliminated or Christianised. Therefore, Christians formed 96.6 percent of the population of Australia and 98.2 percent of New Zealand in 1900.
9. Like North America, these two countries of Oceania have come under the sway of Irreligion, especially in the recent decades. The Irreligious now comprise 20.3 percent of the population of Australia and 31.9 percent of New Zealand.
10. Share of the Irreligious in New Zealand now is higher than in Netherlands, which has become the most irreligious country of North and West Europe.
11. Because of this spread of Irreligion in Australia and New Zealand, share of Christians in these two countries has declined to 72.8 and 61.0 percent, respectively.

12. Besides Christians and the Irreligious, Australia has about 2 percent Muslims and 4.7 percent adherents of Asian religions. The corresponding proportions for New Zealand are 1.0 and 5.1 percent, respectively.

13. This rise in the share of Muslims and of Asian Religions has also happened in recent decades. But the more remarkable change of this period is in the rise of Irreligion.

14. While Australia and New Zealand have been colonised by people of European stock, other countries in Oceania have continued to retain their indigenous populations. These indigenous populations have been nearly fully Christianised.

15. Unlike Australia and New Zealand, other countries of Oceania with their indigenous Christian converts have not been swayed by the wave of Irreligion passing through the former two. Most of these countries continue to be largely Christian in 2010.

16. Two of the largest countries of Oceania, besides Australia and New Zealand, are Papua New Guinea and Fiji. There are few of the Irreligious in both of these.

17. Papua New Guinea with a population that is one and half times that of New Zealand continues to be 94.8 percent Christian. In 1900, nearly 96 percent of the population of Papua New Guinea followed native Ethnic Religions. Nearly all of them have been converted and have remained steadfast in their new faith.

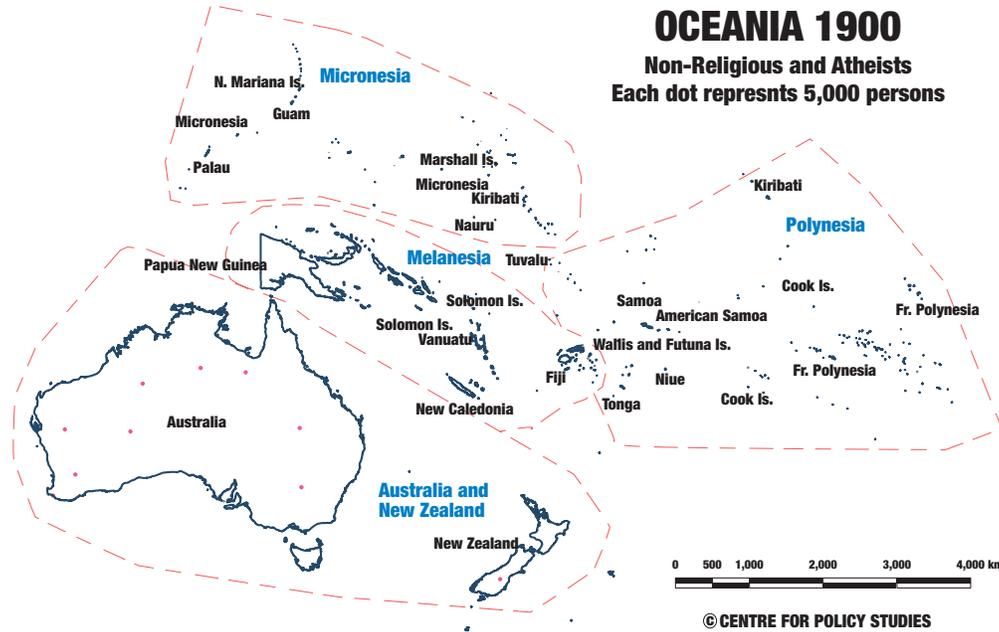
18. Fiji has much smaller population than Papua New Guinea. Like elsewhere in Oceania, the indigenous Fijians have been nearly fully converted to Christianity.

19. Fiji also has a considerable proportion of people of Indian descent. There are 28.4 percent Hindus (including Sikhs and Jains) and 6.2 percent Muslims in the population of Fiji in 2010. Christians form 63.9 percent of the population. In 1970, the share of Hindus was higher at 41.0 percent and Christians formed 50.5 percent of the population then.

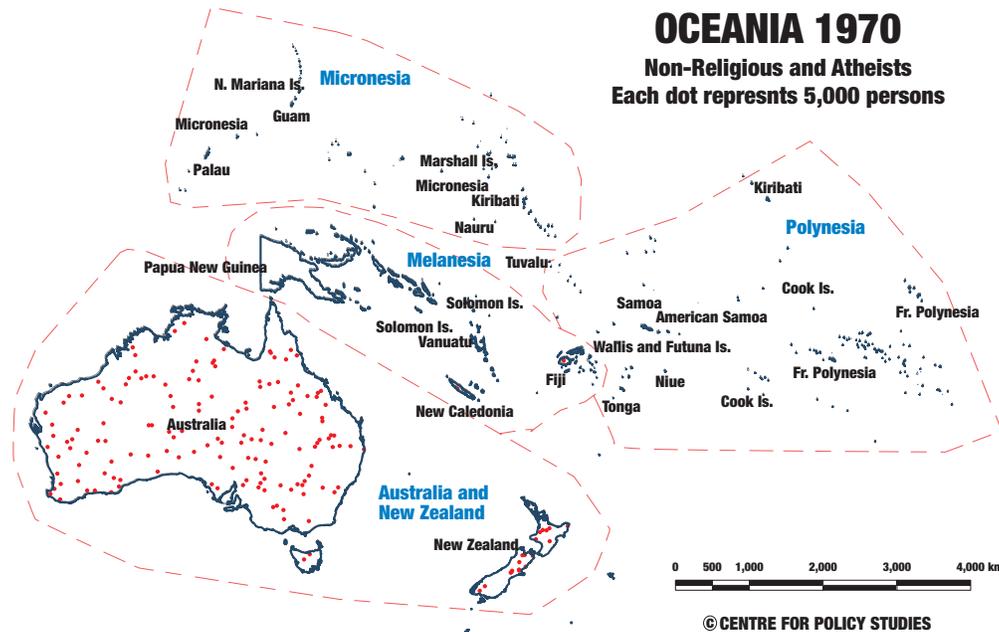
20. Irreligion thus seems to be a phenomenon restricted to Europeans. They are losing faith not only in their native Europe but other parts of the world where they have settled. It is indeed interesting to see the indigenous people of those parts, whom the Europeans have converted to Christianity, remaining steadfast in their new faith while the Europeans themselves, in their neighbourhood and in Europe proper, are turning away from religion.

Maps showing spread of Irreligion in Oceania

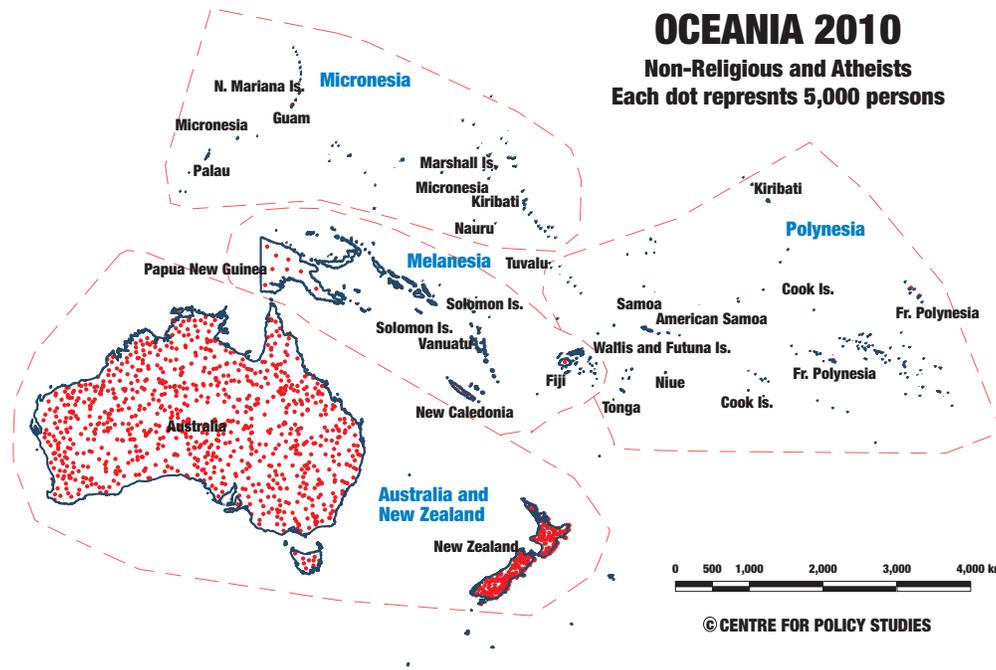
The maps below graphically depict the spread of Irreligion through Oceania in the course of the twentieth century.



In 1900, there were about 44.7 thousand Agnostics or Atheists in Oceania. Of them, 38.5 thousand were in Australia and another 5.2 thousand in New Zealand. There were only a thousand Agnostics or Atheists in the rest of Oceania.



Number of the Irreligious grew to 873 thousand in 1970. Of these, 762 thousand were in Australia and 99 thousand in New Zealand. Only about 12 thousand were in the rest of Oceania.



In 2010, number of the Irreligious in Oceania has grown to 6 million. Of these, 4.5 million are in Australia and 1.4 million in New Zealand. Of the remaining about 100 thousand, 42 thousand are in Papua New Guinea and 26 thousand in North Caledonia. The latter has a considerable presence of European in its tiny population of 251 thousand.