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The French Connection — Worldview, Missionaries, and Fertility Rates

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Over the past two centuries or so, France has transformed itself into one of the most secularized cultures on earth. The worldview of the French is increasingly devoid of any Christian reference, and a particularly radical form of secularism fills much of the nation's public space.

Now, *The Telegraph* [London] reports that British evangelicals are targeting France as a mission field — a field more lacking in Christian witness than Africa or Asia. From the article:

New figures show that the modern missionary is eschewing countries such as Nigeria, Papua New Guinea or India in favour of that unlikely heart of darkness: France. The latest edition of Religious Trends, a compilation of Christian statistics published last week, shows that France overtook Kenya last year as the leading destination for British mission agencies.

In further evidence that Europe is increasingly seen as more spiritually needy than Africa or Asia, in third place is another country with strong Roman Catholic roots, Spain.

There has been a crisis of confidence in Christianity across Europe," said Martin Thompson of the Church Mission Society. "We are beginning to see Europe as a strategic priority." According to France Mission, there are more mediums and occult practitioners in France than there are registered doctors, and practising Muslims outnumber practising evangelical Christians by 12 to one.

That is an amazing statistic — practicing Muslims outnumber practicing evangelical Christians by twelve to one. No wonder the nation now appears as a 'strategic priority' for missions.

Meanwhile, the French birth rate has dropped to 1.9 per couple — below the replacement rate. Now, the French government proposes to reward mothers who have a third child with a stipend of up to \$1,250 per month.

Writing last year in *The Telegraph* [London], columnist Barbara Amiel observed: *France is facing the problem that dare not speak its name. Though French law prohibits the census from any reference to ethnic background or religion, many demographers estimate that as much as 20 [to] 30 percent of the population under 25 is now Muslim. . . . Given current birthrates, it is not impossible that in 25 years France will have a Muslim majority. The consequences are dynamic: Is it possible that secular France might become an Islamic state?*

