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SURVEYING CHRISTIAN BELIEFS AND RELIGIOUS DEBATES IN POST-WAR BRITAIN

Ben Clements

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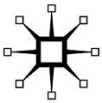

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For Kyriaki and Erini

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1
Introduction

Abstract: *This introductory chapter reviews evidence relating to different aspects of religious change and secularisation in British society and sets the wider context for the book's core themes. It sets out the aims and scope of the book, the broad methodological approach followed and the range of sources used. It introduces the main sources in terms of recurrent social surveys and opinion polls. It outlines the distinctive but interrelated focus of the chapters and the empirical contribution each one makes. It emphasises that the analyses and findings reported in each chapter contribute to wider scholarly debates over the nature and extent of religious change and secularisation ins post-war Britain.*

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Religious change and secularisation in Britain

In a classic definition, secularisation refers to the 'process whereby religious thinking, practice and institutions, lose social significance' (Wilson 1966: xiv). In Britain religion has undergone a process of privatisation in recent decades, losing some of its social functions as well as authority and influence in the sphere of politics (Bruce 2012: 164). Bruce has argued that 'every index of religious interest and involvement in Britain shows decline. It is the consistency of the data which is significant' (2013: 374). Of course, this decline particularly affects Christian traditions: the 'social reach' or 'penumbra' of Christianity has clearly receded (Bruce 2013: 374). Field has observed that 'organized Christianity has been in retreat between the 1960s and 2010s, and on any number of fronts', noting that in 'critical performance indicators (membership, attendance, rites of passage, and affiliation) net commitment to institutional Christianity has decreased in contemporary Britain' (2014c: 192, 193). A range of evidence can be adduced to document the nature and extent of religious change – that is, in terms of popular engagement with religion – in areas such as belonging, behaving, believing and public attitudes towards the role and relevance of religious faith, institutions and leaders.

In terms of religious *belonging*, several key trends are apparent. The growing number of 'religious nones' – that is, those who do not identify with any religion – in the population is a key trend in recent years. Indeed, religious affiliation was preponderant until relatively recently (Field 2014b). Based on recent survey readings, the 'religious nones' approach or amount to half of the adult population: British Social Attitudes (BSA) 2014: 49 per cent; British Election Study (BES) 2015: 45 per cent (Clements 2014a); European Values Study (EVS) 2008: 45 per cent; European Social Survey (ESS) 2012: 51 per cent. Based on the BSA surveys, running since 1983, the proportion with no religious identification averaged across approximately ten-year periods was 34 per cent between 1983 and 1992, rising to 42 per cent between 1993 and 2002, and increasing further to 46 per cent between 2003 and 2013.

Census data have also confirmed the rise in 'religious nones' in recent years. In 2011, 59 per cent of the population of England and Wales identified themselves as belonging to a Christian religion, a fall of around 12 percentage points since 2001. Over the same period, the proportion in the 'no religion' category increased from 15 to 25 per cent (Office for National Statistics 2012). In Scotland, the proportion of the population

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professing no religion increased from 28 per cent in 2001 to 37 per cent a decade later. The proportion identifying as Christian decreased from 65 per cent in 2001 to 54 per cent in 2011 (Scottish Government). While responses to questions on religious identity have always been sensitive to question wording and the set of response options offered (Field 2014b), it is clear that 'between one-quarter and one-half the population now make sense of their lives without a religious identity' (2014b: 379). Of course, the social agencies of religious socialisation – such as Sunday schools (Field 2014) – have been weakened over time, including within the family, meaning that the intergenerational transmission of religious identity from parent to child is less likely. 'Two non-religious parents successfully transmit their lack of religion. Two religious parents in Britain have a roughly 50/50 chance of passing on the faith' (Voas 2013). Data from the BSA show that the proportion of people saying they were *not* raised within a religion in their family environment rose from 6 per cent in 1991 to 19 per cent in 2013.

Another key trend in religious belonging is the decline in affiliation as Anglican, or Church of England (Clements 2014c; Voas 2013). The BSA data show that those identifying as Anglican fell considerably, from 40 per cent in 1983 to 16 per cent three decades later. The BES surveys show that from 1963 to 2015, the proportion identifying as Anglican fell from 65 to 31 per cent (Clements 2014a). The proportion affiliated with traditional Nonconformist churches (or other Christian denominations) has also declined (from 14 per cent in 1983 to 5 per cent in 2013, based on BSA surveys). The BSA survey data also show that the proportion identifying as Christian but without any particular denominational affiliation has increased: from 3 per cent in 1983 to 12 per cent in 2013. The evidence generally shows that the proportion identifying as Catholics has remained broadly stable in recent decades: at or just under a tenth of the adult population (Field 2014b).

Identification with non-Christian religions has increased, reflecting wider demographic shifts and patterns of inward migration, rising from less than 1 per cent in 1963 to 8 per cent in 2015, based on BES data, and increasing from 3 per cent in 1983 to 8 per cent in 2013, based on the BSA surveys. The 2001 and 2011 census data (for England and Wales) show that the proportion of Muslims increased from 3 to 5 per cent (Office for National Statistics 2012). Indeed, ethnic minority groups are now one of the main 'carriers of religion' in British society (Bruce 2014: 16–17).

The BSA data on religious affiliation have been extrapolated to produce adult population estimates across time for each religious group (noting

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that the total adult population has risen from 41.3 to 50.5 million). For Anglicans, the number declined from 16.5 million in 1983 to 8.6 million in 2014 (NatCen 2015). For those with no affiliation, the numbers almost doubled: from 12.8 million to 24.7 million over the same period. The number of Roman Catholics has changed little: 4.1 million and 4 million, respectively (NatCen 2015). The number of other Christians (including those from Nonconformist traditions and those not affiliated to any particular denomination) has increased from 7 million in 1983 to 8.6 million in 2014. The non-Christian group saw a substantial increase, growing from 0.8 million in 1983 to 4 million three decades later (NatCen 2015).

In terms of religious *behaviour*, aggregate data on church attendance within Christian denominations show a process of continued decline: figures show that in 2000 there were 3.5 million churchgoers in Britain, falling to 2.9 million in 2010; this is projected to fall to 2.6 million in 2015 and 2.3 million in 2020 (McKay 2010). Amongst Anglicans, total church attendance in England was 1,370,400 in 1980 and 870,600 in 2005; the respective figures for Catholics in England were 2,064,000 and 893,100 (McAndrew 2011). For Methodists, historically the largest of the Nonconformist traditions, attendance declined from 606,400 to 289,400 (McAndrew 2011). The BSA surveys show that the proportion reporting that they never attend religious services increased from 56 per cent in 1983 to 66 per cent in 2013. The BES survey shows the proportion of non-attenders rising from 23 per cent in 1963 to 58 per cent in 1997. Surveys also show there has been some decline in personal religious practices, such as praying, and in membership of local churches or religious groups (Clements 2015). Specifically in relation to the Church of England, Bruce observes that, 'In 1924, the Church of England had 3.5 million on its electoral roll. In 2009, it had 1.2 million. That is a fall from 10% to 2% of the population' (Bruce 2013: 370). British society has also becomes much less 'biblecentric' in terms of its religious practices, as well in relation to knowledge of and attitudes and beliefs towards specific biblical content (Field 2014a). The British public has also become less religious across recent decades in the sense of its personal salience for individuals: indeed, 'Religious saliency (including spirituality) exemplifies more than most religious indicators that Britain remains in the midst of progressive secularisation' (Field forthcoming b: 11).

Secularisation can also be evidenced in wider changes in *public attitudes to religion and religious institutions*, in terms of declining religious authority (Chaves 1994) and the declining public reputation of religion

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(Bruce 2014). In terms of perceptions of the broader role and status of Christianity, there have clear declines in the proportions agreeing that Britain *is* a Christian country or that it *should be* a Christian country (Field 2014e) and in those saying it is very or fairly important that you are Christian in order to be truly British (Clements 2014e). Over recent decades, there have also been declining levels of public trust and confidence in church and clergy (Clements 2015; Field 2014d). The British public is also less receptive than it was to the exercise of religious authority and influence in the political process, whether targeted at voters or the government (Clements 2015). More broadly, religious groups in the wider population – Anglicans, Catholics, other Christians – have undergone a period of liberalisation in their views on moral issues, such as gay rights, abortion and euthanasia, where the teachings of particular faith traditions hold less sway and, as a result, the gulf between the leaders, those charged with upholding and articulating teachings on moral conduct, and the led, has grown wider. Even so, religious groups still tend to lag behind the 'religious nones', which tend to have the most liberal perspectives on issues of personal morality (Clements 2015, 2014f).

Aims and scope

Given this wider context of religious change and secularisation across recent decades, this book extends temporal research into religious belief and religious-secular attitudes within the British population. Beliefs represent an important focus in recent debates over religious change and secularisation in Britain, not least given the lively scholarly discussion over the 'believing but not belonging' perspective (Davie 1994, 2015; Bruce 2013, 2014; Voas and Crockett 2006). This book aims to provide a detailed empirical assessment of the (changing) extent of religious beliefs in British society, in general and across different social (and religious) groups, this latter aspect being particularly worthwhile given that 'secularization affects some social groups earlier and more severely than others' (Bruce 2014: 16). The book aims to increase the breadth and depth of scholarly understanding in this area.

Several core questions underpin this research into religious beliefs and religious-secular attitudes in Britain. What have been the main areas of change and continuity in traditional religious beliefs amongst the British public? Which sociodemographic groups and religious groups have been

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more or less likely to hold traditional beliefs? In relation to religious-secular debates taking place in the context of the religious changes discussed already, have attitudes moved in a more secular direction? How do they vary across social and religious groups? As well as providing a long-term perspective on change and continuity, the book provides up-to-date empirical analysis of the social correlates of religious beliefs and attitudes on religion-secular debates. Therefore the relative impact of sex, age, socio-economic status – established correlates of religiosity (Lee 2012) – and religious affiliation on beliefs and attitudes is examined via selected multivariate analyses using contemporary surveys, which are representative of the adult population in Britain.

The analyses and findings in the book make several contributions to existing scholarly knowledge concerning the nature of popular religion in British. First, the book extends existing research on religious beliefs in Britain (Clements 2014; Voas and Crockett 2006; Glendinning 2006; Field 2001; Gill et al. 1998; Kay 1996; Davie 1994). The focus on religious beliefs in recent decades also complements research looking at beliefs in British society in the early post-war period (Field 2015a; Argyle 1958; Sigelman 1977). Secondly, it offers a wide evidence base on belief and religious-secular issues to help inform debates over the nature and extent of secularisation (Bruce 2014, 2013), including the 'believing without belonging' thesis (Davie 1994, 2015). The focus on variation in belief and attitudes across population groups also provides a rich empirical contribution to limited existing findings about the relationship between, on the one hand, sex and age and religiosity (Lee 2012) and, on the other, socio-economic status and religiosity, in particular examining the expectations of 'deprivation theory' – that traditional religious beliefs will be more prevalent amongst socially deprived groups – in the British context (Rice 2003). More broadly, given the methodological approach and sources used, it makes a substantive contribution to the 'repurposing' of quantitative religious data (Field, forthcoming a).

The scope of the book does not encompass popular beliefs that Gill and colleagues refer to as 'non-traditional' religious beliefs, (1998: 508) or that Field terms 'heterodox' beliefs (2015a). Therefore, the focus is on those beliefs commonly understood as 'orthodox' and coming within the 'framework of traditional Christianity' (Field 2015a: 74). In terms of the time period covered here, the data availability regarding religious beliefs and religious-secular attitudes is much richer for more recent decades than for the early post-war decades, particularly given that the

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two recurrent social survey series with a range of religious content (BSA and EVS) both began in the early 1980s. The book also cannot provide a comprehensive assessment of the full range of issues which have featured in religious-secular debates in Britain. Instead, it looks at three areas which clearly have had historical significance and retain contemporary relevance: religion and science, the role of religion in the public education system and church-state relations.

Methodological approach, sources and chapter outlines

This book's broad approach follows that used by the author in a recently published monograph looking at religion and public opinion in Britain (Clements 2015), which analysed areas of change and continuity in the sociopolitical attitudes of religious groups and general public opinion towards religious authority. This book focuses on a different set of themes – theistic and other religious beliefs and areas of religious-secular controversy – but similarly examines change and continuity over time, as well as assessing the contemporary social and religious sources of variation in beliefs and attitudes. Users of polls and surveys for the purposes of investigating religion of course need to be mindful of some of their limitations, as has been discussed in more depth elsewhere (Field, forthcoming a; Voas 2007, 2003). As Field observes:

> In particular, polls are a record of what respondents *claim* to believe or *claim* to do, rather than an objective and scientific verification of what they *actually* believe or *actually* do. There is no doubt that interviewees are sometimes tempted to give what they feel will be the socially respectable and acceptable answer to a question on religion, which may result in exaggeration; an example would be the well-known tendency for people to overstate the frequency with which they go to church on Sundays. (2001: 159)

Polls and surveys, however, collectively represent a 'tremendous potential research resource for scholars of religious studies, modern history, and social science' (Field forthcoming a: 7). Recurrent social surveys and serial opinion poll data, often characterised by considerable continuity in the questions carried on religious topics, enable rich analysis of aspects of religious change in Britain.

With this in mind, this book therefore uses a plurality of survey sources (and therefore a plurality of indicators) to provide a rich and

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robust analysis of public opinion across recent decades. The book is unapologetically data-rich, as each chapter assesses evidence sometimes stretching back over several decades, and uses multiple survey sources, where data permit, to assess areas of change and continuity. Extensive use is made of tables in order to make the presentation and analyses of the evidence as accessible as possible – something that is crucial when looking at data collected over several decades. In all tables, percentages have been rounded, and for purposes of comparison, the overall proportions are shown, as well as those for different social and religious groups.

The book primarily relies on the analysis of recurrent data from three sources, two social surveys and one opinion polling series, all of which are based on representative samples of the adult population in Britain:

- *European Values Study*, with four waves conducted so far between 1981 and 2008 (though the fieldwork for the British sample in this fourth wave was actually conducted in 2009–2010);[1]
- *British Social Attitudes*, beginning in 1983 with specialist modules on religion included in 1991, 1998 and 2008;[2]
- *Gallup opinion polling*, which began in Britain in the late 1930s, with richer data on religious characteristics from the 1970s onwards (for details on sampling and methodology, see Field 2015b).

It also uses additional surveys, some very recent, to provide a contemporary perspective on the social and religious sources of variation in popular beliefs and attitudes and provides some limited analyses of the British component of the cross-national Eurobarometer (EB) surveys. All of the analyses of surveys and opinion polls undertaken in the book relate to representative samples of the British adult population (unless otherwise stated), always excluding those living in Northern Ireland.

For the EVS, BSA and EB surveys and additional survey sources used in Chapter 4, the data reported are solely based on analyses of the survey data sets conducted by the author (unless otherwise stated). The Gallup data and data from some other historical polls were kindly supplied by Dr Clive Field in the form of reports and/or data tables per opinion poll and thus the data presented in tables have been compiled from this material; hence, the categories used in the tables reflect those available in the material. For the EVS, BSA, EB and Gallup surveys and the additional survey sources used in Chapter 4, the question wording and substantive response options (minus 'don't know' or equivalent categories) for each question are generally included at an appropriate position in the main

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text. In all tables based on analyses conducted by the author, 'don't know' or equivalent responses, where applicable, are included in the bases used for calculating overall and group-related percentages.

In the tables, the empirical analyses try as far as possible to use a comparative set of categories for the analyses of the beliefs and attitudes of social and religious groups, looking at variation based on sex, age group, socio-economic status (social grade or occupation type; education) and religious belonging. A common set of age groups are used for the EVS and BSA surveys: 18–29, 30–44, 45–64, and 65 and older. The age group for the Gallup polls necessarily reflect those provided in the publication of the polling results (16–24, 25–34, 35–44, 45–64 and 65 and older). Given the common use of the social grade classification in the EVS surveys and Gallup polls, some explanatory detail is in order. Based on a long-standing definition used for social surveys in Britain, this classification takes the form of four categories: *AB*: higher or intermediate managerial, administrative or professional; *C1*: supervisor or clerical and junior managerial, administrative or professional; *C2*: skilled manual worker; and *DE*: semi- and unskilled working class or those in receipt of state benefits (e.g. the unemployed or pensioners). The analysis of BSA data relies on a dichotomous indicator of manual or non-manual employment. For the EVS surveys, educational attainment is measured as the age full-time education was completed (20 and under or 21 and over), as a measure of educational qualification was asked only in the 2008 survey. In the BSA surveys, it takes the form of the highest qualification held, split into degree-level (or higher), other qualifications (below degree-level, A-level or equivalent, GCSE or equivalent, lower level or other) or no qualifications held.

The focus on religious belonging in Chapters 2 and 3 concerns those with a Christian affiliation (Anglicans, Catholics, other Christian), given that the beliefs looked at generally lie within a traditional Christian framework (Field 2015a). There is also a consistent focus on those with no affiliation – the 'religious nones' – to draw detailed comparisons with those with an affiliation; this is particularly relevant given that recent research has labelled them 'fuzzy nones', a group that exhibits some variation in relation to religious identity, belief and practice (Woodhead 2014). Religious belonging in the BSA and EVS surveys is based on the categories of Anglican, Catholic, other Christian, no religion. In the Gallup polls, the categories available are Church of England, Church of Scotland, Nonconformist, Catholic, and none. Data for the 'other' category are not

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shown. Chapter 4 is somewhat different; its focus is on long-running religious-secular debates which also have contemporary resonance. Religion is a 'multifaceted phenomenon' (Smidt et al. 2009: 4–5), and it is important to examine how these different dimensions are consequential for public attitudes on religious-secular debates. The treatment of religion in Chapter 4 therefore includes the three main areas commonly used for analysing religion: belonging, behaving and believing (Smidt et al. 2009; Leege and Kellstedt 1993). Given that church-state relations and education are two of the pathways through which religion – and religious actors – have been at the centre of political debate and given the traditional denominational-party links underlying party-political and electoral contestation, Chapter 4 also examines the views of party supporters (Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat, other party, no party).

For all of the multivariate analyses, those belonging to non-Christian religions are always included (as is a measure of ethnic group) in order to provide a wider base. A common set of social and religious variables are used for the multivariate analyses conducted in Chapters 2 and 3 (sex, age, socio-economic status and religious affiliation), but the set of explanatory variables is expanded for Chapter 4 to include religious beliefs, party-political loyalties and geographical area. It is important to account for the influence of sociodemographic factors which might be directly associated with beliefs and attitudes and which might also be correlated with religious belonging (details on the measurement of some common independent variables are provided in Appendix 1).

Each of the main chapters has a distinctive but related focus and follows a logical sequence, looking first at theistic beliefs, then at other religious beliefs and biblical content, and finally examining religious-secular attitudes.

Chapter 2 provides a detailed empirical assessment of belief in God in Britain. Data are examined in relation to belief in God, belief in a personal God, the salience and role of God in individuals' lives and self-identification as atheist. It focuses on change and continuity at the aggregate level, as well as looking at variation across time based on socio-demographic characteristics and religious belonging. It uses multivariate analysis to assess the relative impact of social and religious factors on contemporary belief in God.

Chapter 3 focuses on other traditional religious beliefs. It looks at popular belief in life after death, hell, heaven, sin and the devil, as well as at specific content of the Bible (biblical literalism, the divine authority of

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the Old and New Testaments and Jesus as the son of God). It examines overall changes in belief and analyses variation on the basis of sociodemographic characteristics and religious belonging. Multivariate analysis is undertaken to examine the sources of contemporary belief amongst members of the British public.

Chapter 4 looks at public opinion towards religious-secular debates in British society and at the views of social and religious groups towards historical issues which have endured and have contemporary resonance for the policy agenda in a secularising society. The main themes are the role of religion and science in modern society (whether we believe in, trust or depend too much on the latter relative to the former), the role of religion within education (debates over single-religion, or 'faith', schools) and church-state relations (the issue of disestablishment of the Church of England). It uses data from recurrent social surveys and opinion polls to assess change and continuity in group attitudes over time and examine the social and religious variables associated with contemporary opinion on these issues.

Chapter 5 discusses some of the key findings from the empirical analyses undertaken in Chapters 2 through 4 and restates the empirical contribution made to scholarly debate in this area. It reflects on the major areas of change and continuity which have occurred in terms of belief and religious-secular issues in post-war Britain. It also points to areas for future scholarly inquiry in order to build on and extend the research undertaken in the book.

Notes

1 The EVS is a cross-national study using a repeated cross-sectional design, with survey waves carried out in 1981, 1990, 1999 and 2008. These have generally involved face-to-face interviews and standardised questionnaires in all the countries involved and have used representative multistage or stratified random samples nationally representative of each country's adult population (18 and older). For further information, see: http://www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu/frmShowpage?v_page_id=4386315781860116

2 The BSA series has a repeated cross-sectional design, with surveys conducted on an annual basis since 1983 with the exceptions of 1988 and 1992. Based on multistage stratified random sampling, it used CAPI face-to-face interviews and self-completion supplements and was representative of adults (18 and older) living in private households in Great Britain. For further information, see http://www.natcen.ac.uk/our-research/research/british-social-attitudes/.

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2
Theistic Belief

Abstract: *This chapter considers theistic belief, assessing its areas of change and continuity, both overall and across social and religious groups, and showing that the evidence is generally consistent across the sources and indicators used. Overall, belief in God and the personal salience of God have generally declined over time, as have orthodox expressions about God's role and disposition. There has been some increase in self-identification as atheist. There are generally consistent differences in terms of which social and religious groups have been more likely to express theistic belief in British society. Finally, the chapter uses contemporary survey data to examine, in a multivariate context, the factors associated with theistic belief.*

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Belief in God

The first section of this chapter focuses on belief in God as expressed through binary response options (yes/no) in surveys, as well as questions 'that go beyond measuring the simple presence or absence of belief' (Bishop 1999: 425) and so offer more differentiated sets of response options. The first set of data analysed here comes from post-war Gallup opinion polls covering the period 1963–1999. The Gallup polling used here comes from six surveys, spread over a period of three decades, which asked the following question:

> Which of the following do you believe in? God.
> Yes.
> No.

The proportions responding 'yes' – both overall and across different social and religious groups – are shown in Table 2.1. In terms of groups, data are generally available for sex, age group, social grade and religious affiliation (not available for the 1975, 1995 and 1999 surveys). Between 1973 and 1981 belief ranged from 71 to 76 per cent (the 1979 Now! Religion Survey found that 73 per cent expressed belief in God). Earlier, in a 1968 Gallup survey, it had stood at 77 per cent (with an NOP poll from 1964 showing 90 per cent saying that they definitely or probably did believe that there was a God). Between 1986 and 1999, belief was lower, in the 61–68 per cent range. Taking the bookend surveys for the series, the proportion believing in God declined from 74 per cent in 1973 to 68 per cent in 1999.

Of course, the aggregate picture concerning belief in God masks interesting variation across societal groups. In terms of providing a 'benchmark' from an earlier survey for the Gallup data, analysis of the NOP poll from 1964 shows that while certain or probable belief in God was characteristic of an overwhelming majority across all social groups, there was nevertheless some variation. It was higher amongst women (95 per cent) than men (83 per cent), more common amongst older age groups than young (95 per cent amongst those 65 and older; 83 per cent amongst those 21 to 24), and lowest amongst those who left full-time education at 19 or over (85 per cent, compared to 91 per cent of those who left at 14 or under or at 17 or 18). There was little variation in belief across social class (based on the AB, C1, C2, DE groups).

Which group-based differences are apparent across time in the Gallup survey data? Women were consistently more likely to express belief in God,

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TABLE 2.1 *Per cent saying they believe in God, 1973–1999, Gallup*

Variable	Category	1973 (%)	1975 (%)	1979 (%)	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1989 (%)	1993 (%)	1995 (%)	1999 (%)
Overall		74	71	76	73	68	64	64	61	68
Sex	Men	65	60	68	64	58	53	52	51	60
	Women	83	82	83	82	76	76	75	71	75
Age group	16–24	–	66	62	60	59	53	55	50	57
	25–34	–	60	68	64	66	54	55	58	54
	35–44	–	69	78	75	64	66	61	55	63
	45–64	–	76	82	82	71	75	69	68	75
	65 and over	–	83	86	84	76	73	79	70	85
Social grade	AB	–	67	77	67	71	62	62	63	65
	C1	–	66	71	72	70	64	63	60	63
	C2	–	71	75	74	59	62	61	55	67
	DE	–	77	80	77	73	69	69	65	75
Religious affiliation	Church of England	77	76	–	74	69	69	66	–	–
	Church of Scotland	–	80	–	82	83	76	70	–	–
	Nonconformist	–	84	–	93	89	84	80	–	–
	Catholic	90	87	–	92	87	84	87	–	–
	None	–	22	–	22	16	21	20	–	–

Source: Gallup. Data supplied by Dr Clive Field.

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with a considerable gap often amounting to 15 to 20 (or more) points. In the earlier polls, four-fifths of women said they believed in God, decreasing slightly to around three-quarters from the mid-1980s onwards. For men, around three fifths believed in God in the earlier surveys, declining somewhat in the later surveys. Starting from 1975, age shows a consistent pattern over time, in that belief is more prevalent amongst older age groups. In fact, there is generally a linear pattern whereby belief in God increases with each successive age group (though this is not always the case for the 16–24 and 25–34 groups). There is some decline over time – from 1975 to 1999 – in belief in God for the 16–24, 25–34 and 45–64 age groups but less movement for the two older groups. Comparing the two bookend surveys, the differential between the youngest and oldest age groups widens over time (17 points in 1975 and 28 points in 1999).

The evidence shows that belief in God is always highest amongst those in the DE social grade, reaching three-quarters or above in some surveys. However, the differential with the other social grades, including those in the highest (AB), varies over time. Thus, these four groups lack the consistent pattern generally evident for the sex or age group. Some but not all surveys (the last reading is from 1993) allow an examination of belief in God based on religious affiliation. Over time, belief is generally higher amongst Catholics, those in the Church of Scotland and Nonconformists than it is among those affiliated to the Church of England. In 1975, 87 per cent of Catholics believed in God compared to 76 per cent of those affiliated with the Church of England (respectively, 90 and 77 per cent in 1973). In 1993, around two-thirds (66 per cent) of those identifying as Church of England expressed belief in God, compared to nearly nine in ten Catholics (87 per cent). Amongst those with no affiliation, belief in God is expressed by small minorities, usually around a fifth. Overall, belief in God has consistently been higher amongst women, those in older age groups, those in the DE social grade and amongst Christians other than Anglicans.

A second set of data asking about belief in God using a binary response format comes from the EVS surveys, with the same question included in each of the four waves. It was worded as follows:

> Which, if any, of the following do you believe in? God.
> Yes.
> No.

The data are reported in Table 2.2, which shows the overall and group proportions believing in God. Overall, belief in God declines across each

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TABLE 2.2 *Per cent saying they believe in God, 1981–2008, EVS*

Variable	Category	1981 (%)	1990 (%)	1999 (%)	2008 (%)
Overall		75	71	61	58
Sex	Men	69	61	52	51
	Women	80	80	69	64
Age group	18–29	62	57	52	44
	30–44	77	68	56	50
	45–64	82	79	68	61
	65 and over	84	87	70	76
Social grade	AB	74	68	62	–
	C1	71	71	63	–
	C2	73	70	59	–
	DE	81	76	61	–
Age completed full-time education	21 or over	66	59	52	49
	20 or under	76	73	62	60
Religious affiliation	Anglican[a]	78	84	62	73
	Catholic	93	87	82	91
	Other Christian	84	93	74	88
	No religion	28	51	23	30

Note: [a]Note that this category for the 1981 survey covers Protestant traditions apart from Nonconformists. For all subsequent surveys, Nonconformists and other Christian traditions fall within the 'other Christian' category.

Source: EVS surveys.

survey, falling from 75 per cent in 1981 to 71 per cent in 1990, then to 61 per cent in 1999 and to 58 per cent in 2008. Other serial data also show declining belief in God. Ipsos MORI surveys show the proportion believing in God falling from 64 to 57 per cent over the period 1998–2009 (Ipsos MORI 1999, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2009). This decline of belief in God provides a continuation of the trend observed in previous research, for the period covering the 1940s to the 1990s, in which Gill and colleagues concluded that there had been a significant erosion of belief in God. Across the post-war era, people in Britain have become more likely to admit that they do not believe in God and less likely to say they do believe or are not sure (1998: 514).

In general, the patterns of group differences for the EVS data support those found in the Gallup data. Hence, women are always more likely than men to express belief in God. In 1981, 80 per cent of women believed in God compared to 69 per cent of men; in 2008, the respective proportions were 64 and 51 per cent. The 'God gap' between men and women

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was broadly similar in 1981 and 2008. In terms of age groups, again the evidence corroborates the Gallup series. Those 65 and older consistently registered the highest levels of belief in God, and belief decreased with each age group, being lowest amongst those 18 to 29. In 1981, over four-fifths of those 65 and older expressed belief in God (84 per cent) compared to around three fifths of those in the youngest age category (62 per cent). Nearly three decades later, the differential had increased, with three-quarters of those in the oldest age group expressing belief in God compared to somewhat over two-fifths of those 18 to 29. In 2008, moreover, the 'God gap' between the oldest age group and those 45 to 64 had widened. The 65 and over group registered the lowest percentage decrease over time, at 8 points, compared to 21 points for those 45 to 64, 27 points for those 35 to 44 and 18 points for the youngest age group.

Equivalent data for social grade are available only for 1981 to 1999 and tend to replicate the Gallup data in that those in the DE grade are most likely to express belief in God over time, but the differentials with the other grades are usually small. All social grades showed a clear decline in belief across the two decades, and the gap between the AB and DE social grades had all but closed by 1999. The EVS surveys allow an examination of belief based on education, using a measure of age at which full-time education was completed. Table 2.2 shows the levels of belief for two groups, those who completed their education at 20 and under and those who finished it at 21 and over (which would include many of those with a university-level education). While both groups register decline in belief, there is a consistent difference over time in that those who completed their education at 20 or under are more likely to express belief in God. In 1981, around three-quarters of those who finished their education at an earlier age believed in God compared to about two-thirds who finished at 21 and over. In 2008, three-fifths of those who completed their education at 20 or under expressed belief in God compared to just under half of those who finished their education at 21 and older. The 2008 survey also allows for an examination of belief based on educational qualifications (not shown in Table 2.2). Those with no qualifications were more likely to express belief in God (73 per cent) compared to those with a degree-level qualification (53 per cent) or other qualifications (58 per cent).

The pattern for religious belonging is in accord with that evident in the Gallup data. That is, across time belief in God is always higher amongst Catholics and other Christians, compared to Anglicans, and lowest amongst those with no religion (in relation to the data for 1981, see the

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note on religious affiliation categories below Table 2.2). As in 1981, the figures for 2008 show the same relative ordering in levels of belief and that it has fallen a little amongst Anglicans and Catholics. Amongst those with no religious affiliation, belief in God is held by a minority, with the exception of 1990, when around half expressed belief.

Further evidence on overall and group belief in God comes, albeit over a shorter period of time, from the BSA surveys (with specialist modules on religion included in the 1991, 1998 and 2008 surveys). These questions utilise a wider set of response options, going beyond a binary format of offering yes/no responses. Table 2.3 shows responses to a question asking about belief in God carried in six surveys between 1991 and 2008. The question was worded as follows:

> Which statement comes closest to expressing what you believe about God?
> Don't believe in God.
> Don't know if God exists, no way to find out.
> Higher power.
> Believe sometimes.
> I know God really exists, and that I have no doubts about it.
> Doubt, but believe.
> Don't know.

The proportions – overall and within social and religious groups – saying that 'I know God really exists, and that I have no doubts about it', giving an unequivocal response, are shown in Table 2.3. Overall, the proportion giving this response was highest in 1991 and then amounted only to around a quarter (24 per cent). By 2008, this proportion had declined to 17 per cent, the lowest proportion across the surveys. In other words, in each survey around three-quarters of adults in Britain expressed a less than unequivocal response about the existence of God, with significant proportions of those asked availing themselves of the more conditional or contingent statements not afforded in the Gallup and EVS questions.

Underlying this aggregate picture is considerable variation in expressed belief across groups. Which social and religious groups have been most likely to offer this level of certitude in their belief in God? Women, once again, are more likely than men to have no doubt about the existence of God. Around a quarter of women gave this response in 1991 compared to a fifth of men. In 2008, the proportions had dropped to a fifth of women (20 per cent) and 14 per cent of men. Both groups show declining levels of certitude over recent decades. There are consistent age-related differences across time. Indeed, certitude about God's existence was always

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TABLE 2.3 *Per cent saying they know God really exists and have no doubts about it, 1991–2008, BSA*

		1991 (%)	1993 (%)	1995 (%)	1998 (%)	2000 (%)	2008 (%)
Overall		24	23	23	22	21	17
Sex	Men	21	17	18	17	18	14
	Women	26	29	25	25	24	20
Age group	18–29	18	16	13	14	19	11
	30–44	23	19	13	19	18	19
	45–64	21	24	25	27	21	17
	65 and over	36	37	40	27	32	21
Social class	Non-manual	23	27	20	22	24	17
	Manual	23	19	23	21	18	15
Education	Degree	18	26	19	17	24	16
	Other qualification	24	22	18	21	19	16
	No qualifications	25	25	29	27	27	21
Religious affiliation	Anglican	23	26	20	30	20	18
	Catholic	43	48	47	30	44	30
	Other Christian	40	44	42	54	42	34
	No religion	8	6	7	6	5	3

Source: BSA surveys.

highest amongst those 65 and over and generally lowest amongst those 18 to 29. In 1981 and 2008, certitude of belief was about twice as prevalent in the oldest age group as in the youngest age group. All age groups show declining certitude over time, with the proportion amongst the oldest age group declining from 36 per cent in 1991 to 21 per cent in 2008. The respective figures for the youngest age group were 18 and 11 per cent. The magnitude of the decline over time was less substantial for the intermediate age groups (30–44 and 45–64).

Based on indicators of socio-economic status, there were no consistent differences between those in manual and non-manual occupations, although both register declining levels of certitude of belief over time. Similarly, there was somewhat inconsistent variation based on educational attainment; in some surveys those with no qualifications expressed higher levels of certitude; in others, they are closely matched by those with degree-level (or higher) qualifications. The decline in certitude over time was more noticeable for those with other or no qualifications.

The evidence for religious affiliation ties in with that seen in the Gallup and EVS data, in terms of both the differences amongst

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Christians and the contrast between Christians and those with no affiliation. The level of expressed certitude has been much lower amongst Anglicans compared to Catholics and other Christians. In 1991 less than a quarter of Anglicans give this response compared to around two-fifths of Catholics and other Christians. In 2008, the most recent reading, belief declined across all groups but was still much lower amongst Anglicans (18 per cent) than Catholics (30 per cent) and other Christians (34 per cent). Amongst those with no religious affiliation, very small proportions offered this response: 8 per cent in 1991, declining to 3 per cent in 2008.

Another question about belief in God in the BSA series was asked in the 1991, 1998 and 2008 surveys; it also offered multiple response options. It was worded as follows:

> Which best describes your beliefs about God?
> I don't believe in God now and I never have
> I don't believe in God now but I used to
> Believe, didn't before
> Believe and always have done
> Can't choose

The percentages responding 'Believe, didn't before' and 'Believe and always have done' were combined and are reported in Table 2.4.

TABLE 2.4 *Per cent who believe in God, 1991–2008, BSA*

Variable	Category	1991 (%)	1998 (%)	2008 (%)
Overall		49	47	37
Sex	Men	41	38	30
	Women	51	56	44
Age group	18–29	34	33	24
	30–44	41	42	36
	45–64	51	53	38
	65 and over	61	67	48
Social class	Non-manual	47	50	39
	Manual	45	45	33
Education	Degree	36	44	37
	Other qualification	47	46	34
	No qualifications	49	55	45
Religious affiliation	Anglican	58	66	55
	Catholic	78	77	64
	Other Christian	65	77	58
	No religion	16	23	10

Source: BSA surveys.

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Given the combining of both of the options expressing current belief in God, it is not surprising that the percentages are much higher than those reported in Table 2.4 though they do not constitute a majority in any survey. Declining belief is again evident, falling from 49 per cent in 1991 to 37 per cent in 2008 (with most of the decline occurring after 1998).

Differences between men and women are just as apparent in 2008 as in 1991, although belief does decline over time for both groups. In 1991, 41 per cent of men expressed belief compared to 51 per cent of women. In 2008 the respective figures were 30 and 44 per cent. Age-related differences are clear and consistent across surveys, although again all groups show declining levels of belief over time. In 1991 those 65 and over were nearly twice as likely to express belief in God as were those in the youngest age group (61 and 34 per cent, respectively). Similarly, in 2008, belief in God was twice as prevalent in the oldest age group (48 per cent) compared to the youngest (24 per cent). The intermediate age groups stood between the youngest and oldest groups in their levels of belief, with those aged 45 to 64 showing a higher level of belief than those 30 to 44 in 1991 and 1998, but the gap between them had narrowed by 2008.

Those in non-manual occupations were somewhat more likely, in 1998 and 2008, to express belief in God compared to those in manual work (39 and 33 per cent, respectively, in the most recent survey). The differences were more marked for educational attainment, however. In 1991, those with degree-level (or higher) qualifications stood out from the other two groups, having a lower proportion believing in God. In the subsequent surveys, those with any form of qualifications registered lower levels of belief than those with no formal qualifications. Only those with the highest level of qualifications (degree or above) did not show a decreased level of belief over time.

The recurring pattern amongst Christians is evident again. Belief was lowest in each year amongst Anglicans (falling slightly from 58 to 55 per cent) and always higher amongst Catholics and other Christians, although both groups also registered declining belief over time. For Catholics, it fell from over three-quarters to less than two-thirds. Amongst other Christians it declined from 65 to 58 per cent. In each survey, a majority in every Christian group registered belief in God, but the size of the majorities decreased over time. The differential in belief in God between, on the one hand, Anglicans and, on the other, Catholics and other Christians was less in 2008 than in 1991. Even so, all Christian

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groups clearly stand out from those with no affiliation. Belief varied somewhat amongst those with no religious identity, increasing from 16 per cent in 1991 to 23 per cent in 1998 but then falling to 10 per cent in 2008.[1]

Belief in a personal God

The next set of time-series data pertain to popular belief in a personal God, which as a question has traditionally elicited lower levels of belief in the British (and other national) populations compared to questions asking about 'God'. Even so, surveys carried out between 1947 and 1963 showed that large proportions of the population expressed belief in a personal God (Field 2015a: 76–77), with a survey in 1947 showing 45 per cent holding this belief (Field 2008: 454). Again, this section draws upon time-series data from Gallup polls and the EVS surveys, starting again with the former. The Gallup data come from six surveys and cover the period 1963–1993 (data are missing for religious affiliation in 1979). The wording for the Gallup question was as follows:

> Which of these statements comes closest to your beliefs?
> There is a personal God.
> There is some sort of spirit or life force.
> I don't know what to think.
> I don't really think there is any sort of spirit, God or life force.
> Don't know.

Table 2.5 reports the overall and group proportions expressing belief in a personal God. Overall, *belief in a personal God* registers at much lower levels than does *belief in God* using a yes/no response format. Between 1963 and 1993, belief in a personal God is always the preserve of a minority of the adult population, amounting to over a third from the 1960s to the early 1980s and falling to around three in ten in subsequent surveys. Specifically, 76 per cent expressed belief in God in 1979 compared to 35 per cent who expressed belief in a personal God. The respective figures for 1993 were 64 and 30 per cent.

A Gallup opinion survey conducted in 1947 found that belief in a personal God was higher amongst women than men and amongst those 50 and over compared to those of a younger age (Field 2008: 454). Looking across social groups, women are always more likely than men to express belief in a personal God, with the level declining from over

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two-fifths to around a third in the 1989 and 1993 surveys. Belief for men in the Gallup surveys is highest at three in ten in 1963 and 1981, declining to less than a quarter in later surveys. There is, therefore, a substantial 'God gap' between women and men in the first and last surveys (15 and 13 points, respectively). The 'God gap' across the generations is also evident for belief in a personal God (though slightly different age categories were used in the 1963 survey). In the 1979 Gallup survey, 52 per cent of those 65 and older expressed this belief compared to 24 per cent of those 16 to 24. By 1993, 25 per cent of those 16 to 24 believed in a personal God compared to 35 per cent of those 65 and over. The God gap between these age groups was 28 and 10 points, respectively, in 1979 and 1993. The 65 and over age group shows a much larger decline over time in this belief from 1979 to 1993: from over half to just over a third. The other age group show much smaller declines, if any, over this period.

What about variation in belief in a personal God based on socio-economic background? The differences here are neither as consistent nor as pronounced as those evident for sex and age group. In fact, the picture is rather inconsistent over time, based on the surveys

TABLE 2.5 *Per cent who believe in a personal God, 1963–1993, Gallup*

Variable	Category	1963a (%)	1979 (%)	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1989 (%)	1993 (%)
Overall		38	35	36	31	30	30
Sex	Men	30	25	30	23	23	23
	Women	45	43	42	39	36	36
Age group	16–24 / 16–29	34	24	30	30	22	25
	25–34 / 30–44	35	25	33	30	25	23
	35–44		34	35	28	35	31
	45–64	41	37	41	31	32	35
	65 and over	46	52	43	36	36	35
Social grade	AB / Prof. / Man.	47	37	36	33	26	29
	C1 / Other	39	31	38	30	30	29
	C2 / Skilled manual	33	31	36	25	27	24
	DE / Other	37	40	36	38	34	36
Religious affiliation	Church of England	34	–	32	25	27	25
	Church of Scotland	57	–	35	31	36	25
	Nonconformist	33	–	65	58	54	42
	Catholic	66	–	60	58	52	62
	None	–	–	11	7	6	8

Note: [a]Age categories for 1963 are 16–29, 30–44, 45–64 and 65 and older.

Source: Gallup. Data supplied by Dr Clive Field. Data for 1963 come from Martin (1968: 178).

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from 1979 onwards. While the AB and DE groups were somewhat more likely to express belief in 1979, there was little variation in 1981, and from 1986 onwards, the DE group were somewhat more likely to express belief in a personal God. Based on religious affiliation, clear and consistent differences tended to underline those found already for belief in God based on yes/no response options. The 1963 survey shows belief was much higher amongst Catholics (66 per cent) and those belonging to the Church of Scotland (57 per cent), falling to a third of those identifying as Church of England (34 per cent) or Nonconformist (33). While no religious affiliation data are available for 1979, for the 1981–1993 surveys – amongst Christians – belief was generally higher amongst Catholics and Nonconformists and lower amongst those affiliated as Church of England or Church of Scotland. However, most Christians showed declining levels of belief between 1981 and 1993 with the exception of Catholics (60 and 62 per cent, respectively). Amongst those with no religious affiliation, belief in a personal God was very low, ranging from 11 per cent in 1979 to 6 per cent in 1989 (8 per cent in 1993).

More recent data on belief in a personal God is available from the EVS surveys, again covering the period 1981–2008. The EVS question was worded as follows:

> Which of these statements comes closest to your beliefs?
> There is a personal God.
> There is some sort of spirit or life force.
> I don't really know what to think.
> I don't really think there is any sort of spirit, God or life force.

The data from the EVS surveys are reported in Table 2.6. They show that, as with the Gallup time-series data, belief in a personal God in the British adult population has always been much lower than theistic belief gauged using yes/no response options. It amounted to around three in ten in 1981 and 1990, declining somewhat in the most recent decades to 28 per cent in 1999 and 25 per cent in 2008.

There is again considerable variation in belief by across the group characteristics. Women were always more likely than men to express this belief, though the gap narrowed somewhat from 1981 to 2008. In 1981, 35 per cent of women and 26 per cent of men, respectively, believed in a personal God, compared to 28 and 21 per cent in 2008. The differences have always been considerable across age groups. In 1981,

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TABLE 2.6 *Per cent who believe in a personal God, 1981–2008, EVS*

Variable	Category	1981 (%)	1990 (%)	1999 (%)	2008 (%)
Overall		30	32	28	25
Sex	Men	26	25	23	21
	Women	35	39	34	28
Age group	18–29	26	21	26	20
	30–44	25	30	26	23
	45–64	34	39	31	24
	65 and over	38	42	33	34
Social grade	AB	29	35	32	–
	C1	28	34	30	–
	C2	27	23	28	–
	DE	37	41	28	–
Age completed full-time education	21 or over	32	32	25	26
	20 or under	30	34	28	25
Religious affiliation	Anglican[a]	27	39	22	28
	Catholic	45	53	54	54
	Other Christian	52	63	45	44
	No religion	9	16	9	9

Note: [a]Note that this category for the 1981 survey covers Protestant traditions apart from Nonconformists. For all subsequent surveys, Nonconformists and other Christian traditions fall within the 'other Christian' category.

Source: EVS surveys.

26 per cent of those 18 to 29 believed in a personal God, while the equivalent figure was 38 per cent amongst those 65 and older. In 2008, the gap in belief had widened slightly: 20 per cent amongst the 18–29 group and 34 per cent of those 65 and over. All groups showed some decline in belief over time, but it was less pronounced for those 30 to 44 and 65 and older. The largest decline occurred for those 45 to 64, falling from 34 to 24 per cent over nearly three decades.

Based on the two measures of socio-economic status, education and social grade (data not available for 2008), again the differences tend to be rather muted or inconsistent across time. While those in the DE group expressed the highest level of belief in a personal God in 1981 and 1990, by 1999 the level of belief was much closer across the social grades. Levels of belief were broadly similar across the two groups categorised by age at which full-time education was completed. For 2008, when a breakdown by highest educational qualification is available, a more pronounced difference emerged. That is, belief in a personal God was higher amongst those with no qualifications

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(36 per cent) compared to those with degree-level (26 per cent) or other qualifications (24 per cent).

The data for religious belonging – in particular, amongst Christians – confirm the differences evident from the Gallup data. The data for 1981 are somewhat problematic due to the different categorisation used compared to the subsequent surveys (see the note on categories below Table 2.6). Looking at the period 1990–2008, belief is clearly much lower amongst Anglicans than Catholics and other Christians (which includes Nonconformists). Belief in a personal God amongst Anglicans was higher in 1990 but declined to somewhat less than and somewhat more than a quarter, respectively, in 1999 and 2008. Belief actually increased over time for Catholics (45 per cent in 1981, 54 per cent in 2008). Therefore, in 2008 belief in a personal God was almost twice as likely amongst Catholics than Anglicans. Amongst other Christians, belief in a personal God was higher than Catholics in 1990 but lower in 1999 and 2008 (45 and 44 per cent). Belief amongst those with no religious affiliation was generally very low – below one in ten in three of the four surveys (9 per cent in 1981, 1999 and 2008).

Personal salience of God and traditional questions

As well as asking about belief in God or in a personal God, data are available pertaining to the salience or relevance of God to the lives of individuals. The EVS surveys have asked about the salience of God using the following question:

> And how important is God in your life? Please use this card to indicate – 10 means very important and 1 means not at all important.

The personal salience of God is measured on a scale from 1 to 10 (with a midpoint of 5.5), and the average scores for each survey are reported in Table 2.7 (overall and for the same set of groups used already for the EVS surveys). The overall trend is similar to that seen for the questions on belief in (a personal) God, with the average importance of God in individuals' lives declining survey to survey: from 5.7 in 1981, to 5.3 in 1990, to 4.9 in 1999 and falling to 4.7 in 2008. The average score has, from being just above the midpoint in 1981, fallen and stayed below it in the subsequent surveys. A similar question on the importance of God in individuals' lives, measured on a 1–10 scale (where 1 equals not at all

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TABLE 2.7 *Importance of God (mean scores), 1981–2008, EVS*

Variable	Category	1981	1990	1999	2008
Overall		5.7	5.3	4.9	4.7
Sex	Men	5.2	4.5	4.5	4.2
	Women	6.2	5.9	5.4	5.1
Age group	18–29	4.3	3.8	4.3	3.9
	30–44	5.4	4.8	4.3	3.9
	45–64	6.5	6.0	5.3	4.9
	65 and over	7.1	7.0	6.0	6.1
Social grade	AB	5.5	5.2	5.1	–
	C1	5.2	5.2	5.3	–
	C2	5.5	5.0	4.5	–
	DE	6.4	5.7	4.8	–
Age completed full-time education	21 or over	5.4	4.7	4.7	4.5
	20 or under	5.7	5.3	4.9	4.7
Religious affiliation	Anglican[a]	5.6	6.1	4.7	5.4
	Catholic	7.4	7.1	6.2	6.9
	Other Christian	6.9	7.7	6.2	6.9
	No religion	2.7	3.6	2.3	2.7

Note: [a]Note that this category for the 1981 survey covers Protestant traditions apart from Nonconformists. For all subsequent surveys, Nonconformists and other Christian traditions fall within the 'other Christian' category.

Source: EVS surveys.

important and 10 equals very important), was asked in Eurobarometer (EB) surveys in 1983 and 1994, with the overall mean score declining from 6.0 to 5.2. These data on the importance of God sit within a wider trend of a clear and steady decline in the personal salience of religion – based on various indicators from surveys and polls – amongst the adult population in Britain over recent decades (Field forthcoming b).

Again, the differences across groups corroborate some of those found for belief in (a personal) God. The salience of God in daily lives is, on average, higher for women than for men, and this is so in each survey. In 1981 the average score for women was 6.2 compared to 5.2 for men. In 2008, while the mean salience for both groups has declined, there is still a clear differential: 5.1 for women, 4.2 for men. The EB data also evinced a clear differential between men and women in the mean level of salience. In 1983 the average scores were 5.2 and 6.7, respectively, for men and women; in 1994 they had fallen to 4.7 and 5.7.

The mean salience scores also differed across the age groups and in a way which is in accordance with the pattern seen for theistic belief.

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Indeed, the differences between the mean scores of the youngest and oldest age groups were considerable. In 1981 the mean salience for those 18 to 29 was 4.3, well below the 7.1 score registered for those 65 and older. In 2008 the mean score was 3.9 for the youngest age group and 6.1 for the oldest. Across all surveys, the mean scores of the 45–64 age group were somewhat below those of the 65 and older group but were always higher than those of younger age groups. In 1999 and 2008 the mean scores of the 30–44 group were the same as those of the 18–29 group but were noticeably higher in the two earlier surveys. All groups exhibited declining salience across time, although the largest declines in mean scores occurred for the 30–44 and 45–64 groups. The EB surveys of 1983 and 1994 also showed a general declining salience of God across age groups. On both occasions there was an increase in the average level of importance with each successive age group.

Variation in mean scores was also evident based on socio-economic status but not in a consistent way, at least for social grade. In 1981 and 1990 those in the DE group had the highest average importance, but in 1999 it was highest amongst the C1 group. The mean scores did not differ that much based on age at which full-time education was completed, although they were always higher for those who finished education at 20 or under. The averages were closer in 1999 and 2008. Looking at variation based on educational qualifications, in the 2008 survey, the personal salience of God was highest for those with no qualifications (5.5), and lowest for those with degree-level (4.8) or lower-level qualifications (4.5). For both personal salience and belief in God, the differences are more pronounced when using highest qualification obtained, as opposed to age completing full-time education, as an indicator of educational attainment.

Religious belonging has also served as a clear differentiator of the salience of God in individuals' lives. As with belief, there has been clear variation across Christian groups. In each survey, God was more salient to the lives of Catholics and other Christians than to Anglicans' lives. In 1981 the mean score for Catholics was 7.4, declining over time to 6.9 in 2008. For other Christians the mean score was 7.7 in 1990 and 6.9 in 2008. For Anglicans, in comparison, the average scores were 6.1 in 1990 and 5.4 in 2008. Catholics and other Christians, along with those in the 65 and over group, registered the highest mean scores in Table 2.7. The scores, not unexpectedly, have been much lower for those with no religion: 2.7 in 1981 and 2008. These constitute the lowest scores of

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any group in Table 2.5. While there is marked variation across Christian groups, they have stood apart in each survey from those with no religious affiliation. The EB surveys have also showed considerable variation based on religious belonging, albeit data were available only in the 1994 survey. Personal salience of God, as in the EVS surveys, was highest for Catholics (7.5), followed by Protestants (6.3). Mean salience was much lower for those who professed no religion: 2.7 (a level similar to that recorded in some of the EVS surveys).

The BSA surveys have also asked about God's involvement in and relevance for daily life using other questions. Again, these questions were asked in the 1991, 1998 and 2008 surveys. The question wordings are as follows:

> Do you agree or disagree that ... There is a God who concerns Himself with every human being personally.
> Do you agree or disagree that ... To me, life is meaningful only because God exists.
> Strongly agree
> Agree
> Neither
> Disagree
> Strongly disagree
> Can't choose

The responses 'strongly agree' and 'agree' were combined and the percentages are shown in Table 2.8, both overall and for social and religious groups.

Overall, agreement that God concerns himself with humans has been considerably higher than with the statement that life is meaningful only because God exists. In 1998 and 2008, in particular, agreement with the first statement was around twice as high as agreement with the second statement. Agreement with either statement showed some decline over time. Belief that God concerns himself with humans declined from around a third (34 per cent) in 1991 to somewhat over a quarter (28 per cent) in 2008. Believing that life is meaningful only because God exists has also declined over the same period, from 19 to 14 per cent.

Both statements show that women have been more likely than men to agree to some extent, although both groups show declining levels of agreement over time. In relation to God concerning himself with humans, the gap has grown over time. In 1991, 37 per cent of women agreed compared to 31 per cent of men. In 1998 and 2008 the gap was

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TABLE 2.8 *Additional questions about God, 1991–2008, BSA*

		God concerns himself with humans: Per cent agreeing			Life is only meaningful because God exists: Per cent agreeing		
Variable	**Category**	**1991 (%)**	**1998 (%)**	**2008 (%)**	**1991 (%)**	**1998 (%)**	**2008 (%)**
Overall		34	31	28	19	16	14
Sex	Men	31	24	23	18	11	13
	Women	37	36	32	21	19	15
Age group	18–29	24	21	21	6	4	9
	30–44	32	26	29	15	9	13
	45–64	35	36	26	20	21	13
	65 and over	47	40	34	40	31	22
Social class	Non-manual	34	30	28	18	16	15
	Manual	32	31	25	20	15	14
Education	Degree	29	33	27	15	16	12
	Other qualification	33	29	26	17	13	13
	No qualifications	36	34	32	25	22	19
Religious affiliation	Anglican	36	37	33	22	17	13
	Catholic	65	56	51	38	23	24
	Other Christian	52	63	51	27	38	31
	No religion	11	12	7	5	6	2

Note: Combines 'strongly agree' and 'agree' responses.

Source: BSA surveys.

wider, with 23 per cent of men and 32 per cent of women in agreement in the latter survey. Concerning life being meaningful only because of God's existence, the gap in agreement has not widened when comparing 1991 and 2008. Age-related differences are similar for both statements and in accordance with what has been discussed so far. Those 65 and over were most likely to register agreement with both statements in each survey, but they also showed the greatest decline over time. Agreement that God concerns himself with humans declined amongst those 65 and older from 47 per cent in 1991 to 34 per cent in 2008. Similarly, agreement that life is meaningful only because of God's existence fell over the same period from 40 to 22 per cent. The other age groups have all showed lower levels of agreement with each statement, always lowest amongst those 18 to 29. The differences based on manual or non-manual occupation are generally small or inconsistent.

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Based on educational attainment, there is a more consistent pattern, with those with no formal qualifications generally showing higher levels of agreement with either statement. However, the differences with the other groups have not been in the order witnessed for sex and age group. In 2008, 32 per cent of those with no qualifications agreed that God concerns himself with humans in comparison to 27 and 26 per cent of those with, respectively, degree-level (or higher) and lower-level qualifications. In relation to life having meaning only because of God's existence, 19 per cent of those with no qualifications expressed agreement in the most recent surveys, followed by 13 per cent of those with other qualifications and 12 per cent of those with degree-level qualifications.

These statements reveal considerable variation between Christian groups and between those with and without a religious affiliation. In terms of differences across Christian groups, once again Anglicans stood out from Catholics and other Christians. While across surveys a majority of Catholics and other Christians expressed agreement with God being concerned with humans, amongst Anglicans agreement stood at around a third or somewhat above. Comparing 1991 and 2008, there was actually little change in the level of agreement amongst Anglicans and other Christians, but there was declining agreement amongst Catholics (from 65 to 51 per cent). For life being meaningful only because God exists, the proportion of Anglicans agreeing declined from 22 per cent in 1991 to 13 per cent in 2008. The decline in agreement amongst Catholics has been considerable, falling from 38 to 24 per cent. Amongst other Christians, however, there has been a slight increase in agreement over time, so that in 2008 agreement was higher than that amongst Catholics. Those with no religious affiliation showed very low levels of agreement with each statement. Over time, there was also a decline in agreement, so that in 2008 just 7 and 2 per cent agreed, respectively, that God concerns himself with humans and life has meaning only because of God's existence.

Additional measures of the personal salience of God or involvement in individuals' lives were asked in the 1991 or 2008 surveys. Responses to these questions asked on only one occasion are presented in Appendix 2. In the 1991 survey, one question asked:

> How close do you feel to God most of the time?
> Don't believe in God
> Not very close

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Not close at all
Somewhat close
Extremely close

The focus here is on proportions saying either 'extremely close' or 'somewhat close'. Overall, they constituted just over two-fifths of those asked. Feeling close to God was more common amongst women (47 per cent) than men (35 per cent). There was considerable variation based on age, ranging from three-fifths of those 65 and older to around a quarter of those in the youngest age group. While there was no difference based on occupation, feeling close to God was less common amongst those with degree-level (or higher) qualification – at 27 per cent compared to 40 per cent amongst those with other qualifications and 48 per cent of those with no formal qualifications. Feelings of closeness to God were more common amongst Catholics (70 per cent) and other Christians (62 per cent) than Anglicans (46 per cent) and much less likely amongst those with no affiliation (16 per cent).

Another question in the 1991 survey asked about the course of individuals' lives being decided by God. It was worded as follows:

How much do you agree or disagree that ... the course of our lives is decided by God.
Strongly agree.
Agree.
Neither.
Disagree.
Strongly disagree.

Data are again reported in Appendix 2. Agreement with this proposition was low, at 19 per cent overall. It was higher amongst women (23 per cent), amongst those 65 and over (36 per cent compared to less than a tenth of those 18 to 29) and amongst those in manual occupations (23 per cent) and with no qualifications (28 per cent). There was again variation across Christian groups; agreement was more common amongst Catholics and other Christians and less prevalent amongst Anglicans; very little agreement was expressed on the part of those with no religion.

Several other questions were asked only in the 2008 survey. One of them focused on the character of God: specifically, whether God is angered by human sin or not. It was worded as follows:

Do you think that God is angered by human sin?
Yes, definitely.

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Yes, probably.
No, probably not.
No, definitely, not.
Don't believe in God.

The combined percentages responding 'yes, definitely' and 'yes, probably' are reported in Appendix 2. Overall, just over two-fifths said that God is angered by human sin. Interestingly, responses were very similar amongst men and women (41 and 43 per cent, respectively). There was also much less variation based on age group compared to other statements about God. Amongst those 18 to 29, 39 per cent agreed that God is angered by human sin, only slightly lower than those in the oldest group (65 and over: 45 per cent). Around two-fifths of those in the other age groups also held this point of view. There was little difference based on occupation, but for education, those with no qualifications stood out: half said God is angered by human sin compared to around two-fifths of those with some form of qualification. There was once again considerable variation based on religious affiliation. Around three-fifths of Catholics and half of other Christians said that God is angered by human sin compared to a third of Anglicans and very few of those with no affiliation.

The BSA 2008 also asked two additional questions about whether God is involved in an individual's affairs and how individuals connect with God outside of formal settings. They were worded as follows:

If you have religious beliefs, do you think that God is directly involved in your affairs?
Yes, definitely.
Yes, probably.
No, probably not.
No, definitely, not.
Don't believe in God.
Do you agree or disagree with the following? I have my own way of connecting with God without churches or religious services.
Strongly agree.
Agree.
Neither agree nor disagree.
Disagree.
Strongly disagree.

Based on the question on God's involvement in individuals' affairs, the proportions (overall and group) responding 'yes, definitely' or 'yes, probably' are shown in Appendix 2. Overall, somewhat less than two-fifths

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said that God was involved in their own affairs. Women were more likely to think this than men at, respectively, 41 and 33 per cent. Approaching half of those 65 believed this was the case compared to somewhat over a third of the two intermediate age groups; lowest at three in ten of those 18 to 29. There was less difference based on occupation type, but those with no formal educational qualifications were more likely to think that God is involved in their affairs (43 per cent) than those with some formal qualification. The differences were not as marked as before amongst Christians, but Catholics and other Christians were still somewhat more likely to think that God is directly involved in their affairs. Perhaps surprisingly, around a fifth of those with no religious affiliation believed this to be the case.

Agreement with the statement about having their own way of connecting with God outside of formal religious settings stood at about two-fifths overall (combining 'strongly agree' and 'agree' responses). In keeping with previous results, women were more likely to agree than men (respectively, 47 and 37 per cent). Agreement was almost twice as likely amongst the oldest as compared to the youngest age group: respectively, 54 and 28 per cent. Once again it was educational attainment rather than occupation that showed considerable variation. Those with no qualifications were clearly more likely to agree (54 per cent) than those with some formal qualification (about two-fifths agreeing). Based on belonging, other Christians showed the highest level of agreement (64 per cent), followed by Catholics (56 per cent) and then Anglicans (46 per cent). A very small proportion of those with no affiliation agreed with the statement (14 per cent).

Atheism

Levels of atheism in society can be inferred from the proportions who say they do not believe in God (and, if given the option, any form of spirit or higher power) in response to questions in the surveys and polls already discussed. Another way is to use survey questions that offer a respondent the opportunity to self-identify as an atheist. A summary of the variety of assessments of the proportion of British society that can be categorised as atheist has been provided by Zuckerman (2007: 49):

> Norris and Inglehart (2004) found that 39 percent of those in Britain do not believe in God. According to a 2004 survey commissioned by the BBC,

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> 44 percent of the British do not believe in God. According to Greeley (2003), 31 percent of the British do not believe in God, although only 10 percent self-identify as 'atheist'. According to Bruce (2002), 10 percent of the British self-identify as an 'agnostic person' and 8 percent as a 'convinced atheist', with an additional 21 percent choosing 'not a religious person'. According to Froese (2001), 32 percent of the British are atheist or agnostic. According to Gallup and Lindsay (1999: 121), 39 percent of the British do not believe in God or a 'Higher Power'. (2007: 49)

Recurrent social surveys and serial polling data shed some light on overall levels and group prevalence of atheism in Britain, in particular whether there has been a discernible increase over time (given the trends regarding popular religion outlined in Chapter 1 and the evidence on declining theistic belief and personal salience of God examined in this chapter). NOP polls conducted between 1965 and 1993, using different question wordings for religious affiliation, allowed respondents to identify themselves as atheist or agnostic, with the proportions so identifying slowly increasing over time (Field 2014b: 372). Based on the wording 'What is your religion, if any?', asked between 1965 and 1970, the proportions saying they were atheist or agnostic increased from 1 to 3 per cent (Field 2014b: 372). Using an alternative wording ('Which religious group would you say you come into in terms of your beliefs?'), asked between 1970 and 1989, the proportion saying agnostic or atheist inched up steadily, from 4 per cent in 1970 to 9 per cent in 1989 (with a survey in 1985 registering 10 per cent; Field 2014b: 372). Finally, using the wording 'Regardless of your religious upbringing, would you tell me what your religion is now?', asked only in 1976, 1978 and 1993, the respective proportions were 7, 7 and 11 per cent (Field 2014b: 372). Across alternative formulations of the religious affiliation question and over varying periods of time, there were perceptible increases in the proportions identifying as either atheist or agnostic. Is this trend also present in other recurrent survey sources?

A question asked in each EVS survey has given respondents the opportunity to identify themselves as a convinced atheist, using the following wording:

> Independently of whether you go to church or not, would you say you are a:
> Religious person.
> Not religious person.
> Convinced atheist.

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Of interest here are those who identify themselves as a 'convinced atheist' – though this particular wording, using 'convinced', may potentially dampen down levels of self-identification – and the overall and group proportions giving this response are shown in Table 2.9. Overall, the proportions who declared that they were a convinced atheist – as opposed to being (or not being) a religious person – have been very small, albeit nearly doubling over time, from 4 per cent in 1981 to 8 per cent in 2008. The Now! Religion survey of 1979 found that, in response to a probe following up those who had said they had no religion, 6 per cent identified themselves as Atheist and 7 per cent said they were Agnostic (as proportions of the overall sample).

The group proportions show some variation on the basis of social characteristics. Men were more likely than women to identify as a convinced atheist: in 1981 the respective proportions were 6 and 2 per cent, increasing to 12 and 4 per cent in 2008. Across age groups, identifying oneself as an atheist decreased with age, being most common amongst those 18 to 29 (rising over time from 9 to 12 per cent). It was least common amongst those 65 and over (precisely the group that has consistently shown the highest incidence of belief in God across surveys and questions), standing at 3 per cent in 2008. The other two groups also showed some increase over time in the proportion saying they were a convinced atheist: from 3 to 10 per cent amongst those 30 to 44 and from 2 to 6 per cent amongst those 45 to 64.

There has been a clear difference in identification as an atheist based on education. In 1981 and 2008, those who left education at 21 and over were around twice as likely to see themselves as a declared atheist (respectively, 7 and 14 per cent) compared to those who completed full-time education at a younger age (respectively, 4 and 6 per cent). Based on the 2008 survey, those with a degree-level (or higher) qualification were most likely to say they were an atheist (13 per cent), followed by those with some other qualification (6 per cent) and those with no qualifications (just 3 per cent). Not unsurprisingly, identification as an atheist separates out those with no religious affiliation from those with some form of Christian identity. Although numbers have fluctuated over time, in 2008 15 per cent of those with no affiliation said they were convinced atheists compared to less than 2 per cent of all Christian groups. Across all social and religious groups, therefore, the highest incidence of atheism, within the 10–15 per cent range, has been found amongst men, those 18 to 29 or 30 to 44, those with higher levels of educational attainment and those with no religious

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affiliation. These are also the groups that have been less likely to say that they believe in God or in a personal God (see Tables 2.2 and 2.6).

Data from the EB surveys also shed further light on levels of atheism amongst the general adult population in Britain (data tables showing group percentages are not presented or analysed here due to lack of space) based on the following question about being a religious person or not:

> Whether you do or you don't follow religious practices, would you say that you are:
> A religious person.
> Not a religious person.
> An agnostic
> A (convinced) atheist.

The overall levels of self-identification show that between 1982 and 1989, 4 to 5 per cent saw themselves as a 'convinced atheist'. Between 1989 and 1994, the proportion identifying as 'an atheist' was about 5 to 7 per cent,

TABLE 2.9 *Per cent saying they are a convinced atheist, 1981–2008, EVS*

Variable	Category	1981 (%)	1990 (%)	1999 (%)	2008 (%)
Overall		4	5	5	8
Sex	Men	6	7	7	12
	Women	2	2	3	4
Age group	18–29	9	8	9	12
	30–44	3	5	5	10
	45–64	2	3	4	6
	65 and over	1	1	2	3
Social grade	AB	4	6	7	–
	C1	4	5	5	–
	C2	5	5	3	–
	DE	3	3	5	–
Age completed full-time education	21 or over	7	11	13	14
	20 or under	4	4	4	6
Religious affiliation	Anglican[a]	2	1	2	2
	Catholic	2	1	3	1
	Other Christian	1	0	3	2
	No religion	23	9	20	15

Note: [a]Note that this category for the 1981 survey covers Protestant traditions apart from Nonconformists. For all subsequent surveys, Nonconformists and other Christian traditions fall within the 'other Christian' category.

Source: EVS surveys.

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while those declaring themselves 'an agnostic' (not offered as an option previously) amounted to around 6 or 7 per cent. Between 2005 and 2012, in response to a question on religious affiliation – 'Do you regard (consider) yourself as belonging to a (particular) religion? (IF YES) Which of them? (Which one?)' – the proportion declaring they were an 'atheist' generally ranged from 2 to 5 per cent. However, in response to this question, respondents could also identify as 'nonbeliever/agnostic', which generally elicited proportions in the 17–25 per cent range (17 per cent in 2006, 25 per cent in 2012).

Recent ad hoc polls have also allowed the proportion of the adult population identifying as agnostic or atheist to be estimated, albeit with considerable variation in the results obtained from the different polls (obviously carried out by different research organisations and using variant question wordings and response options). A cross-national Harris poll from 2006 found that 35 per cent of the British sample said that they were agnostic – a very high proportion compared with other surveys – with another 17 per cent identifying as atheist.[2] A YouGov survey from 2007 found that 16 per cent said they were atheist and another 9 per cent declared they were agnostic (YouGov 2007). In May 2011, in response to another YouGov poll, 6 per cent described themselves as agnostic and 19 per cent said they did not believe in any god or Gods or in a higher spiritual power (YouGov 2011). In a 2012 cross-national survey conducted by YouGov, 17 per cent of those in the UK sample identified as agnostic and 21 per cent said they did not believe in any God or spiritual higher power (the label 'atheist' was not used; Moody 2015). Most recently, a YouGov poll in February 2015 reported that 19 per cent identified as atheist, 7 per cent identified as agnostic, while another 16 per cent claimed some other non-religious identity. When asked about belief in God, 33 per cent said they did not believe in any sort of God or greater spiritual power (Moody 2015). An Ipsos MORI poll conducted in 2000 found, in response to a question on religious affiliation, that 5 per cent apiece said they did not have any religion and were either agnostic or atheist (Ipsos MORI 2000). In 2003, in another Ipsos MORI poll, when asked which best described them, 14 per cent chose agnostic and 12 per cent selected atheist (Ipsos MORI 2003).

In sum, the proportions identifying as atheist have been very low in recent decades, often around one in twenty or slightly higher in the 1980s and 1990s, as conveyed by the evidence from the EVS and EB

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surveys, albeit both show some increase over time. Where questions in social surveys and polls have allowed respondents to identify themselves as agnostic, the proportions using this descriptor have tended to equal or exceed those calling themselves atheist, although the YouGov 2011 and 2015 surveys are notable exceptions. The YouGov 2015 survey shows that nearly three times as many individuals opted for the atheist label compared to that of agnostic (amongst those with no religion). It is also clear that the proportion self-identifying as atheist is much lower than that saying they do not believe in God. The EVS surveys show that the proportion that does not believe in God has risen from 16 per cent in 1981 to 32 per cent in 2008, while the equivalent figures for not believing in a personal God (spirit or life force) are 9 and 16 per cent.[3] Over the same period, those prepared to call themselves a convinced atheist increased from 4 to 8 per cent. While both series show a doubling or near doubling of disbelief in God and identification as atheist, in 2008 in the British adult population the former were around four times likelier to be found than the latter.[4] The YouGov 2015 survey also shows up this differential: while overall 33 per cent said they did not believe in any sort of God or greater spiritual power, 19 per cent identified as an atheist.

Multivariate analysis

The extensive data reviewed so far – over time and across different surveys and indicators– have indicated areas where there are reasonably consistent differences between social groups in theistic belief, personal salience of God, God's role and disposition and self-identification as an atheist. In particular, theistic belief has been more common amongst women than men, older age groups (especially those 65 and over) and, often, those with lower educational attainment – consistent with the expectation of 'deprivation theory', that belief in religious phenomena should be more prevalent amongst more socially marginalised groups (Rice 2003). It was also more common amongst Catholics and other Christians than Anglicans and was least likely amongst those who professed no affiliation.

As a final step in the examination of social and religious variation in theistic belief, more detailed analysis is undertaken of contemporary belief in God and in a personal God. Multivariate analysis is undertaken to assess the relative impact of group characteristics on theistic belief.

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The data analysed here come from two nationally representative surveys of adults in Britain: undertaken by YouGov in March 2013 (fieldwork: 27–28 March; sample size: 1,918) and November 2013 (fieldwork: 24–25 November; sample size: 1,681), both of which asked a variety of questions about religion, including theistic belief.[5] Each survey asked a different question about belief in God, allowing an assessment of the effects of a similar set of independent variables on different ways of gauging such belief. The March 2013 survey asked about belief in God, while the November 2013 survey asked about belief in a personal God. The questions asked about belief in God were worded as follows:

> People have different beliefs about God, which of the following best applies to you?
> I believe there is a God.
> I do not believe in any sort of God, but do believe there is some sort of spiritual higher power.
> I do not believe in any sort of God or spiritual higher power.
> Which of these statements comes closest to your belief?
> There is a personal God.
> There is some sort of spirit/God or life force.
> I don't really know what to think.
> I don't think there is any sort of God, spirit/god or life force.

The set of response options for the first question therefore allowed for the declaration of an atheistic perspective, while that for the second question enabled respondents to choose an agnostic or an atheistic point of view.

In response to the question asking about belief in a God or a spiritual higher power, 38 per cent said there was a God, while 20 per cent said there is no God but there is some form of spiritual power. Less than a third (30 per cent) did not believe in either, and about a tenth did not know (11 per cent). A similarly worded question with equivalent response options was asked in two EB surveys conducted in 2005 and 2010. Overall, as in the YouGov survey, a plurality believed in God (2005: 40 per cent; 2010: 39 per cent), followed by the proportion believing there was some spirit or life force (39 and 32 per cent), with about or somewhat more than a fifth not believing in any form of spirit, God or life force (19 and 24 per cent). A very small proportion on each occasion did not know.

In relation to belief in a personal God, overall 17 per cent said there was a personal God (41 per cent when asked by Gallup in 1957), 32 per cent thought there was some form of spirit, God or life force (37 per

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cent in 1957), 23 per cent did not know what to think (16 per cent in 1957), and 28 per cent said they did not think there was any sort of God, spirit or life force (6 per cent in 1975).[6] In other words, respondents were almost twice as likely to think there was some form of higher power as think there was a personal God, a little under a quarter lacked a clear opinion on whether they believed or not, and a little over a quarter gave what might be considered an 'atheist' viewpoint. The overall level of belief in a personal God is therefore somewhat higher than that found in the most recent EVS survey. In keeping with the detailed set of survey evidence reviewed so far, belief in a personal God elicited a lower level of affirmation (17 per cent) than did belief in God as gauged in the first question (38 per cent). The level of expressed non-belief in God (or some other higher power) is broadly similar in response to both questions (around three in ten).

Given the number of response options, multinomial logistic regression is used, suitable for nominal multicategory dependent variables. Belief in God and belief in a personal God are used as the reference categories for the separate regression analyses and thus are compared in turn with each of the other response categories (for the March 2013 survey, 'don't know' responses are excluded). A near-identical set of independent variables are used for the estimations. The independent variables were sex, age, ethnic group, education, social grade / occupation type and religious affiliation (see Appendix 1 for information on measurement). The difference in measurement relates to the use of social grade or occupation type. In the March 2013 survey those in the highest AB social grade (those in higher managerial, administrative, or professional posts) are compared to the other grades (C1, C2, DE). For the November 2013 survey, those in professional or higher technical work or who are a manager or senior administrator are compared to all other occupation types. For both estimations, the reference category for religious affiliation constitutes those with no religion.

The results are contained in Tables 2.10 and 2.11, which report the B coefficients (standard errors) and the odds ratios (Exp(B)) for both regression estimations. The sign of the beta (B) coefficient indicates whether a particular independent variable has a positive effect, increasing the odds of being in the category of interest, or a negative effect, decreasing the odds of being in the category of interest. The odds ratio statistic indicates whether the impact of any particular explanatory variable is to increase or decrease the likelihood of being in each category of

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interest compared to the reference category for each model estimation (believing in God or believing in a personal God).

The first estimation looked at beliefs in the March 2013 survey data (see Table 2.10). In the comparison of those who believe in some sort of spiritual higher power versus those who believe in God, only the religious affiliation variables have significant effects. Those with any form of affiliation (whether Christian or non-Christian) are much less likely than those with no affiliation to believe there is some spiritual higher power compared to believing in God. In the second comparison, both social characteristics and religious identity prove to be significant predictors. Women and older people are significantly less likely to believe that there is not a God or a spiritual higher power compared to believing in God. All those with a religious identity, whether Christian or other, are also significantly less likely to say there is not any God or higher power compared to believing in God.

There are no effects for the two indicators of socio-economic status: occupation and education. That is, those in the highest occupational group and those with high educational attainment (degree-level or higher) do not significantly differ from those, respectively, in lower-level occupational groups and those with lower-level or no formal qualifications. These findings are interesting in the light of the

TABLE 2.10 *Multinomial logistic regression of belief in God*

	Belief there is some sort of spiritual higher power versus belief there is a God		**No belief in any sort of God or spiritual higher power versus belief there is a God**	
Variable	**B (SE)**	**Exp(B)**	**B (SE)**	**Exp(B)**
Intercept	−.08 (.34)		1.78* (.34)	
Sex	−.13 (.14)	.88	−1.13* (.15)	.32
Age	.00 (.00)	1.00	−.01* (.00)	.99
Ethnic group	.46 (.26)	1.59	.44 (.26)	1.55
Education: degree-level	−.16 (.17)	.85	.12 (.17)	1.13
Social grade: AB	.09 (.15)	1.10	.23 (.16)	1.26
Anglican	−1.18* (16)	.31	−2.89* (.19)	.06
Catholic	−1.91* (.26)	.15	−4.47* (.46)	.01
Other Christian	−1.69* (.27)	.18	−3.04* (.34)	.05
Other religion	−1.74* (.32)	.18	−3.42* (.39)	.03
Nagelkerke R Square		.40		
Weighted N		1,611		

Note: *$p<.05$ or lower. Reference category: no religion.

Source: YouGov survey of adults in Britain, March 2013.

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general expectations of 'deprivation theory', where 'socially marginal people are more likely to believe in the paranormal because it helps them deal with their disadvantaged status' (Rice 2003: 99), including those who have low levels of education or are poor. Rerunning the model in Table 2.10 with different specifications of the dummy variables for occupation and education provided a more direct test of the 'deprivation theory', so that those with no qualifications and those in the lowest DE social grade were compared to all other respondents. There were no significant effects for either variable in the comparison between believing there is some sort of spiritual higher power and believing there is a God. However, in the comparison between not believing in any sort of God or spiritual higher power versus believing there is a God, having no formal qualifications *decreased* the likelihood of having an atheist response (occupation type was again not significant). In other words, in keeping with the tenets of deprivation theory (Rice 2003), those with no formal educational qualifications were more likely to believe in God than those with some formal qualifications (results not shown here).

Are similar relationships evident in the second estimation (shown in Table 2.11), focusing on belief in a personal God? The first comparison, believing there is some sort of spirit, God or life force versus believing in a personal God, shows that the only statistically significant variables concern religious affiliation. All religious affiliation variables are negatively signed, meaning that having any form of religious identification reduces the likelihood of believing in some form of spirit, God or life force compared to thinking there is a personal God. The next comparison, involving those who declare they don't know what to think versus those who believe in a personal God, again shows that those with a religious affiliation – Christian and other – are less likely to hold this view compared to believing in a personal God. Women are also less likely to hold this view than men, while those from a white ethnic group are more likely to express this statement than those from minority ethnic backgrounds. Those in the salariat occupational group are also less likely to express this view than those in other occupational groups, but there is no significant effect for education. A similar set of results is obtained for the final comparison, those who do not believe in any form of higher power versus those who think there is a personal God. Women and members of the salariat are less likely than, respectively, men and those in other occupations to think there is no form of higher power compared

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TABLE 2.11 *Multinomial logistic regression of belief in a personal God*

	There is some sort of spirit/God or life force versus I believe in a personal God		I don't really know what to think versus I believe in a personal God		I don't think there is any sort of spirit/ God or life force versus I believe in a personal God	
Variable	**B (SE)**	**Exp(B)**	**B (SE)**	**Exp(B)**	**B (SE)**	**Exp(B)**
Intercept	.70* (.35)		1.15* (.39)		1.47* (.37)	
Sex	−.03 (.16)	.97	−.49* (.17)	.61	−.93* (.18)	.39
Age	.01 (.01)	1.01	.00 (.01)	1.00	.01 (.01)	1.01
Ethnic group	.39 (.27)	1.48	.83* (.31)	2.30	.58* (.30)	1.79
Education	.10 (.18)	1.11	−.02 (.19)	.98	.25 (.19)	1.28
Salariat	−.29 (.18)	.75	−.61* (.20)	.54	−.49* (.20)	.61
Anglican	−.92* (.20)	.40	−1.56* (.22)	.21	−3.17* (.27)	.04
Catholic	−1.86*(.28)	.16	−2.32* (.32)	.10	−3.36* (.37)	.03
Other Christian	−1.03* (.30)	.36	−2.05* (.37)	.13	−2.11* (.33)	.12
Other religion	−1.24* (.30)	.29	−2.31* (.42)	.10	−2.82* (.42)	.06
Nagelkerke R Square			.25			
Weighted N			1,587			

Note: *$p<.05$ or lower. Reference category: no religion.

Source: YouGov survey of adults in Britain, November 2013.

to believing in a personal God. Those from a white ethnic background are more likely to offer an atheist response. Completing a consistent pattern across the comparisons, Anglicans, Catholics, other Christians and non-Christian adherents are once again less likely to think there is no higher power compared to believing in a personal God. In other words, in contemporary British society, women, those from minority ethnic backgrounds, those in the salariat (occupational group) and those belonging to all religious traditions are more likely to express belief in a personal God. Also age, an established correlate of religious identity and involvement (Lee 2012), shows no significant impact on belief in a personal God net of other social and religious characteristics.

It is also worth noting that education has no significant effects in any of the comparisons in Table 2.11; that is, those with a degree-level qualification are not more likely to offer less religiously orthodox responses than those with lower-level or no qualifications. As before, to examine the tenets of 'deprivation theory' for more marginalised socio-economic groups (Rice 2003), the model estimation was rerun with different specifications of the dummy variables for education and occupation;

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that is, those with no qualifications and those in the lowest occupational group (semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers) were compared to all others. The results (not reported here) show that, compared to believing in a personal God, those with no qualifications were *more likely* not to know what to think and *more likely* not to think there is any sort of spirit/God or life force (the effects were not significant for occupation). These results therefore stand somewhat at odds with those obtained for the prior survey.

Notes

1 An additional question on belief in God was asked in the 2008 BSA survey: 'About belief in God. Are you absolutely sure you believe in God, somewhat sure, not quite sure, not at all sure, or are you sure you do not believe in God?' Overall, around three respondents in ten said that they were absolutely sure they believed in God. The group-related differences were in keeping with those generally seen already. Certainty of belief was higher amongst women (35 percent compared to 24 percent of men), most common amongst those 65 and older (44 percent), and – based on affiliation – most likely amongst Catholics (34 percent) and other Christians (30 percent). It declined to a fifth of Anglicans and just above one in twenty of those with no religion. The differences based on socio-economic status were less marked, though certainty of belief was less prevalent amongst those with other educational qualifications (around a quarter compared to a third or more of those with degree-level or no qualifications).

2 The Harris data were kindly provided by Dr Clive Field. The BSA surveys show that, over the period 1991–2008, the proportion of those who said they did not believe in God increased from 10 to 18 percent (based on the question featured in Table 2.3). In response to the question featured in Table 2.4, the proportion of those declaring themselves to be consistent non-believers (do not believe and never have done) rose from 12 percent in 1991 to 20 percent in 2008 (with 12 and 15 percent, respectively, declaring they do not believe now but used to).

3 Further analysis of atheist self-identification and disbelief in God in the EVS 2008 survey shows a close association between them. Of the small group who identified as atheist, 97 percent did not believe in God, while 64 percent did not believe in a personal God, spirit or life force (18 percent declared they believed in a spirit or life force, with 18 percent unsure what to believe in or responding they did not know). In terms of levels of atheist self-identification by belief in God, 23 percent of those who believed in God said they were a

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convinced atheist, and 29.3 percent of those who did not believe in a personal God (or spirit of life force) said this.

4 As Smith and Baker comment: 'Of course, all of this raises issues of methodology, as some techniques such as forcing respondents to identify with a label such as "atheist" will yield lowers estimates of disbelief in God than a questions specifically about theism' (2015: 5–6).

5 The YouGov surveys used in Chapters 2–4 were based on online interviews. The survey samples were derived from members of the YouGov Plc GB panel of 185,000+ individuals who agreed to take part in surveys. An email, sent to panellists selected at random from the base sample according to the sample definition, invited them to take part in a particular survey and provided a link to the survey. The surveys were weighted to be representative of all GB adults (18 and over). The data were weighted by age and sex, social grade, region and religious attendance. Targets for the weighted data were derived from the 2001 census, YouGov estimates and data from the British Social Attitudes survey. Comparisons of YouGov's opt-in Internet panels with traditional stratified random-sample-interview and random-digit-dial techniques have concluded that the biases introduced by this methodology are small and are offset by the much larger sample sizes that the Internet methodology allows (Sanders et al. 2007).

6 The figures resulting from equivalent questions asked in a 1957 Gallup survey come from Kellner (2013).

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3
Traditional Religious Beliefs

Abstract: *This chapter examines orthodox religious beliefs which are commonly accepted as coming within the traditional framework of Christianity, including specific biblical content. It assesses the main areas of change and continuity in levels of religious belief, both overall and within social and religious groups. The picture revealed is one of both change and continuity across the sources and indicators used. Some beliefs have remained at broadly stable levels in recent decades, while others have registered variable decline over time. There are also some consistent findings as to the groups more likely to hold traditional beliefs and have more 'biblecentric' attitudes. Finally, contemporary survey data are used to examine, in a multivariate context, the factors associated with religious beliefs.*

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Life after death

To start the analysis of recurrent survey data pertaining to 'traditional religious beliefs' (Gill et al. 1998: 508), the evidence is assessed for belief in life after death. A Gallup survey from 1939 asked respondents whether they believed in life after death; nearly half said they did (48 per cent). Analysis of surveys carried out between 1947 and 1963 showed that large proportions of the population expressed belief in life after death, ranging from 49 to 56 per cent (Field 2015a: 76–77). For more recent decades, the overall and group proportions expressing belief in life after death based on Gallup surveys (conducted in 1975 and 1999) are shown in Table 3.1. The question's wording was as follows:

> Which of the following do you believe in? Life after death.
> Yes.
> No.

The nearly twenty-five-year period between the surveys shows that overall belief in life after death increased from around a third (35 per cent) in 1975 to half (50 per cent) in 1999. Belief in life after death stood at 53 per cent in the Now! Religion survey of 1979 and at 41 and 39 per cent in Harris surveys conducted, respectively, in 1970 and 1974.[1]

In both Gallup surveys, belief was considerably higher amongst women than men: the respective figures are 44 and 26 per cent in 1975 and 59 and 40 per cent in 1999. The Gallup 1939 survey showed a similar difference, with 57 per cent of women believing compared to 44 per cent

TABLE 3.1 *Belief in life after death, 1975 and 1999, Gallup*

Variable	Category	1975 (%)	1999 (%)
Overall		35	50
Sex	Men	26	40
	Women	44	59
Age group	16–24	33	49
	25–34	31	43
	35–44	30	44
	45–64	35	56
	65 and over	46	57
Social grade	AB	38	51
	C1	35	46
	C2	34	50
	DE	36	52

Source: Gallup. Data supplied by Dr Clive Field.

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of men. The Harris surveys from 1970 and 1974 also show that belief was higher amongst women than men. The age-related differences in the Gallup surveys are broadly in line with those registered in the 1939 survey (43 per cent of those 21 to 29, 48 per cent of those 30 to 49, 54 per cent of those 50 and over). In 1975 belief in life after death was highest amongst those 65 and over. The Harris surveys from the 1970s show that belief was lower amongst those 34 and under. In 1999 it was most common amongst those 45 and older. In 1999 belief was higher in all age groups, as it was amongst men and women. Belief also rose across the different social grades, but in both surveys there is little to separate those in the highest and lowest (respectively, AB and DE) social grades.

The EVS surveys asked about belief in life after death in every wave between 1981 and 2008 with the following wording (similar to that used in the Gallup surveys):

> Which, if any, of the following do you believe in? Life after death.
> Yes.
> No.

The data (reported in Table 3.2) provide a picture of overall stability: with belief at 45 and 44 per cent, respectively, in 1981 and 2008. As with the Gallup data, there is marked variation across social and religious groups. In each survey, belief was considerably higher amongst women compared to men. Over half of women expressed this belief compared to around a third (or slightly higher) of men. The variation based on age group was not as marked as that generally seen for theistic belief (see Chapter 2). Comparing those 18 to 29 and those 65 and older, in 2008 the gap in belief was only a few percentage points.

There were no consistent differences based on measures of socio-economic background, albeit those in the AB and C1 grades were more likely to express this belief than those in the C2 and DE groups in 1981 and 1999 (equivalent data were not available for 2008). Similarly, the differences were not consistent over time for educational attainment; the belief gap was usually very small. Based on a measure of highest qualifications held (from 2008), belief in life after death was higher, though, amongst those having a formal qualification (degree level: 44 per cent; below degree level: 44 per cent) compared to those with no qualifications (38 per cent). Variation across religious identity is in accordance with the pattern regularly seen for theistic belief (in relation to the data for 1981, see the note on religious affiliation categories below Table 3.2). That is, belief in life

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TABLE 3.2 *Per cent who believe in life after death, 1981–2008, EVS*

Variable	Category	1981 (%)	1990 (%)	1999 (%)	2008 (%)
Overall		45	44	43	44
Sex	Men	38	36	36	34
	Women	52	52	51	54
Age group	18–29	45	39	44	42
	30–44	48	42	44	43
	45–64	43	47	47	46
	65 and over	46	49	40	46
Social grade	AB	48	42	50	–
	C1	47	46	48	–
	C2	43	42	42	–
	DE	45	46	38	–
Age completed full-time education	21 or over	48	38	43	43
	20 or under	44	45	44	45
Religious affiliation	Anglican[a]	44	50	43	48
	Catholic	66	68	62	72
	Other Christian	61	65	53	59
	No religion	16	28	15	27

Note: [a]Note that this category for the 1981 survey covers Protestant traditions apart from Nonconformists. For all subsequent surveys, Nonconformists and other Christian traditions fall within the 'other Christian' category.

Source: EVS surveys.

after death was most common amongst Catholics, then other Christians, then Anglicans. In 2008, nearly three-quarters of Catholics held this belief compared to three-fifths of other Christians and nearly half of Anglicans. It was least prevalent amongst those with no religious affiliation; on the most recent reading (2008), around a quarter held this belief.

The BSA series provide another source of data about belief in life after death amongst the adult population in Britain, based on a question asked between 1991 and 2008 and an additional question asked in the 2008 survey. The questions asked were as follows:

> Do you believe in life after death?
> Yes, definitely.
> Yes, probably.
> No, probably not.
> No, definitely not.
> [2008] About things that some people believe in and others don't. Are you absolutely sure you believe in life after death, somewhat sure, not quite sure, not at all sure, or are you sure you do not believe in life after death?

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The combined proportions saying 'yes, definitely' or 'yes, probably' and 'absolutely sure' or 'somewhat sure' are reported in Table 3.3.

As with the EVS data, belief is stable across time (48 per cent in 1991, 47 per cent in 2008). Similar group-related differences are evident. Belief was more common amongst women (over half in each survey) than men (just over or under two-fifths). The differences are not consistent over time based on age, but in 2008 belief was more common amongst those in the two younger groups. Variation is also not that pronounced or consistent based on indicators of socio-economic background, whether occupation type or qualification obtained. Based on religious belonging, belief was always higher amongst Catholics and other Christians compared to Anglicans. In 2008 belief amounted to around two-thirds of Catholics and other Christians, about half of Anglicans and three in ten of those with no affiliation (not too dissimilar from the proportion in the EVS 2008 survey). The question asked only in the 2008 survey shows a somewhat lower level of belief overall (37 per cent), but similar group differences are evident based on this different wording and set of response options. Specifically, belief was more common amongst women than men. It was highest amongst Catholics (just over three-fifths),

TABLE 3.3 *Per cent who believe in life after death, 1991–2008, BSA*

Variable	Category	1991 (%)	1998 (%)	2008[a] (%)	2008[b] (%)
Overall		48	52	47	37
Sex	Men	43	43	38	29
	Women	53	59	56	45
Age group	18–29	44	58	54	37
	30–44	52	49	53	40
	45–64	48	54	43	34
	65 and over	49	49	40	40
Social class	Non-manual	48	54	49	38
	Manual	48	48	43	35
Education	Degree	39	54	47	39
	Other qualification	50	54	50	38
	No qualifications	49	48	44	36
Religious affiliation	Anglican	50	60	52	38
	Catholic	74	69	66	62
	Other Christian	64	69	66	48
	No religion	31	38	30	21

Notes: [a]Combines 'yes, definitely' and 'yes, probably' responses.
[b]Combines 'absolutely sure' and 'somewhat sure' responses.

Source: BSA surveys.

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followed by other Christians (nearly half), Anglicans (nearly two-fifths) and those with no affiliation (a fifth). Again, there was less variation based on age group or socio-economic circumstances.

The group-related differences found across the survey evidence for belief in life after death provide some support for those found by Field (2015a) in a study of religious change in the 'long 1950s' – that is, the 1947–1963 period. Specifically, Field found that 'all studies revealed belief to be stronger among women ... than men and the older than younger age cohorts' (2015a: 99–100). The gap between men and women is clear and consistent on the basis of the more recent evidence examined here. That for age group is not.

Hell

Historical data on belief in hell are available from the Gallup, EVS and BSA series. The Gallup data cover the period 1973–1999 and are based on the following question:

> Which of the following do you believe in? Hell.
> Yes.
> No.

Table 3.4 reports the overall and group percentages expressing belief in hell. The proportion of the adult population reporting that they believed in hell is low over time: in the range of a fifth to a quarter, albeit rising to around a third (32 per cent) in 1999. Most surveys showed that belief is more common amongst women than men, although the gap varies over time. The picture for age is not clear-cut, and the group professing the highest level of belief alters over time. It was highest amongst those 65 and older in the 1999 survey. Social grade provides a similar picture to that for age group: no one group consistently expressed a higher level of belief in hell. More clarity is evident in the results for religious affiliation: belief was always highest amongst Catholics and then usually Nonconformists, albeit data were not available for all surveys. Belief tended to be lower amongst those belonging to the Church of England or the Church of Scotland and, not unexpectedly, was very low amongst those with no affiliation.

The EVS data (reported in Table 3.5) also show that only a minority of adults have expressed belief in hell over time, broadly stable at around a

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TABLE 3.4 *Per cent who believe in hell, 1973–1999, Gallup*

Variable	Category	1973 (%)	1975 (%)	1979 (%)	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1989 (%)	1993 (%)	1995 (%)	1999 (%)
Overall		20	19	22	21	21	24	26	24	32
Sex	Men	–	15	20	19	21	19	22	23	31
	Women	–	23	24	22	21	29	31	25	34
Age group	16–24	–	21	20	18	24	26	27	23	30
	25–34	–	16	21	22	20	25	31	26	31
	35–44	–	18	25	26	23	28	25	16	28
	45–64	–	19	21	20	19	21	27	30	35
	65 and over	–	23	24	20	20	22	21	21	38
Social grade	AB	–	27	27	18	20	29	23	31	33
	C1	–	17	16	22	25	24	27	22	31
	C2	–	19	23	21	17	18	22	18	30
	DE	–	19	22	21	24	27	32	26	35
Religious affiliation	Church of England	17	17	–	13	17	23	23	–	–
	Church of Scotland	–	10	–	24	28	22	25	–	–
	Nonconformist	47	23	–	46	38	19	39	–	–
	Catholic	–	43	–	49	35	47	43	–	–
	None	–	6	–	7	7	11	11	–	–

Source: Gallup. Data supplied by Dr Clive Field.

quarter (or just over in) each survey (26 per cent in 1981, 29 per cent in 2008). The differences are not as marked as those often seen for theistic belief, but belief in hell is always more common amongst women than men. Based on age group, the differences are not pronounced. This is also generally the case for social grade and age at which full-time education was completed, which do not present consistent or clear-cut differences in each survey. Religious belonging again proves to be a strong differentiator of belief. Catholics are consistently likely to express a higher level of belief in hell (always over half), followed by other Christians, then Anglicans (in the range of a fifth to just over a quarter). Belief amongst those with no professed affiliation has been very low, highest at 14 and 13 per cent in 1990 and 2008.

The BSA question on belief in hell was asked on the 1991, 1998 and 2008 surveys and was worded as follows:

> Do you believe in hell?
> Yes, definitely.
> Yes, probably.
> No, probably not.
> No, definitely not.

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TABLE 3.5 *Per cent who believe in hell, 1981–2008, EVS*

Variable	Category	1981 (%)	1990 (%)	1999 (%)	2008 (%)
Overall		26	25	28	29
Sex	Men	23	23	26	25
	Women	29	27	30	33
Age group	18–29	24	26	26	24
	30–44	28	24	30	29
	45–64	26	24	29	29
	65 and over	28	26	27	31
Social grade	AB	22	23	28	–
	C1	21	25	31	–
	C2	30	25	31	–
	DE	28	27	23	–
Age completed full-time education	21 or over	25	20	30	29
	20 or under	26	26	29	28
Religious affiliation	Anglican[a]	22	26	24	27
	Catholic	58	58	54	59
	Other Christian	36	39	39	47
	No religion	6	14	7	13

Note: [a] Note that this category for the 1981 survey covers Protestant traditions apart from Nonconformists. For all subsequent surveys, Nonconformists and other Christian traditions fall within the 'other Christian' category.

Source: EVS surveys.

The BSA data (see Table 3.6) also show that belief in hell – the proportion saying 'yes, definitely' or 'yes, probably' – has stood at around a quarter of the population since the early 1990s. The group differences correspond with those seen in the EVS data. Women are always more likely than men to express belief in hell, while, interestingly, belief is least common amongst the oldest age group (in the 1998 and 2008 surveys). In 2008 around a third of those in the 18–29 and 30–44 groups expressed this belief compared to a quarter and somewhat lower, respectively, of those 45 to 64 and those 65 and over. Variation is less evident across time on the basis of social class and for education (particularly in 1998 and 2008). Again, there are considerable – and consistent – differences across Christian groups: belief is highest amongst Catholics, followed by other Christians and then Anglicans. In 2008 well over half of Catholics held this belief (56 per cent) compared to a third of Anglicans (33 per cent), just over two-fifths of other Christians (42 per cent), and a fifth of those with no professed affiliation (21 per cent).

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TABLE 3.6 *Per cent who believe in hell, 1991–2008, BSA*

Variable	Category	1991 (%)	1998 (%)	2008 (%)
Overall		26	28	29
Sex	Men	22	25	25
	Women	29	32	32
Age group	18–29	28	33	34
	30–44	27	30	34
	45–64	24	28	25
	65 and over	25	23	23
Social class	Non-manual	25	28	28
	Manual	27	30	30
Education	Degree	19	27	28
	Other qualification	27	29	30
	No qualifications	26	29	27
Religious affiliation	Anglican	23	28	33
	Catholic	53	54	56
	Other Christian	34	49	42
	No religion	14	17	21

Note: Combines 'yes, definitely' and 'yes, probably' responses.

Source: BSA surveys.

Heaven

Belief in heaven has been elicited in Gallup surveys using the following wording:

> Which of the following do you believe in? Heaven.
> Yes.
> No.

Belief in heaven has always been considerably higher in the general adult population than has belief in hell. Indeed, based on the Gallup data reported in Table 3.7, belief in heaven has often been more than twice as high as belief in hell. In 1973 belief in heaven stood at 51 per cent (in comparison with 20 per cent for hell) and in 1999 at 62 per cent (32 per cent for hell). Belief in heaven has generally been just above the 50 per cent level or even higher, though the last survey, 1999, is something of an outlier. Over time the difference between women and men has been consistent. In 1973, 41 per cent of men and 60 per cent of women held this belief (a difference of 19 points); the corresponding figures in 1999

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TABLE 3.7 *Per cent who believe in heaven, 1973–1999, Gallup*

Variable	Category	1973 (%)	1975 (%)	1979 (%)	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1989 (%)	1993 (%)	1995 (%)	1999 (%)
Overall		51	50	57	53	52	55	53	50	62
Sex	Men	41	39	47	45	41	40	41	41	53
	Women	60	59	66	60	61	68	64	58	70
Age group	16–24	–	41	45	45	50	52	50	45	51
	25–34	–	43	45	43	42	47	50	51	53
	35–44	–	47	60	52	50	52	50	38	57
	45–64	–	52	62	60	55	58	53	56	68
	65 and over	–	65	70	63	58	67	63	53	74
Social grade	AB	–	48	57	40	49	47	48	54	56
	C1	–	45	51	52	55	49	50	46	56
	C2	–	48	59	55	44	53	50	45	64
	DE	–	56	58	59	59	65	61	54	69
Religious affiliation	Church of England	52	52	–	49	52	58	53	–	–
	Church of Scotland	–	57	–	62	66	65	50	–	–
	Nonconformist	–	57	–	85	63	74	72	–	–
	Catholic	76	78	–	79	67	76	80	–	–
	None	–	7	–	13	15	15	13	–	–

Source: Gallup. Data supplied by Dr Clive Field.

were 53 and 70 per cent (a difference of 17 points). The survey data show that belief in heaven has generally been more prevalent amongst the two older groups (45–54 and 65 and over) and less common amongst those in the younger groups. In 1975, 41 per cent of those 16 to 24 expressed belief in heaven compared to 65 per cent of those 65 and over. The corresponding figures in 1999 were 51 and 74 per cent.

Apart from a couple of surveys where the differences are less clear-cut, it is generally the case that belief has been highest amongst those in the DE social grade. Variation in belief based on Christian affiliation shows that over time, belief in heaven has been most common amongst Catholics and Nonconformists, followed by those affiliated with the Church of Scotland and then those identifying as Church of England. Again, religious affiliation data are not available for some surveys. The earliest reading (1973) shows that around three-quarters of Catholics held this belief as against about half those in the Church of England group. In 1993, four-fifths of Catholics held this belief, along with nearly three-quarters of Nonconformists, about half of those identifying as

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Church of Scotland or Church of England and just over a tenth of those with no affiliation.

The EVS surveys (1981–2008) also show that, overall, belief in heaven has been consistently and considerably higher than belief in hell. Data reported in Table 3.8 are based on responses to the following question:

> Which, if any, of the following do you believe in? Heaven.
> Yes.
> No.

Based on the surveys, belief in heaven actually declined in recent decades from 57 per cent in 1981 to 46 per cent in 2008. In 2008, therefore, belief in heaven was about 18 points higher than belief in hell. Corroborating the Gallup data, over time, belief in heaven has been much more common among women than men. Amongst men, belief declines from around half in 1981 to less than two-fifths in 2008. Amongst women, it falls from over three-fifths to somewhat over half. A large age-related differential is evident for belief in heaven, with belief increasing with each age

TABLE 3.8 *Per cent who believe in heaven, 1981–2008, EVS*

Variable	Category	1981 (%)	1990 (%)	1999 (%)	2008 (%)
Overall		57	53	45	46
Sex	Men	51	43	36	37
	Women	63	63	54	55
Age group	18–29	47	45	39	39
	30–44	57	50	42	43
	45–64	60	57	49	47
	65 and over	67	66	53	57
Social grade	AB	45	46	41	–
	C1	48	52	44	–
	C2	63	52	46	–
	DE	64	64	48	–
Age completed full-time education	21 or over	41	41	36	40
	20 or under	59	55	48	48
Religious affiliation	Anglican[a]	58	64	46	55
	Catholic	76	71	70	78
	Other Christian	67	76	61	71
	No religion	17	36	11	25

Note: [a]Note that this category for the 1981 survey covers Protestant traditions apart from Nonconformists. For all subsequent surveys, Nonconformists and other Christian traditions fall within the 'other Christian' category.

Source: EVS surveys.

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group. Those 65 and over were most likely to believe in heaven, those in the 18–29 group least likely to. In 1981 and 2008 there were substantial percentage point gaps in belief between the youngest and oldest groups (respectively, 20 and 18 points).

Unlike other traditional beliefs looked at already, there is greater variation based on social grade, particularly in the 1981 and 1990 surveys. In every survey those in the DE social grade are most likely to hold this belief, though the differences are less pronounced in the 1999 survey (data were not available in 2008). Continuing the established pattern, the data for religious belonging again shows variation across Christian groups. It is highest amongst Catholics and other Christians, followed by Anglicans, and lowest amongst those with no affiliation. In 2008 over three-quarters of Catholics believed in heaven, along with seven in ten of other Christians. This fell to about half of Anglicans and a quarter of those with no affiliation (markedly higher than their belief in hell in the same survey).

The BSA surveys also show evidence of decline in belief in heaven, falling from just under half in 1991 to just over two-fifths in 2008. The data are reported in Table 3.9. The question was worded as follows:

> Do you believe in heaven?
> Yes, definitely.
> Yes, probably.
> No, probably not.
> No, definitely not.

As with the Gallup and EVS data, women were much more likely to express belief in heaven (at least half in each survey, albeit falling over time) than were men (two-fifths in 1991, declining to a third in 2008). Data for socio-economic status show a consistent pattern for educational attainment in that those with degree-level (or higher) qualifications were less likely to profess belief in heaven compared to those with other qualifications (less so in 2008) and those with no qualifications (who expressed the highest level of belief in each survey). Differences are evident based on social class, with manual workers (except in the 2008 survey) somewhat more likely to express belief.

The findings for religious affiliation continue the established pattern for other traditional beliefs: belief in heaven is more common amongst Catholics and other Christians, less prevalent amongst Anglicans, and much less so amongst those with no religious affiliation. In 2008 around

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TABLE 3.9 *Per cent who believe in heaven, 1991–2008, BSA*

Question		1991 (%)	1998 (%)	2008 (%)
Overall		48	47	43
Sex	Men	39	37	34
	Women	56	55	51
Age group	18–29	42	51	44
	30–44	47	44	45
	45–64	47	47	40
	65 and over	60	52	41
Social class	Non-manual	44	45	42
	Manual	53	51	42
Education	Degree	29	39	40
	Other qualification	47	46	41
	No qualifications	56	55	48
Religious affiliation	Anglican	55	55	54
	Catholic	73	64	71
	Other Christian	65	73	62
	No religion	25	31	13

Note: Combines 'yes, definitely' and 'yes, probably' responses.

Source: BSA surveys.

seven in ten Catholics held this belief compared to just over three-fifths of other Christians and just over half of Anglicans. The proportion of Anglicans professing belief in heaven was stable between the bookend surveys, as it was also for Catholics and other Christians. It declined amongst those with no affiliation, from a quarter in 1991 to somewhat over a tenth in 2008.

Sin

Only the EVS surveys provide over-time data on belief in sin, again for the period 1981–2008, based on the following question:

> Which, if any, of the following do you believe in? Sin.
> Yes.
> No.

Data are provided in Table 3.10. Belief in sin is higher than that recorded for other beliefs asked about in the EVS surveys – heaven, hell and life after death – with the exception of belief in God. It also shows some decline over time: from 68 per cent in 1981 to 57 per cent in 2008. The difference in belief between men and women is less marked, although

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TABLE 3.10 *Per cent who believe in sin, 1981–2008, EVS*

Variable	Category	1981 (%)	1990 (%)	1999 (%)	2008 (%)
Overall		68	68	57	57
Sex	Men	68	65	56	53
	Women	69	71	57	61
Age group	18–29	62	57	51	49
	30–44	70	72	54	50
	45–64	73	73	65	64
	65 and over	68	69	58	65
Social grade	AB	70	73	67	–
	C1	69	71	62	–
	C2	67	62	58	–
	DE	68	68	49	–
Age completed full-time education	21 or over	72	67	60	56
	20 or under	68	68	56	58
Religious affiliation	Anglican[a]	67	76	57	63
	Catholic	84	88	73	86
	Other Christian	71	87	69	82
	No religion	52	54	33	39

Note: [a]Note that this category for the 1981 survey covers Protestant traditions apart from Nonconformists. For all subsequent surveys, Nonconformists and other Christian traditions fall within the 'other Christian' category.

Source: EVS surveys.

where there is a clear difference (in 1990 and 2008), women were more likely to hold the belief. Over time, both men and women show a decline in the proportion professing belief. Across age groups, the first two surveys showed that belief in sin was lower amongst the 18–29 group, who stood apart from the three older groups. In the two later surveys, those 18 to 29 and 30 to 44 stood somewhat apart from the older groups in their lower level of expressed belief. In 2008 nearly two-thirds of those in the 45–64 and the 65 and older groups professed belief in sin compared to around half of those 18 to 29 and 30 to 44.

The differences based on social grade were not clear-cut in 1981. In 1990 and 1999 there was greater variation, with belief actually highest in the AB and C1 social grades, being lowest amongst the C2 grade in 1990 and DE grade in 1999. Based on age having completed full-time education, the differences were rather small and not consistent across surveys. There was also hardly any variation across highest educational qualification held in the 2008 survey, with 57 to 58 per cent of each group believing in sin. Religious belonging again showed variation

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across Christian groups. In each year belief in sin was higher amongst Catholics and other Christians than Anglicans. In 2008, 86 per cent of Catholics professed this belief, along with 82 per cent of other Christians, compared to 63 per cent of Anglicans. Interestingly, nearly two-fifths of those with no religious affiliation also held this belief in 2008 (and over half did so in 1981 and 1990). Based on the EVS surveys, the proportion believing in sin amongst those with no affiliation *is always higher* than that seen for belief in God (see Chapter 2), albeit the levels were almost identical in 1990.

The Devil

Over-time data on belief in the devil come from the Gallup surveys (1975–1999) and the two earlier EVS surveys (1981 and 1990). The Gallup question was worded as follows (with the data shown in Table 3.11).

> Which, if any, of the following do you believe in? The devil.
> Yes.
> No.

Overall, belief in the devil, like belief in heaven, has been much lower than that seen for other traditional beliefs, being around a fifth to a quarter (highest in 1999 at 29 per cent). Earlier in the post-war period, a Gallup survey from 1963 showed that 36 per cent expressed belief in a devil (Martin 1968: 179); it stood at about a third in surveys from 1957 and 1961 (Field 2015a: 77). A more recent YouGov survey put belief in the devil at 18 per cent (YouGov 2013b).

In the Gallup surveys, belief has generally been higher amongst women than men, though the difference has sometimes been small. The variation across age groups was much less pronounced than that for other orthodox beliefs, and there has been no consistent pattern across surveys. The same is the case for social grade. Religious affiliation does show greater and more consistent variation over time, although data are not available for all surveys. Generally, belief in the devil has been higher amongst Catholics, Nonconformists and those affiliated with the Church of Scotland than it has amongst those belonging to the Church of England. Belief has been much lower, albeit variable, amongst those professing no religion (5 to 14 per cent).

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TABLE 3.11 *Per cent who believe in the devil, 1975–1999, Gallup*

Variable	Category	1975 (%)	1979 (%)	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1989 (%)	1993 (%)	1995 (%)	1999 (%)
Overall		20	22	21	21	26	26	24	29
Sex	Men	16	24	17	22	21	20	22	27
	Women	23	20	24	20	30	33	26	31
Age group	16–24	21	25	20	22	25	28	22	24
	25–34	19	24	23	26	27	25	30	25
	35–44	20	21	26	25	27	29	15	26
	45–64	19	19	18	18	25	28	29	33
	65 and over	20	23	18	19	25	22	20	36
Social grade	AB	27	29	22	22	32	22	28	26
	C1	18	19	24	25	26	29	23	31
	C2	18	21	20	17	19	21	21	26
	DE	20	22	18	23	28	31	24	31
Religious affiliation	Church of England	16	–	15	17	24	22	–	–
	Church of Scotland	10	–	23	24	25	38	–	–
	Nonconformist	20	–	43	41	22	36	–	–
	Catholic	44	–	36	36	42	48	–	–
	None	9	–	6	5	14	12	–	–

Source: Gallup. Data supplied by Dr Clive Field.

The EVS data reported in Table 3.12 are based on the following question:

> Which, if any, of the following do you believe in? The Devil.
> Yes.
> No.

In both surveys around three in ten express belief in the devil (somewhat higher than that recorded in Gallup polls), which is broadly on a par with overall belief in hell as recorded in the EVS surveys. There is much less marked variation based on sex and age group compared to that registered for some other religious beliefs. This is also the case for social grade and age having completed full-time education (less so for 1981). It is in relation to religious belonging that there is a marked difference in levels of belief. In both surveys, over three-fifths of Catholics professed belief in the devil, along with half of other Christians. For Anglicans, in contrast, lower proportions expressed belief, but in turn those proportions were much higher than those amongst people with no affiliation.

The BSA surveys asked only about belief in the devil in 1991, using wording equivalent to that used for other religious belief questions. Based on

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TABLE 3.12 *Per cent who believe in the devil, 1981 and 1990, EVS*

Variable	Category	1981 (%)	1990 (%)
Overall		30	30
Sex	Men	28	27
	Women	32	32
Age group	18–29	30	27
	30–44	31	29
	45–64	30	36
	65 and over	31	29
Social grade	AB	25	32
	C1	27	31
	C2	33	28
	DE	32	29
Age completed full-time education	21 or over	24	28
	20 or under	31	30
Religious affiliation	Anglican[a]	25	32
	Catholic	63	61
	Other Christian	50	53
	No religion	8	17

Note: [a]Note that this category for the 1981 survey covers Protestant traditions apart from Nonconformists. For all subsequent surveys, Nonconformists and other Christian traditions fall within the 'other Christian' category.

Source: EVS 1981 and 1990 surveys.

combined proportions saying 'yes, definitely' or 'yes, probably', a quarter said they believed in the devil (26 per cent) – similar to the levels obtained in the Gallup data and close to those in the EVS surveys. Belief did not show much variation based on social characteristics. It was slightly higher amongst women than men and highest amongst those 30 to 44, but it did not vary much on the basis of socio-economic background. However, there was considerable difference in belief based on religious belonging. Around half of Catholics (51 per cent) expressed belief in the devil, compared to just over a third of other Christians (36 per cent). This fell to around a fifth of Anglicans (22 per cent) and was lowest (just over a tenth) for those with no affiliation (13 per cent). These group-related differences based on religious belonging underline those found in the EVS and Gallup data.[2]

Biblecentrism

The recurrent social surveys and opinion polls also shed light on overall and group belief in various indicators of 'biblecentrism' – a shorthand

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term for the centrality of the Bible in British society – which can also be used, at the individual level, as an indicator of religiosity in the British adult population (Field 2014a: 523). As Field notes: 'In addition to measuring attitudes to the literalism of the Bible as a whole, we need to probe the matter at the level of beliefs in specific biblical content' (2014a: 513). This section looks at four such areas: belief in the Bible or Holy Scripture being the actual or inspired word of God; belief in the divine authority of the Old Testament; belief in the divine authority of the New Testament; belief in Jesus Christ as the son of God.

From the BSA surveys, levels of belief in the Bible (1991 and 1998) or Holy Scripture (2008) being the actual or inspired word of God are elicited from the following questions:

> Which of these statements comes closest to describing your feelings about the Bible?
> The Bible is the actual word of God and it is to be taken literally, word for word.
> The Bible is the inspired word of God.
> The Bible is an ancient book of fables, legends, history and moral teachings recorded by man.
> About your feelings about Holy Scripture. Which comes closest to describing yours?
> Scripture is the actual word of God and to be taken literally.
> Inspired word of God, but not everything taken literally.
> Scripture is an ancient book of fables, legends and history.

The combined percentages saying that the Bible (or Holy Scripture) is the actual or inspired word of God are reported in Table 3.13. It is important to note that, overall, while in 1991 and 1998 two-fifths believed the Bible to be the actual or inspired word of God, in 2008, with the different question wording, that proportion rose to over half. Nevertheless the pattern of group difference is generally the same across the two question wordings, although differences for some groups are somewhat less pronounced in 1998.

Women are more likely to believe that the Bible (or Holy Scripture) is the actual or inspired word of God. In 1998 around a third of men said this compared to more than two-fifths of women. In 2008, with the different wording, it amounted to somewhat under half of men and over three-fifths of women. Based on age group, in 1991 and 2008 those 65 and older were most likely to think that the Bible (or Holy Scripture) was the actual or inspired word of God; with those 18 to 29 least likely to

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TABLE 3.13 *Per cent saying the Bible/Holy Scripture is the actual or inspired word of God, 1991–2008, BSA*

Variable	Category	Bible: 1991 (%)	Bible: 1998 (%)	Holy Scripture: 2008 (%)
Overall		41	39	55
Sex	Men	37	33	47
	Women	44	43	62
Age group	18–29	32	28	60
	30–44	38	35	49
	45–64	40	46	50
	65 and over	56	45	67
Social grade	Non-manual	40	39	55
	Manual	42	37	55
Education	Degree	26	42	51
	Other	41	38	54
	None	44	39	62
Religious affiliation	Anglican	46 (5)	49 (4)	64 (7)
	Catholic	67 (12)	57 (6)	81 (12)
	Other Christian	65 (12)	76 (15)	76 (16)
	No religion	17 (2)	20 (1)	32 (3)

Note: Combines 'yes, definitely' and 'yes, probably' responses.

Source: BSA surveys. Percentages in parentheses show the proportions saying it is the actual word of God.

think this. In 2008, however, those 18 to 29 ranked below the oldest age group in holding this belief, with it being least common amongst those 30 to 44 and 45 to 64.

There is little difference in belief across social classes with both iterations of the question. However, there are consistent differences based on educational attainment in 1991 and 2008: those having no formal qualifications were more likely to believe that the Bible or Holy Scripture was the actual or inspired word of God. Both questions drew a similar set of responses by religious affiliation. In 1991 and 1998 Catholics and other Christians showed higher levels of belief than did Anglicans, highest at three-quarters of other Christians in 1998. In 2008 those believing Holy Scripture the actual or inspired word of God included four-fifths of Catholics, three-quarters of other Christians and nearly two-thirds of Anglicans. Amongst those with no affiliation, perhaps unexpectedly, the proportions were 17 per cent in 1991, 20 per cent in 1998 and 32 per cent in 2008.

When restricted to only those saying that the Bible or Scripture is the *actual word of God to be taken literally* – shown in parentheses in Table

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3.13 for the religious affiliation categories – such responses have been more common from Catholics and other Christians (clearly highest for the latter in the 1998 and 2008 surveys). Even so, within each Christian group, the proportion believing the Bible or Scripture to be the actual word of God is always heavily outweighed by that saying that it is the inspired word of God (in each case, this proportion can be found by subtracting the percentage in parenthesis from the figure reported alongside it in each cell).

The Gallup surveys provide over-time data (1979–1993) on belief in the divine authority of the Old Testament and New Testament based on the following question wordings (and same set of response options):

> Which of these comes nearest to expressing your views about the Old Testament?
> Which of these comes nearest to expressing your views about the New Testament?
> It is of divine authority and its commands should be followed without question.
> It is mostly of divine authority but some of it needs interpretation.
> It is mostly a collection of stories and fables.

The combined percentages of those thinking the Old Testament and New Testament are of divine authority or mostly of divine authority are reported in, respectively, Tables 3.14 and 3.15. Overall, there has been some decline in those believing in the divine authority (to some extent) of the Old Testament: from 51 per cent in 1979 to 44 per cent in 1993.

There is consistent variation over time in the beliefs of men and women, with the latter more likely to support the divine authority of the Old Testament (over half in each survey). There is some evidence for age-related differences. With the exception of 1986, the pattern is for belief in divine authority (unequivocally or mostly with some interpretation) to be more common amongst older age groups and usually highest in those 65 and over (and sometimes at a similar level amongst those 45 to 64). In 1979 two-fifths of those 16 to 24 and two-thirds of those 65 and older believed in the divine authority of the Old Testament. In 1993, the last survey available, it was still around two-fifths of the youngest age group but had fallen to half of those 65 and older. Less consistent results are evident for social class.

The results for religious affiliation (not available for the 1979 survey) show that Catholics, Nonconformists and those affiliated with the Church of Scotland were more likely to have believed in the divine authority of the

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TABLE 3.14 *Per cent who believe the Old Testament is of divine authority or mostly of divine authority, 1979–1993, Gallup*

Variable	Category	1979 (%)	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1989 (%)	1993 (%)
Overall		51	48	48	43	44
Sex	Men	43	42	41	35	38
	Women	59	52	55	50	51
Age group	16–24	40	38	45	32	38
	25–34	46	44	47	38	40
	35–44	52	42	49	46	39
	45–64	52	56	49	46	52
	65 and over	66	57	49	56	52
Social grade	AB	54	35	46	43	45
	C1	51	48	51	40	44
	C2	49	54	44	44	41
	DE	48	48	51	44	48
Religious affiliation	Church of England	–	46 (10)	47 (7)	43 (8)	44 (9)
	Church of Scotland	–	67 (24)	66 (14)	61 (21)	58 (8)
	Nonconformist	–	76 (35)	65 (16)	57 (13)	59(21)
	Catholic	–	62 (21)	62 (15)	66 (8)	65 (15)
	None	–	7 (3)	11 (0)	6 (0)	10 (1)

Source: Gallup. Data supplied by Dr Clive Field. Percentages in parentheses show the proportions saying it is of divine authority.

Old Testament, with this view being less common amongst those identifying as Church of England and held only by very small proportions of those with no religion. In 1993 nearly three-fifths of Nonconformists and those affiliated with the Church of Scotland, as well as two-thirds of Catholics, believed to some extent in divine authority compared to two-fifths of those belonging to the Church of England and a tenth of those with no affiliation. Figures in parentheses also show the proportions within each religious affiliation category that believed the Old Testament was of divine authority and should be obeyed without question. It is noteworthy that for all Christian groups, the preponderant view was, not the literalist view, but that the Old Testament was mostly of divine authority and needed some interpretation. For Catholics in 1981, for every individual who believed unequivocally in divine authority, two took the view that some interpretation was needed. In 1993, for every Catholic who believed unequivocally in the divine authority of the Old Testament, three Catholics believed it was mostly divine authority but that some interpretation was needed.

Belief in the divine authority (or mostly divine authority) of the New Testament (Table 3.15) is generally a little higher than the equivalent belief

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TABLE 3.15 *Per cent who believe the New Testament is of divine authority or mostly of divine authority, 1979–1993, Gallup*

Variable	Category	1979 (%)	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1989 (%)	1993 (%)
Overall		55	53	52	47	49
Sex	Men	47	48	45	39	40
	Women	63	56	59	54	56
Age group	16–24	44	38	46	35	42
	25–34	50	48	54	41	42
	35–44	58	51	51	52	44
	45–64	57	59	53	48	56
	65 and over	68	64	58	62	56
Social grade	AB	59	43	55	51	48
	C1	59	54	58	44	49
	C2	52	59	45	47	45
	DE	54	48	54	47	52
Religious affiliation	Church of England	–	51 (9)	52 (8)	48 (9)	48 (10)
	Church of Scotland	–	70 (19)	65 (16)	64 (18)	59 (10)
	Nonconformist	–	82 (43)	77 (28)	73 (14)	74 (31)
	Catholic	–	65 (21)	64 (22)	63 (13)	73 (22)
	None	–	14 (4)	16 (4)	8 (0)	8 (0)

Source: Gallup. Data supplied by Dr Clive Field. Percentages in parentheses show the proportions saying it is of divine authority.

for the Old Testament but also declines somewhat over time (from 55 to 49 per cent). As with the Old Testament question, there is a clear gap between men and women, with the latter group more likely to believe in the New Testament's divine authority (either unequivocally or mostly with some interpretation needed). Across surveys, a majority of women think this is so compared to less than half and then two-fifths of men. There is age-based variation over time, as seen for the Old Testament question. That is, in general, those 65 and over are most likely to believe the divine authority of the New Testament. In 1979 two-thirds of those 65 and above professed this, compared to somewhat over two-fifths of those in the youngest group. In 1993 a clear majority of those in the oldest groups held this belief compared to two-fifths of those 16 to 24.

Again, there is lack of consistent variation by social grade, but the pattern for religious belonging (not given for 1979) is in accord with that obtained for the Old Testament. Belief in divine authority (unequivocal or mostly with some interpretation required) is again consistently higher amongst Catholics, Nonconformists and those affiliated with the Church of Scotland. Amongst those who identify as Church of England, around

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half hold this view, while for those with no affiliation, less than a tenth do so in the later surveys.

The final belief about biblical content relates to Jesus Christ being the son of God, based on the following Gallup question:

> Do you believe that Jesus Christ was the son of God or just a man?
> Son of God.
> Just a man.
> Just a story.

Data are reported in Table 3.16 for the period 1979–1993. Overall, the proportion believing that Jesus is the son of God fell from 55 per cent in 1979 to 46 per cent in 1993. A Gallup survey in 1963 found that 59 per cent professed this belief (Martin 1968: 179); it had stood at 71 per cent in 1959 (Field 2015a: 77).

Over time, women were much more likely than men to hold this belief. In 1979, 65 per cent of women said Jesus was the son of God compared to 43 per cent of men. In 1993, 57 per cent of women professed this belief compared to only a third of men. There is clear variation by age. In 1979 somewhat over two-fifths of those 16 to 24 believed Jesus to be the son

TABLE 3.16 *Per cent who believe Jesus Christ was the son of God, 1979–1993, Gallup*

Variable	Category	1979 (%)	1981 (%)	1986 (%)	1989 (%)	1993 (%)
Overall		55	52	48	46	46
Sex	Men	43	42	37	35	33
	Women	65	62	58	57	57
Age group	16–24	43	42	42	40	37
	25–34	49	45	46	35	40
	35–44	64	53	44	46	44
	45–64	56	57	53	52	51
	65 and over	61	66	53	60	54
Social grade	AB	61	47	47	44	44
	C1	48	47	48	46	43
	C2	56	54	42	43	41
	DE	55	57	56	51	53
Religious affiliation	Church of England	–	50	47	48	47
	Church of Scotland	–	64	66	63	48
	Nonconformist	–	80	69	75	66
	Catholic	–	79	69	69	71
	None	–	12	8	5	6

Source: Gallup. Data supplied by Dr Clive Field.

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of God compared to clear majorities of those 35 to 44 and 65 and older. In 1993 less than two-fifths of the youngest age group held this belief, increasingly steadily to over half of those 45 to 64 and 65 and over. Based on social grade, there was a tendency for those in the DE social grade to be more likely to believe that Jesus was the son of God (albeit the 1979 survey is rather out of line, in that the AB grade had the highest proportion saying this).

Belief in Jesus as the son of God again differed across Christian groups from 1981 to 1993, being more common amongst Catholics, Nonconformists and those affiliated with the Church of Scotland (except in 1993) than it was amongst those who identified as Church of England. In 1981 around four-fifths of Catholics and Nonconformists held this belief compared to half and around two-thirds of those, respectively, who identified as either Church of England or Church of Scotland. By 1993 this belief had declined to some extent across all Christian groups but was still much more prevalent amongst Catholics and Nonconformists. The proportion holding the belief amongst those with no religion ranged from 5 to 12 per cent over time. The group-related differences found in the survey data for recent decades have some similarity with those revealed in research into religious belief in the early post-war period: in a 1963 study, belief in Jesus as the son of God was considerably higher amongst women than men and highest for Catholics (Field 2015a: 100).

A core aspect of biblical content in the Old Testament concerns the creationist account of life on earth. Research on attitudes in the general adult population has noted that 'the account of the creation in Genesis is not widely rejected in favour of evolutionist interpretations' (Field 2014: 513). In terms of differences amongst groups in society, Field noted that

> In general surveys, professing Roman Catholics were well above average in selecting interpretations according God a prime role, as were those without any religion in rejecting supernatural intervention. The traditional biblical story of the creation is also more likely to find favour among women than men, the over-65s than under-25s, and the DE social group than ABs. (2014: 514)

The BSA survey asked a question on this topic in the 2008 survey, using the following wording:

> About your personal beliefs. Which of the following statements comes closest to your views on the origin and development of human beings?

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> Human beings have developed over millions of years from less advanced forms of life, but God guided this process.
> Human beings have developed over millions of years from less advanced forms of life, but God had no part in this process.
> God created human beings pretty much in their present form at one time within the last 10,000 years or so.

The overall proportion saying that God played some role in the origin and developments of human beings was 48 per cent, with two-thirds of this group saying that God guided a process of human being developing over millions of years and one-third believing in a creationist account. The majority of those asked (52 per cent) said that God played no part in the origins and development of humans. Other polls also show more support for an evolutionary account of human origins and life on earth. An Ipsos MORI (2006) survey of adults in Britain found that a near majority of respondents accepted 'evolution theory' as best describing their view on the origin and development of life on earth (48 per cent), with about a fifth siding with 'creationism theory' (22 per cent) and the remainder believing in 'intelligent design theory' (17 per cent) or unsure (12 per cent). A YouGov survey (2010) also found that about two-thirds agreed (65 per cent) that the theory of evolution was more likely to be the correct explanation for the origin of humans compared to 9 per cent assenting to the biblical account of creation, 12 per cent supporting intelligent design and 13 per cent unsure.

Looking at differences in the BSA data based on social and religious groups, women were more likely to think that God played some role in human life (56 per cent, combining the two responses, compared to 40 per cent for men). Belief in God playing some role in the development of human beings was most common amongst those 65 and over (65 per cent) and at a much lower – and similar – level within the other age groups (42–47 per cent). Those in manual occupations were a little more likely than those in non-manual positions to believe God played some part (50 and 47 per cent, respectively), but variation was much more marked with educational attainment. Those with some form of qualification were much less likely to profess this belief (43 per cent of degree holders; 46 per cent of those with other qualifications) than those with no formal qualifications (three-fifths). Belief in God playing some role in the development of human beings was high across all Christian groups but relatively higher amongst Catholics (78 per cent) and other Christians (75 per cent) than Anglicans (62 per cent). Even a fifth of

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those with no affiliation thought that God played some part in this process (22 per cent).

Recent survey research conducted by the Wellcome Trust in 2009 and 2012 found that around half of (UK) adults thought that life evolved because of natural selection (2009: 53 per cent; 2012: 50 per cent; Clemence et al. 2013: 32). The combined percentages saying that God played some part in the process (either 'Humans and other living things evolved over time, in a process guided by God' or 'Humans and other living things were created by God and have always existed in their current form') were 45 per cent in both 2009 and 2012. Based on group characteristics, women were more likely to offer a religious perspective on the origins and development of life than men, as were those 65 and over (Clemence et al. 2013: 33).

Further light on public views on the evolution debate come from earlier BSA surveys, which, as part of the ISSP environment modules in 1993 and 2000 (and separately in 1996), asked a question on the origins of life within a battery of questions testing public knowledge and understanding of science. The full wordings differed somewhat, but all had a core focus on asking whether it was true or not that human beings developed from earlier species of animal. The patterns of responses – overall and based on group-related group differences – were similar across the surveys, although it should be noted that the proportions responding 'definitely not true' and 'probably not true' were generally higher across the board in 2000. Overall, a fifth (2000: 20 per cent) or fewer (1993: 17 per cent; 1996: 16 per cent) said that it was either definitely or probably not true that human beings developed from earlier species of animal, with large majorities believing that they did. In terms of group-related views, disagreement with human beings developing from earlier species was most marked amongst those 65 and older (33 per cent in 2000) and those with no qualifications (30 per cent in 2000) and amongst other Christians (32 per cent in 2000). It was lowest amongst those 44 and under, those with a degree-level qualification and those with no religious affiliation.

Multivariate analysis

The detailed examination of historical survey data has shown that there are some generally consistent differences across social and religious

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groups in the likelihood of subscribing to traditional religious beliefs and aspects of biblical content. In many respects these differences accord with those obtained for theistic belief examined in Chapter 2. As with theistic belief, the holding of traditional religious beliefs and belief in the veracity of biblical content has tended to be more common amongst women than men, amongst those in older age groups – or the oldest – and amongst Catholics and other Christians than amongst Anglicans (and least prevalent amongst those with no religious affiliation). The results are not always consistent or clear-cut for measures of socio-economic background, but where there is variation in belief based on educational attainment, it is usually those with no qualifications who are more likely to profess traditional religious beliefs. This accords with the expectation of 'deprivation theory', whereby socially marginalised groups are more likely to believe in religious phenomena (Rice 2003).

This section extends the analysis of group variation in attitudes to examine the relative impact of each social and religious characteristic within the context of multivariate analysis of contemporary religious beliefs in Britain. As in Chapter 2, the analysis uses a YouGov survey representative of the adult population in Britain, which was conducted in November 2013 (fieldwork: 24–25 November; sample size = 1,681). This survey asked about several different religious beliefs, including specific aspects of biblical content (for information on YouGov's survey methodology, see note 4 in Chapter 2). This coverage in the survey enables an analysis of the social and religious sources of a range of beliefs looked at in this chapter (the March 2013 YouGov survey also used in Chapter 2 is not employed, as it asked fewer belief-related questions and those asked essentially duplicated those available in the November 2013 survey). The traditional beliefs asked about were life after death and the devil, which have traditionally elicited higher and lower levels of popular belief, respectively, in the British population. The questions concerning specific biblical content – indicators of 'biblecentrism' (Field 2014) – focus on Jesus as the son of God, on the resurrection and on the origins of life.

The questions used as the dependent variables for the logistic regression estimations were worded as follows:

> Do you believe there is or is not life after death?
> Is.
> Is not.
> Do you believe there is or is not a devil?
> Is.

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Is not.
Do you believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God or just a man?
Son of God.
Just a man.
Just a story.
Do you believe that the Bible's account of the resurrection is broadly right?
Yes, I believe Jesus Christ returned to life on the third day after his crucifixion.
No, I do not believe this happened.
Which do you think is more likely to be the correct explanation for the origin of life on the earth?
The theory of evolution, and natural selection over billions of years.
The account of creation as told in the Bible, with life on earth starting thousands, not billions, of years ago.
Intelligent design: evolution has happened, but is the work of an intelligent designer such as God, not natural selection.

For the question on belief in life after death, responses were evenly split. Around a third said that there was life after death (33 per cent) – lower than the belief as expressed in the historical data – while a very similar proportion said there was not (33 per cent) or was not sure (34 per cent). A lower proportion believed in the devil – around a fifth (22 per cent); this is in line with the historical data analysed above – while about half did not believe in the devil (49 per cent). Nearly three in ten did not know (29 per cent).

In terms of beliefs about biblical content – biblecentrism, or the centrality of the bible in British society (Field 2014a: 503) – around a quarter believed that Jesus Christ was the son of God (27 per cent). This figure was markedly lower than that obtained by the Gallup surveys in earlier decades, which itself was marginally exceeded by the three in ten who said he was just a man (29 per cent). Around a fifth thought Jesus was just a story (22 per cent), and a similar proportion could not offer an opinion (21 per cent). As for belief in the biblical account of the resurrection, a quarter believed it broadly right (26 per cent), while nearly twice as many (48 per cent) said it did not happen. The remaining quarter did not know (26 per cent). Finally, in response to the question on the explanation for the origins of life on earth, three-fifths said evolution and natural selection (60 per cent), less than a tenth believed in the biblical account of creation (8 per cent) and around one in seven said intelligent design (14 per cent). Just under a fifth of respondents were not sure (19 per cent).

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The dependent variables were coded so that a score of 1 was given to the religiously orthodox response (i.e. believe in life after death, believe in the devil, believe Jesus is the son of God, believe Jesus Christ returned to life on the third day after his crucifixion, believe in the biblical account of creation *or* in intelligent design). All other responses were scored 0. The analysis, consisting of five binary logistic regression estimations, uses the same set of independent variables as in Chapter 2 (sex, age, ethnic group, education, occupation type and religious affiliation). As with other research into the correlates of traditional beliefs (Rice 2003; Clements 2014d), an identical model specification is used to allow a robust comparison of the effects of the independent variables across the different dependent variables. The reference category for religious affiliation constitutes those with no religion.

The results are contained in Table 3.17, which reports the B coefficients (standard errors) and the odds ratios (Exp(B)) for both regression estimations. The sign of the beta (B) coefficient indicates whether a particular independent variable has a positive effect (i.e. increasing the odds of being in the category of interest) or a negative effect (decreasing the odds of being in the category of interest). The odds ratio statistic indicates whether the impact of any particular explanatory variable is to increase or decrease the likelihood of being in the category of interest compared to the reference category.

The first model estimation concerns belief (or not) in life after death. Both sex and age have significant effects, women are more likely, and older people less likely, to hold this belief. Members of the salariat (those in professional or higher technical work and managers or senior administrators) are also more likely to believe in life after death, but there is no significant impact for educational attainment. There is a consistent pattern for the religious affiliation variables, with all religious groups more likely than those with no affiliation to belief in life after death. Belief in the devil is underpinned by sex, age, ethnic background and education. Specifically, and net of other factors, women are more likely to profess this belief, with older people and those from a white British ethnic background less likely to. Those with a degree-level (or higher) qualification are less likely to express belief in the devil compared to those with lower-level or no formal qualifications. We might expect this from 'deprivation theory', which argues that belief in religious phenomena should be more prevalent amongst more deprived socioeconomic groups (Rice 2003). Again, all religious affiliation variables have

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TABLE 3.17 *Binary logistic regressions of religious beliefs*

	Life after death		Devil		Jesus as son of God		Resurrection		Origins of life	
Variable	**B (SE)**	**Exp(B)**	**B (SE)**	**Exp(B)**	**B (SE)**	**Exp(B)**	**B (SE)**	**Exp(B)**	**B (SE)**	**Exp(B)**
Sex	.57* (.11)	1.78	.42* (.13)	1.53	.41* (.13)	1.50	.26* (.13)	1.29	.24 (.13)	1.27
Age	−.01* (.00)	.99	−.01* (.00)	.99	.00 (.00)	1.00	.00 (.00)	1.00	−.01* (.00)	.99
Ethnic group	−.07 (.21)	.93	−.60* (.22)	.55	−.10 (.24)	.91	−.51* (.23)	.60	−.57* (.22)	.56
Education	−.17 (.13)	.84	−.37* (.15)	.69	.07 (.14)	1.07	−.04 (.15)	.96	−.19 (.15)	.83
Salariat[a]	.27* (.13)	1.31	.24 (.15)	1.27	.46* (.14)	1.58	.57* (.15)	1.77	.54* (.15)	1.72
Anglican	.97* (.14)	2.63	1.32* (.17)	3.74	1.90* (.16)	6.71	1.91* (.16)	6.76	1.21* (.17)	3.34
Catholic	1.80* (.22)	6.03	2.25* (.23)	9.49	2.66* (.23)	14.30	2.75* (.23)	15.63	1.59* (.23)	4.90
Other Christian	1.31* (.22)	3.71	1.83* (.24)	6.26	1.96* (.23)	7.12	2.28* (.23)	9.82	2.10* (.23)	8.14
Other religion	1.37* (.25)	3.93	1.33* (.27)	3.77	1.30* (.27)	3.66	1.45* (.26)	4.25	1.76* (.26)	5.79
Constant	−1.01* (.25)	.36	−1.18* (.28)	.31	−2.55* (.30)	.08	−2.14* (.29)	.12	−1.33* (.28)	.27
Nagelkerke R Square	.13		.16		.27		.28		.16	
Weighted N	1,588		1,588		1,588		1,587		1,587	

Note: *$p<.05$ or lower. Reference category: no religion.

Source: YouGov survey of adults in Britain, November 2013.

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a significant impact and in a consistent direction, with Christians and non-Christians more likely to express belief in the devil than those with no affiliation.

After other independent variables are accounted for, women are also significantly more likely to believe that Jesus was the son of God. Age does not have a significant impact on beliefs about Jesus as the son of God, nor does ethnic background or education. Those in the salariat are more likely to believe that Jesus was the son of God compared to those in other occupation types. As with the previous model estimations of belief in life after death and the devil, there is a consistent set of effects for religious belonging, with Anglicans, Catholics, other Christians and those affiliated with other traditions all significantly more likely to believe that Jesus was the son of God. Women and those in the salariat are significantly more likely to believe in the biblical account of the resurrection, but this belief is significantly less likely amongst those from a white British ethnic background. Belief in Jesus returning to life on the third day after his crucifixion is significantly more likely across all religious groups – Christian or otherwise – than amongst those with no affiliation.

Both social and religious characteristics are significantly associated with beliefs about the origins of life on earth. This time women are not significantly more likely than men to believe in a biblical account of creation or in intelligent design. Older people and those with a white British background are significantly less likely to believe in religious accounts of the origins of life. There is no significant difference based on education, while the salariat are more likely than other occupational groups to believe in a religious perspective. Continuing the consistent and strong pattern of effects for religious belonging, those with a Christian or other affiliation are more likely to believe in a religious account of the origins of life on earth than the 'religious nones'.

The three indicators of biblecentrism – Jesus as son of God, belief in the resurrection and a religious account of evolution – show that within a multivariate assessment of contemporary belief, the more biblecentric groups were women (compared to men), the salariat (compared to other occupational grades) and all religious groups (compared to those with no affiliation; see Field 2014a: 518). Interestingly, amongst the other group characteristics, age only had a significant effect on beliefs about the origins of life on earth, and then it was associated with a lower likelihood of believing in a religious perspective (either creationism or theistic evolution; Field 2014a: 518).

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In summary, across the different model estimations of religious beliefs and biblical content, the findings show areas of similarity and differences compared with those obtained for theistic belief (see Chapter 2). In terms of the contemporary social and religious correlates of religious beliefs amongst adults in Britain, the most consistent factors are women – as other research into religious beliefs (Rice 2003) found – and religious belonging, which always tend to increase the likelihood of holding theistic and other beliefs. The effects are in a consistent direction for age in relation to some religious beliefs, with older people *less likely* to believe in life after death and the devil and to hold a religious perspective on the origins of life, other factors being accounted for. Those from a white British ethnic background were less likely than those from minority ethnic backgrounds to hold some religious beliefs and more likely to hold a less orthodox belief on the existence of God. Existing research has shown that minority racial groups are more likely to believe in traditional religious phenomena (Rice 2003). Education had no significant effects on theistic belief, but those with higher-level qualifications were less likely to subscribe to belief in the devil. Those in the highest occupational group – the salariat – were actually *more likely* to hold certain religious beliefs than those in lower-level groups, contrary to the tenets of deprivation theory (Rice 2003). They were also less likely to have a heterodox view on the existence of God (see Chapter 2). Overall, this chapter and Chapter 2 offer only rather weak evidence in support of deprivation theory in 'explaining the social correlates of religious paranormal beliefs' in Britain, at least in relation to standard indicators of individuals' socio-economic circumstances (Rice 2003).

Notes

1 The material for the Harris surveys was kindly provided by Dr Clive Field.

2 The BSA surveys (1991–2008) also asked about belief in religious miracles and used the same question wording for the other belief questions. The data show that, overall, the proportion saying they definitely or probably believed in miracles declined from 40 percent in 1991 to 30 percent in 2008. Again, women were more likely to express this belief than were men (in 2008, 34 percent for women and 26 percent for men), and it was most common amongst those 65 and over. Based on religious affiliation, the proportions believing in miracles was always highest amongst Catholics (64 percent in 2008), followed by other Christians (49 percent), Anglicans (33 percent)

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and those with no religion (11 percent). Differences were less marked or not consistent across surveys based on socio-economic status. A Gallup survey from 1995 that also asked about belief in religious miracles found that 37 percent did so (not too dissimilar from the 34 percent recorded in the 1998 BSA survey). Belief was again more common amongst women than men.

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4
Religious-Secular Debates

Abstract: *This chapter looks at public opinion towards religious-secular debates in British society, specifically science and religion, single-religion schools and disestablishment of the Church of England. It pays particular attention to how attitudes have changed, both overall and across different social groups, and also pays close attention to different opinions on the basis of religious belonging, behaving and believing. It shows how attitudes on religion and science have moved in a direction that undermines religious authority and provides a nuanced analysis of the patterning of opinion on religious schools and church-state links. For each area of debate, it uses survey data to examine, in a multivariate context, the factors associated with contemporary attitudes.*

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Religion and science

This first section analyses attitudes towards religion and science in British society, providing a long-term perspective on attitudinal change (and continuity) and also examining how sociodemographic and religious factors correlate with contemporary attitudes. By going beyond the study of traditional religious beliefs (the focus of Chapters 2 and 3), it provides a broader evidential basis on which to assess public attitudes in Britain in the context of secularisation and declining religious authority. As O'Brien and Noy observe:

> As Western society is increasingly characterized by reason and science, religious authority has ceded influence. Some secularization theories explain this shift as the result of deep-seated incompatibility between scientific and religious authority. (2015: 93)

In Britain, as in other countries, the claims and counterclaims of modern science have a long history of contestation in the public sphere with those of religious faith. As a recent report on public attitudes to medical research observed, 'The basic tenets of many religions and the traditional assumptions and approaches of science, including the direct testing of hypotheses to establish knowledge, often have the potential to conflict with one another, by upholding different key assumptions' (Butt et al. 2009: 36). These debates have to some extent been reinvigorated in recent years as religion has assumed a greater salience on the public policy agenda as policymakers grapple with the ethical and legal implications of advancements in science. Moreover, a more political 'new atheism' has emerged, informed by the claims and knowledge of modern science, in which 'the emphasis is on popularising anti-religious sentiment in order to support efforts to challenge the institutional and social power of religion' (McAnulla 2014: 126). Religious leaders, both Protestant and Catholic, have inveighed against 'militant atheism' and 'atheist extremism' in British society (Bingham 2012; Jones, Hooper and Kington 2010).

Post-war opinion surveys shed some light on general public attitudes towards religion and science and on perceptions of those working in either profession. In 1958 a Gallup survey asked British adults whether, in the long run, science is opposed to religion or whether there is no conflict between them. A quarter (25 per cent) said they were opposed, with just over a third (36 per cent) saying there was no conflict. However, a plurality

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(39 per cent) could not express an option either way and responded 'don't know' (Gallup 1976: 458). A Gallup poll conducted in 1984 found that public opinion was more likely to have a great deal or some confidence in the scientific community compared to organised religion (69 versus 50 per cent). Two-fifths expressed hardly any confidence in organised religion (41 per cent) compared to around a tenth saying this for the scientific community (12 per cent). Polling data conducted over recent decades has shown that, since 1983, the proportion of the British public trusting clergy to tell the truth has fallen somewhat, from 85 per cent in 1983 to 71 per cent in 2014 (the proportions responding 'not tell the truth' were 11 and 24 per cent, respectively; Ipsos MORI 2015). The proportions saying that scientists could be trusted to tell the truth rose from 63 per cent in 1997 (the earliest available data point) to 83 per cent in 2014, with negative evaluations declining from 22 to 14 per cent over the same period (Ipsos MORI 2015). Other survey series have also shown considerably higher levels of public regard for scientists relative to clergy (Field 2014c: 205).

Given the ongoing processes of secularisation – including falling levels of affiliation and theistic belief, already documented in this book, and evidence from existing research of declining public authority in institutional religion (Clements 2015; Field 2014c) – have public evaluations in general and those of particular social and religious groups become less favourable towards the claims of religion relative to those of science in modern society? To assess this, attitudes are first examined using two questions on science and religion asked in the BSA surveys. They were worded as follows:

> How much do you agree or disagree that ... we believe too often in science, and not enough in feelings and faith?
> Do you agree or disagree that ... we trust too much in science and not enough in religious faith?
> Strongly agree.
> Agree.
> Neither agree nor disagree.
> Disagree.
> Strongly disagree.

In this section, all tables report the proportions – overall and within social and religious groups – reporting that they strongly agree or agree with each statement.

Table 4.1 shows the overall responses and for groups classified by social characteristics (sex, age, education, social class) and religious factors

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TABLE 4.1 *Per cent agreeing with statements on science and religion, 1993–2008, BSA*

		Believe					Trust	
Variable	**Category**	**1993 (%)**	**1995 (%)**	**1998 (%)**	**2000 (%)**	**2010 (%)**	**1998 (%)**	**2008 (%)**
Overall		47	42	45	49	30	19	15
Sex	Men	44	36	45	45	28	19	13
	Women	50	46	46	51	33	20	17
Age group	18–29	32	33	35	40	23	12	11
	30–44	42	38	37	46	25	13	13
	45–64	53	43	50	49	33	22	15
	65 and over	65	54	61	62	41	34	22
Social class	Non-manual	48	38	43	48	28	17	15
	Manual	47	45	48	50	32	22	14
Education	Degree	36	29	37	40	23	14	11
	Other	43	41	43	47	27	17	14
	None	56	46	53	58	45	28	21
Religious affiliation	Anglican	50	41	48	55	36	22	16
	Catholic	52	54	55	56	38	26	22
	Other Christian	67	52	62	59	40	39	27
	No religion	38	35	36	37	22	10	6
Religious attendance	Frequent attender	59	55	62	68	47	46	41
	Infrequent attender	50	37	48	52	28	17	14
	Non-attender	42	39	39	42	27	12	9
Belief in God	Has no doubts God really exists	60	56	55	76	–	45	46
	Other response	48	38	35	47	–	13	10
	Does not believe in God	23	29	18	30	–	9	6

Note: Combines 'strongly agree' and 'agree' responses.

Source: BSA surveys.

(affiliation, attendance, belief in God). Looking at public opinion in the aggregate, across nearly two decades there has been some decline in those holding the perception that we believe in science too often and not enough in feelings and faith (falling from 47 per cent in 1993 to 30 per cent in 2010). Data from the BSA surveys show that agreement with the statement that we trust too much in science and not enough in religious faith, always very low, also fell, albeit over a shorter period, from 19 per cent in 1998 to 15 per cent in 2008. Negative evaluations of science in relation to religious faith never amount to a majority of public opinion on either question, though the level of expressed agreement does vary

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considerably across the two questions. Comparing the figures for 2010 and 2008, the British public are roughly twice as likely to think that we believe too much in science relative to feelings and faith compared to thinking that we trust too much in science relative to religion.

Looking first at the response by age and sex for the question on belief in science, it is clear that the proportions agreeing that we believe too often in science (and not enough in faith) have declined over time. There is a tendency for women to be more likely than men to express agreement, but the differences are more marked across the generations. In 1993 those 65 and over were about twice as likely to agree compared to the youngest age cohort (18–24 years), at, respectively, 65 and 32 per cent. In 2010, with all age groups showing a decline in agreement since 1993, those in the oldest age group were nearly twice as likely to agree as the youngest age group (respectively, 41 and 23 per cent).

In terms of socio-economic status, those in manual occupations are slightly likely to express agreement in most surveys, though the gap in level of agreement is much more marked for educational attainment. That is, those with a degree-level qualification are much less likely to express agreement with the statement in every survey. Those with no qualifications consistently register the highest level of agreement. In 2010, 45 per cent of those with no qualifications agreed compared to 23 per cent of those with qualifications at degree level. In 1993, the corresponding figures were 56 and 36 per cent. Those with other qualifications (43 per cent in 1993 and 27 per cent in 2010) have been more likely to agree than their better-qualified peers but less likely to agree than those with no formal educational qualifications.

Based on two readings from 1998 and 2008, a similar pattern of group-based responses is evident for the question on trusting in science too much (and not enough in religious faith), certainly for age and education. Once again, those 65 and older are most likely to agree with this statement. In 1998, 34 per cent of those 65 and over agreed compared to 12 and 13 per cent of those aged, respectively, 18 to 29 and 30 to 44. In 2008 the proportion agreeing had declined to 22 per cent of those 65 and older but was at about the same level amongst the youngest age groups. Those with no formal qualifications were more likely to express agreement in both surveys, standing apart from those with some formal qualifications (10 percent or less across the different response categories).[1]

What about differences in view towards the BSA questions on religion and science based on indicators of belonging, behaving and believing?

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Those with no religion consistently expressed lower levels of agreement, as did those who did not attend services and those who did not believe in God. In 2010 around a fifth of those with no affiliation (22 per cent) expressed agreement compared to 36–40 per cent of Christian groups. In 1993, in contrast, around two-thirds of other Christians expressed this view compared to half of Anglicans and Catholics and two-fifths of those with no affiliation. In 2010 frequent attenders were nearly twice as likely to agree compared to infrequent attenders and non-attenders. Forty seven per cent of regular attenders held this view compared to just over a quarter of irregular and non-attenders. In 2000 around three-quarters of those who expressed belief in God agreed compared to around three in ten non-believers and nearly half of those who gave some other response.

A corroborating pattern of responses is seen for the question on trust in science and religion asked in 1998 and 2008, with most groups showing a decline in agreement over time. Taking the latest reading, very small proportions of those with no religion (6 per cent), irregular or non-attenders (14 and 9 per cent) and non-believers (6 per cent) expressed agreement. Agreement stood at 16 per cent amongst Anglicans, 22 per cent amongst Catholics and nearly three in ten amongst other Christians. There is virtually no change in view over time for those with a firm belief in God (45 per cent in 1998, 46 per cent in 2008), while regular attenders registered a marginal decline in agreement (still amounting to over two-fifths in 2008).

Are these differences based on believing (or not believing) in God replicated when using a wider array of religious beliefs available from the 1998 and 2008 BSA surveys? Responses are reported in Table 4.2 for the questions on believing and trusting too much in science. In terms of believing too much in science and not enough in feelings or religious faith, there is a consistent pattern of responses for the 1998 survey. Those who held traditional beliefs or whose responses showed greater personal engagement with God were more likely to express agreement. Based on the responses on trusting in science from the 1998 and 2008 surveys, once again, those holding orthodox beliefs were much more likely to agree that there is too much trust in science relative to religious faith. The proportions with this view amongst those who said they did not hold any particular religious belief (or who disagreed, for the additional questions on God) were generally very small (less than 7 per cent for those who did not believe in life after death or heaven).

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TABLE 4.2 *Per cent agreeing with statements on science and religion by religious beliefs, 1998–2008, BSA*

		Believe	Trust	
Variable	**Category**	**1998 (%)**	**1998 (%)**	**2008 (%)**
Life after death	Yes – probably or definitely	46	25	24
	Probably or definitely not	29	15	7
Heaven	Yes – probably or definitely	48	29	25
	Probably or definitely not	28	11	7
Hell	Yes – probably or definitely	50	32	27
	Probably or definitely not	31	13	10
Religious miracles	Yes – probably or definitely	58	36	30
	Probably or definitely not	26	10	8
God concerns himself with humans	Strongly agree or agree	58	43	35
	Neither	30	10	8
	Disagree or strongly disagree	25	8	6
Life is only meaningful because God exists	Strongly agree or agree	71	60	52
	Neither	43	15	12
	Disagree or strongly disagree	25	10	7
Belief in God	Believe	50	31	27
	Do not believe	26	8	6

Note: Combines 'strongly agree' and 'agree' responses.

Source: BSA surveys.

The question relating to evolution in the BSA surveys (examined in Chapter 3), asking whether human beings evolved from earlier animal species, also sheds light on variation in attitudes towards science relative to religion. In terms of believing too much in science and not enough in religion, those who thought that it is not true that humans developed from animal species were more likely to agree (1993: 45 per cent; 2000: 46 per cent) than those who think it is true (61 and 68 per cent). Attitudes towards science and religion also differed on the basis of views on the veracity of the content of the Bible. Similarly, in 1998, those who believed the Bible was the actual word of God overwhelmingly agreed that we trusted too much in science (at 81 per cent). Around a quarter of those who thought the Bible was the inspired word of God agreed there was too much trust in science relative to religion. In terms of those who held the view that the Bible was a collection of fables, about a tenth thought that there was too much trust in science.

The question whether 'We depend too much on science and not enough on faith' has been asked in different British social surveys (1988–2014) and in the cross-national EB surveys (1989–2013). As with the above questions,

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response options usually ranged from 'strongly agree' through to 'strongly disagree'. Overall and group-based responses to this question (again, the combined proportions saying 'strongly agree' or 'agree') for the British surveys are reported in Table 4.3. The data come from three sources: the 1988 Public Understanding of Science (PUS) survey, the 1996 BSA survey and the 2014 Public Attitudes to Science (PAS) survey.[2] Looking at Table 4.3, it is clear that the levels of agreement with this statement have been at broadly similar levels to those registered for believing too much science and, similarly, are much higher than those elicited for the statement on depending too much on science (see Table 4.1). Moreover, the decline in agreement follows a similar trajectory to that seen for the belief in science time series, declining by about a third in total (albeit over a longer time span), from 44 per cent in 1988 to 30 per cent in 2014.

As with the attitudinal data for social and religious groups reported already, there is heterogeneity in views based on age, social class and education. In 1988 and 1996, the largest differential is between those in the youngest and older age groups. However, in 2014, the age differential has narrowed considerably, so that only six percentage points separate those 18–29 and those 65 and older. Agreement is lowest, however, amongst the middle two age cohorts, with just a quarter taking this view. Those in non-manual occupations are somewhat less likely to agree in 1988 and 1996. Based on the PAS 2014 survey, there is variation based on social grade (not shown in Table 4.3, where a different classification is used). That is, agreement was twice as high amongst those in the DE group (42 per cent) than those in the AB group (21 per cent). Just under three-tenths of the C1 group expressed agreement compared to just over three in ten of those in the C2 grade. Based on educational attainment, both the 1996 and 2014 surveys show clear evidence of variation in level of agreement. Whereas nearly half of those with no formal qualifications expressed agreement in either year, there was a ten and nine percentage point fall in levels of agreement for those with, respectively, degrees and other qualifications. In 2014, those with no qualifications were more than twice as likely to agree as those with a degree or higher qualification (those with other qualifications were much closer to degree holders in their level of agreement). The PUS 1988 survey showed that, based on the age of completion of full education (not reported in Table 4.3), those who completed at 15 or under were more likely to agree (at 53 per cent) than those who left at a later age (with agreement lowest, 34 per cent, amongst those who left at 19 or over). There are clear differences in

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TABLE 4.3 *Per cent agreeing that we depend too much on science and not enough on religious faith, 1988–2014*

Variable	Category	PUS 1988 (%)	BSA 1996 (%)	PAS 2014 (%)
Overall		44	40	30
Sex	Men	41	36	29
	Women	47	45	30
Age group	18–29	29	32	32
	30–44	40	35	26
	45–64	51	44	26
	65 and over	61	52	38
Social class	Non-manual	40	38	–
	Manual	48	44	–
Education	Degree	–	32	22
	Other	–	38	29
	None	–	48	47
Religious affiliation	Church of England	49	45	36
	Catholic	49	49	33
	Other Christian	56	48	40
	No religion	32	31	16
Religious attendance	Frequent attender	62	62	51
	Infrequent attender	43	41	39
	Non-attender	38	33	21

Note: Combines 'strongly agree' and 'agree' responses.

Source: PUS 1988, BSA 1996 and PAS 2014.

view, therefore, across both occupational and educational indicators of socio-economic circumstances.

As with the evidence analysed from Tables 4.1 and 4.2, views on this question also varied markedly on the basis of belonging, behaving and believing, with the differences consistent across the three surveys. In each year those with no religion were least likely to express agreement, falling from 32 per cent in 1988 to just 16 per cent in 2014. Generally, in 1988 and 1996, pluralities of Anglicans, Catholics and other Christians (a majority in the earlier survey) agreed that we depend too much on science. By 2014 agreement had declined across Christian groups, but – compared to the 'religious nones' – this view was still more than twice as likely to be held by Anglicans, Catholics and other Christians. Based on attendance at religious worship, over six in ten frequent attenders agreed in 1988 and 1996, declining to half in 2014. The levels were more stable for irregular attenders, with around two-fifths agreeing in each survey. The decline in agreement was most pronounced amongst non-attenders, falling by about half in recent decades, from two-fifths to one in five. The PUS 1998

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survey asked whether there is a God, and responses correlated to some extent with views on whether society depends too much on science. Amongst those who agreed that there is no God, fewer than two-fifths agreed that we depend too much on science (38 per cent) compared to half of those who thought that there is a God (52 per cent). Amongst those who responded 'neither agree nor disagree', around a third agreed that we depend overly on science (34 per cent).

Attitudes also differed on the basis of views on the origins and development of human life. Based on data from the 1996 survey, those who think that the proposition that human beings developed from earlier species of animal is untrue were more likely to agree that we depend too much on science relative to faith (56 per cent) compared to 37 per cent of those who think it is true. Similarly, views towards science and religion also varied on the basis of beliefs about the veracity of the content of the Bible.

The PAS 2014 survey also asked two questions tapping religious beliefs. First, a question probing views on whether God created the earth and all life in it. Those who agreed with the creationist perspective were much more likely to think that we depend too much on science (48 per cent) compared to those who disagreed with this perspective (just 13 per cent). Agreement amounted to a quarter of those with a neutral stance on the origins-of-life debate. Second, a question on differing views on the origins-of-life: those who said that living things were created by God and have always existed in their current form were most likely to agree that we depend too much on science (54 per cent), followed by those who believed that living things evolved over time in a process guided by God (35 per cent). Agreement was lowest amongst those who believed in a process of natural selection in which God played no part (17 per cent) and somewhat higher amongst those who declared they had another perspective on the origins-of-life (25 per cent). Therefore, those who subscribed to a creationist stance based on this question were more than three times as likely to agree as those who supported an evolutionary perspective.

The data from the EB surveys (based on the British samples) are reported in Table 4.4 (in 1992 two different questions were used in a split-sample format; both sets of responses are provided). Does the pattern of responses based on the EB data (in Table 4.4) tend to support that shown in Table 4.3? British public opinion as a whole has shown a decline in the level of agreement over time, but this is not as marked as the declines seen in the evidence presented in Tables 4.1 and 4.3. In 1989,

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TABLE 4.4 *Per cent agreeing that we depend too much on science and not enough on faith, by social and religious group, 1989–2013, EB*

Variable	Category	1989 (%)	1992a (%)	1992b (%)	2001 (%)	2005 (%)	2010 (%)	2013 (%)
Overall		44	40	49	46	37	37	36
Sex	Male	41	39	51	42	33	36	38
	Female	46	41	48	50	40	39	35
Age group	18–29	38	33	41	43	31	29	40
	30–44	40	28	39	42	33	29	31
	45–64	48	54	59	47	37	37	32
	65 and over	55	45	58	53	48	47	42
Age completed full-time education	14–15	54	48	54	53	45	51	48
	16–17	40	35	51	44	37	35	31
	18–20	33	34	37	45	33	28	29
	21+	29	36	44	38	30	28	32
Religious affiliation	Protestant/other Christian	47	44	51	–	38	45	–
	Catholic	48	35	62	–	49	49	–
	No religion	37	30	40	–	20*	20*	–
Religious attendance	Frequent[a]	67	–	–	–	57	60	–
	Infrequent	42	–	–	–	38	36	–
	Does not attend	39	–	–	–	29	29	–
Belief in God	Believe there is a God	–	–	–	–	51	53	–
	Believe that there is some sort of spirit or life force	–	–	–	–	31	35	–
	Don't believe that there is any sort of spirit, God or life force	–	–	–	–	23	18	–

Notes: 2005: question asked to one half of a split sample. In 1992, an identical question wording was used for a split-sample format but one half of the sample ('1992b' in the table) were given a set of response options which did not include a neutral position ('neither agree nor disagree'). [a] The question on attendance in the 1989 survey was asked only of those who self-identified as Protestant, Catholic, other Christian or Jewish in response to the question on affiliation. * Includes the following categories: agnostic; atheist; non-believer. Combines 'strongly agree' and 'agree' responses (except for the 2001 survey, which is based on those who said they 'tend to agree'. The other response option was 'tend to disagree', and a neutral option was not available).

Source: EB surveys.

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44 per cent agreed to some extent that we depend too much on science, declining to 36 per cent in 2013.

Group-related responses are shown for sex, age, age completed full-time education, affiliation (using a revised set of categories), attendance and belief in God (where available). There is again clear evidence of persistent group differences, particularly in relation to age group, education and religious belonging, behaving and believing. Over time, those 45–64 and those 65 and over are generally most likely to express agreement (though the pattern is somewhat different in 2013). Those who left education at an earlier age are more likely to agree (particularly those who left at 14 or 15) than those who left later on. In the most recent reading, nearly half of those who left education at 14 or 15 expressed agreement compared to around a third of those who left at 21 and over. In recent surveys, those who left at 16–17 and 18–20 register levels of agreement that are much closer to those 21 and older.

Based on affiliation, Protestants and Catholics were much more likely to register agreement with the statement compared to those with no religion. In 2010, around half of Catholics and over two-fifths of Protestants agreed that we depend too much on science and not enough on faith compared to a fifth of those with no affiliation. Based on a more limited set of survey readings, non-attenders were less likely to express agreement than those who attended services to some extent, but the gap was much more pronounced in relation to regular attenders. Twice as many frequent attenders agreed in 2010 as did non-attenders. The two occasions on which data for belief in God are available (2005 and 2010) show that those who believed in God were much more likely to express agreement than those who believed in some form of spirit or life force or who did not believe in any of these. For both social and religious groups, where clear and consistent differences exist in the EB data, they tend to support those present in the evidence from the other surveys.

Taken together, the evidence from Tables 4.1 through 4.4 suggests some interesting conclusions. Firstly, on debates concerning the relative role of science and religion in modern society, attitudes in Britain have moved to some extent in a direction which fits with wider processes of secularisation and perceptions of declining religious authority in recent decades (Field 2014c; Clements 2015). Public opinion as a whole is less likely to evaluate science unfavourably in relation to religion in terms of trusting too much in science, believing too much in science and depending too much on science. Secondly, social and religious groups tend to

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show declining agreement over time, albeit of different magnitudes and based on differing levels of agreement in the baseline surveys. Amongst the sociodemographic characteristics, older age groups tend to show more positive appraisals of religion relative to science, as do those with lower levels of educational attainment (where differences are sharper than those seen for social class or occupation). Attitudes towards science and religion often differ markedly based on measures of religious affiliation, attendance and belief. Consistently, often by considerable magnitudes, those with a religious affiliation, those who attend services regularly and those who hold traditional religious beliefs are more likely to evaluate science negatively relative to religion. These differences are still pronounced in the most recent surveys even given the general trend for public attitudes to move in a more secular direction.

Are both social and religious factors associated with public attitudes towards questions regarding religion and science when multivariate analysis is undertaken? Research conducted in the US context has found that religious factors – such as affiliation, attendance, beliefs and biblical literalism – are influential in shaping attitudes towards science in general and towards 'contested' science policy issues (Jelen and Lockett 2014; Baker 2013, 2012; Freeman and Houston 2011; Sheerkat 2011; Gauchat 2008). Moreover, public perspectives on religion and science also vary by sociodemographic characteristics, with the scholarly literature finding or expecting that more positive appraisals of science relative to religion are less likely amongst women, minority ethnic groups, older people, those with lower levels of socio-economic status and those with more conservative ideological dispositions; these factors also tend to be correlated with religiosity (O'Brien and Noy 2015: 96–97).

Less evidence exists for the British context, however, with Allum et al. observing that 'Thus far, most research on the relationship of religion to public attitudes about science has taken place in an American setting, where religion plays what seems to be an increasingly important role in public policy, politics and public opinion' (2014: 834). Recent research has shown that religious factors shape public attitudes in Britain towards medical genetics. Catholics and regular churchgoers were less favourable towards the genetic testing of unborn babies, while those who believed in creationism were 'less optimistic about the prospects held out for the future by developments in genetic medicine' (Allum et al. 2014: 846). The analyses conducted in Chapter 3 have already shown that, in a multivariate context, belief in a religious account (creationism or

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intelligent design) of the origins and development of human life – one of the principal sites of contestation between the competing claims of science and religion – was less likely to be found amongst older people and those with a white British background and more likely amongst members of the salariat and all religious groups, irrespective of faith or denomination. There were no significant differences, however, based on sex or educational attainment.

What are the relative impacts of social and religious characteristics on general evaluations of science relative to religion? The most recent sources for the questions examined already – the BSA 2008 survey (trusting too much in science), BSA 2010 survey (believing too much in science) and the PAS 2014 survey (depending too much on science) – are used to examine the correlates of perspectives on religion and science. The relevant samples for the questions, excluding those who did not answer, are BSA 2008: 1,943; BSA 2010: 905; PAS 2014: 1,664 (excluding the small number of cases from Northern Ireland).

The questions all used Likert scales, ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. The distributions of responses for each question show that pro-science views outweigh pro-religion responses, sometimes emphatically so. In the BSA 2008, 56 per cent disagreed that we trust too much in science relative to religion; the 15 per cent in agreement were exceeded by the 25 per cent with a neutral viewpoint ('neither agree nor disagree'). Just 4 per cent could not choose. In the BSA 2010, concerning believing too much in science, responses were more evenly split, with 30 per cent in agreement, 31 per cent neutral and 36 per cent expressing disagreement (just 3 per cent did not know). In the PAS 2014, 30 per cent agreed that we depend too much on science, with nearly half disagreeing (48 per cent). The remainder had a neutral stance (21 per cent) or did not know (2 per cent).

To construct the dependent variables, responses of 'strongly agree' or 'agree' (i.e. negative evaluations of science relative to religion) were coded as 1 and neutral, 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' responses (i.e. positive evaluations of science relative to religion) were coded as 0. 'Don't know' responses were excluded from the analyses. As far as was possible, a similar set of independent variables was used for the model estimations (sex, age, ethnic group, education, social class or social grade, affiliation, attendance, belief), which reflect some of the major religious and socio-demographic sources of attitudinal variation found in existing research (O'Brien and Noy 2015). It should be noted that because of the smaller

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sample size for the question in the BSA 2010 survey, the 'other Christian' and 'other religion' categories were combined for the multivariate analysis. Also, no measures of belief were available in the BSA 2010 survey. Binary logistic regression was used for the multivariate analyses. For each regression estimation, the omitted reference category for religious affiliation comprises those with no religion.

The results of the binary logistic regressions are shown in Table 4.5 (BSA surveys) and Table 4.6 (PAS survey). Looking at the analysis of attitudes towards whether we trust too much in science (and not enough in religious faith), it is clear that both social and religious variables underpin these attitudes. Specifically, older people are more likely to agree, while those from a white ethnic background are less likely to agree. Those with a degree-level education are less likely to agree, confirming the differences in view on the basis of socio-economic status discussed earlier. There are significant effects for belonging, behaving *and* believing. For the BSA 2008 surveys, there are no significant differences for Anglicans and Catholics, but other Christians and those affiliated to non-Christian traditions are, net of other factors, more likely to express agreement compared to those with no affiliation. There is also a significant impact for attendance, with more frequent attendance leading to a

TABLE 4.5 *Binary logistic regression of attitudes towards religion and science, BSA surveys*

	BSA 2008: Trust		BSA 2010: Believe	
Variable	**B (SE)**	**Exp(B)**	**B (SE)**	**Exp(B)**
Sex	−.15 (.15)	.86	−.26 (.16)	.77
Age	.01* (.00)	1.01	.02* (.00)	1.02
Ethnic group	−.65* (.26)	.52	−.99* (.28)	.37
Degree	−.70* (.21)	.50	−.65* (.22)	.52
Salariat	−.27 (.19)	.76	−.21 (.18)	.81
Anglican	.15 (.23)	1.16	.22 (.22)	1.25
Catholic	.34 (.29)	1.41	.43 (.30)	1.54
Other Christian	.75* (.24)	2.13	–	–
Other religion	.81* (.32)	2.25	.41 (.25)	1.50
Attendance	.27* (.04)	1.31	.12* (.04)	1.13
Believe in God	.67* (.19)	1.95	–	–
Constant	−3.06* (.35)	.05	−1.04* (.35)	.35
Nagelkerke R Square	.25		.13	
Weighted N	1,817		876	

Note: *$p<.05$ or lower. Reference category: no religion.
Source: BSA 2008 and 2010 surveys.

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greater likelihood of agreement. Belief in God also underpins negative evaluations of science relative to religion. For the BSA 2010 survey, there are similar results for the sociodemographic variables, with older people more likely to agree and those from a white ethnic group less likely to agree. Degree holders are again less likely to have negative evaluations of science relative to religion. However, only religious behaving has a significant effect, with no significant differences based on belonging (religious beliefs were not included in the 2010 survey). Regular attendance at religious worship leads to a greater likelihood of agreeing that we trust science too much.

The PAS survey results, shown in Table 4.6, demonstrate that the three different aspects of religion are significantly associated with views on whether we depend too much on science. Anglicans, other Christians and those belonging to other religions are significantly more likely to agree compared to the 'religious nones'. More frequent attendance at services increases the likelihood of agreeing, as does subscribing to a creationist perspective. Sociodemographically, those of a white British ethnic background are less likely to agree, as are those with a degree (or higher) qualification and those in the AB social grade (comprising those in higher or intermediate managerial, professional or administrative

TABLE 4.6 *Binary logistic regression of attitudes towards whether we depend too much on science, PAS 2014*

Variable	B (SE)	Exp(B)
Sex	−.12 (.12)	.89
Age	.00 (.00)	1.00
Ethnic group	−.51* (.18)	.60
Degree	−.60* (.16)	.55
Social grade: AB	−.52* (.16)	.60
Anglican	.51* (.20)	1.66
Catholic	.03 (.24)	1.03
Other Christian	.56* (.18)	1.75
Other religion	.63* (.26)	1.88
Attendance	.10* (.03)	1.11
Believe in creationism	.97* (.14)	2.63
Constant	−1.25* (.24)	.29
Nagelkerke R Square	.22	
Weighted N	1,614	

Note: *$p<.05$ or lower. Reference category: no religion.

Source: PAS 2014 survey (excludes those living in Northern Ireland).

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positions). There are no significant differences, however, based on sex or age.

Across the model estimations, there are some commonalities in terms of the social and religious factors differentiating more favourable perspectives on religion relative to science in Britain, which accords with existing research. Based on common results from two or three of the models reported in Tables 4.5 and 4.6, older people were more likely to have negative appraisals of science relative to religion, as were those from minority ethnic groups, other Christians and those belonging to non-Christian religions, those who attended services regularly and those who held orthodox religious beliefs. Consistently, those with a degree-level qualification were less likely to hold more negative views of science relative to religion, underlining the general findings from existing research that education 'generally corresponds to knowledge of and support for science' (O'Brien and Noy 2015: 96). While public attitudes concerning debates over the relative merits of science and religion have tended to shift in a more secular direction in recent decades – and thus contribute to the weakening of religious authority in popular perceptions – religious identity and religiosity prove to be potent correlates of negative assessments of science in these debates.

Faith schools

Debates and disagreements over mass education, in particular schooling, represent one of the pathways through which religion has historically been consequential for politics in Britain (Heath et al. 1993). Education has been an important battleground between religious groups' identities and interests and the role and authority of the state in providing a system of public education. Historical and contemporary debate over religious faith and schooling has varied across the constituent parts of Britain (and in Northern Ireland), reflecting different religious compositions and sets of historical tensions between communities. 'Church schools' were and remain an important part of state education in Britain, with the major roles played by the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church, as well as other Christian traditions (such as the Methodists). Recent governments in Britain – of different party-political complexions – have encouraged the establishment of schools with a 'religious character' (Walford 2008; Jackson 2003: 90), including those for non-Christian

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traditions, as part of a broader agenda of diversifying educational provision. These faith schools are either maintained by the relevant local authority or – in the case of academy schools or free schools – operate outside of their control (Long and Bolton 2014: 2).

This expansion of faith schools has been contentious, both within religious traditions and between religious and secular lobbies. Debate has focused on several issues: whether or not faith schools should be expanded, either in general or in response to the demands of religious minorities; the perceived inadequacies in faith schools' admission policies and procedures; and the contested social and educational outcomes of faith schools relative to other types of school in the state sector. Faith schools have been particularly criticised by secularist and humanist groups – as well as some faith groups – for their perceived detrimental impact on social cohesion in the communities in which they are situated. Many of these groups are affiliated to an umbrella campaign group, the Accord Coalition, which was set-up in 2010 and co-launched the Fair Admissions Campaign in 2013 to address the issue of religious selection in school admissions in England and Wales. The political character of the 'new atheism' movement has produced a 'direct set of political stances' on policy issues such as faith schools (McAnulla 2014: 126). New atheists have 'challenged the positions of both the New Labour and Coalition governments that have endorsed successive moves to create more faith schools since 1997' (McAnulla 2014: 136). In response to criticism, both the Archbishop of Canterbury and the leader of the Catholic Church in England and Wales have made public interventions backing the right of parents to choose faith schools and reiterating the contribution they make to local communities and wider society (BBC News 2014; Bingham 2013).

The prominence of the faith schools debate as a result of recent government policy is reflected in various opinion polls conducted to elicit whether faith schools have public backing and to see whether public perceptions accord with the claims made by those campaigning on either side of the debate. These polls have shown that, on this issue as on many others, public opinion is sensitive to question wording and the number and type of response options available. Moreover, very few of the questions featuring in national polls have been asked on more than one occasion because of variant wording and sets of response options used by different polling organisations.

On balance, though, polls have tended to record majority or plurality opposition to faith schools. A poll conducted in 2004 found that

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a majority (56 per cent) thought that government policy should be to encourage the parents of children of different faiths to send them to the same schools (YouGov). An identical question asked by ICM in 2005 and 2010 found that, on each occasion, a majority (64 and 59 per cent) opted for the response that 'Schools should be for everyone regardless of religion and the government should not be funding faith schools of any kind' (ICM 2005, 2010). A YouGov survey (2007) found a majority disapproved of the expansion of faith schools and another YouGov survey (2013a) found that 49 per cent agreed that all state schools should be secular, with no special links to any particular religion. Polls that have asked questions specifically on the issue of state-funded schools' admissions procedures selecting on the basis of religion have registered majorities opposed (ComRes 2012; YouGov 2009).

This section focuses on charting (relatively recent) public attitudes towards single-religion schools using evidence from the BSA surveys, the main source available for questions on this topic. The questions looked at here are taken from the 2003, 2007 and 2008 BSA surveys. For all questions, Table 4.7 shows the overall and group proportions holding views that can be construed as approving of or positive towards the role or outcomes of single-religion schools.

Reflective of wider policy shifts under the New Labour governments, an identical battery of four questions on faith schools was asked in the 2003 and 2007 BSA surveys. They were worded as follows:

> How much do you agree or disagree that ... the government should fund single-religion schools if parents want them?
> How much do you agree or disagree that ... if the government funds separate Christian faith schools, it should also fund separate schools for other faiths?
> How much do you agree or disagree that ... single-religion schools have a better quality of education than other schools.
> How much do you agree or disagree that ... single-religion schools give children a better sense of right and wrong than other schools?
> Strongly agree.
> Agree.
> Neither agree nor disagree.
> Disagree.
> Strongly disagree.

For each question, the combined percentages are shown for the proportion strongly agreeing or agreeing with each statement. For each question, agreement never amounts to a majority position and in only

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TABLE 4.7 *Attitudes towards faith schools, 2003–2008, BSA*

		2003				2007					2008
Variable	Category	Fund single-religion schools (%)	Fund non-Christian faith schools (%)	Better quality of education (%)	Better sense of right and wrong (%)	Fund single-religion schools (%)	Fund non-Christian faith schools (%)	Better quality of education (%)	Better sense of right and wrong (%)	Support schools linked to a particular denomination (%)	Any religious group should be able to have its own schools[a] (%)
Overall		27	43	20	25	21	38	19	22	30	43 (14)
Sex	Male	26	43	19	25	20	36	19	21	25	39 (14)
	Female	28	44	21	25	23	39	19	22	35	47 (13)
Age group	18–29	27	52	12	13	18	43	15	17	29	51 (9)
	30–44	23	45	19	21	19	41	16	17	30	47 (12)
	45–64	25	41	21	26	21	36	21	21	28	37 (15)
	65+	34	39	28	38	27	31	26	33	35	40 (18)
Social class	Non-manual	28	47	21	26	22	41	21	23	32	45 (13)
	Manual	23	37	18	22	19	32	16	19	28	38 (14)
Education	Degree	31	58	24	29	22	49	23	25	30	46 (10)
	Other	24	41	18	21	20	35	18	19	31	45 (12)
	None	31	39	24	30	24	35	20	24	30	38 (19)
Religious affiliation	Anglican	28	38	24	30	25	33	22	29	33	45 (16)
	Catholic	51	56	40	46	39	49	36	39	58	63 (14)
	Other Christian	32	43	21	32	22	35	22	26	31	44 (14)
	Other religion	46	67	28	34	36	66	31	30	35	49 (6)
	No religion	16	41	13	13	14	36	13	12	21	37 (13)
Religious attendance	Frequent attender	47	55	35	48	38	46	38	45	48	59 (13)
	Infrequent attender	32	46	22	26	23	39	20	24	34	50 (15)
	Non-attender	18	39	15	17	15	35	13	14	23	37 (13)

Note: [a] Figures in parentheses represent the proportions saying that only some religious groups should have their own schools.

Source: BSA surveys.

one case – that of funding non-Christian faith schools (2007) – does it amount to a plurality view – and then only barely so.

Overall, while a quarter of respondents in 2003 thought that single-religion schools should be funded (27 per cent), over two-fifths said that, given the funding of Christian faith schools, non-Christian faith schools should also be funded (43 per cent). The proportions who perceived faith schools to have better social or educational outcomes were low: just a fifth agreed that faith schools provided a better quality of education (20 per cent) and only a quarter thought they provided a better sense of right and wrong (25 per cent). The overall proportions for the responses in 2007 showed, in general, a decrease in positive views of faith schools.

The pattern of responses across social and religious groups was consistent in some respects across both surveys. Differences by sex were not particularly clear or consistent, but those 65 and over tended to have more favourable evaluations of single-religion schools compared to other age groups. Those 65 and over are more likely than all other age groups to think that faith schools provide a better quality of education and instil a better sense of right and wrong. The clear exception is the question on funding schools for non-Christian religions – those 65 and over are *least likely* to agree with this proposition (31 per cent in 2007), with those 18 to 29 most in favour (43 per cent in 2007). Those in non-manual employment are clearly more likely to support the funding of non-Christian faith schools compared to those in manual work (41 and 32 per cent, respectively, in 2007). But the differences are somewhat less pronounced for the other questions. In terms of education, the differences are again most pronounced for the funding of faith schools for other religions: those with a degree-level qualification are most supportive (58 per cent, a majority, in 2003 and 49 per cent in 2007), with support considerably lower amongst those with lower-level or no formal qualifications.

As might be expected, there are marked differences of view based on religious affiliation. Amongst Christian groups, Catholics stand out as having more positive evaluations of faith schools – including the funding of schools for non-Christian traditions – compared to Anglicans and other Christians. Separate schooling has been crucial for the maintenance of the Catholic's community's distinctive subculture – integral to the religious socialisation of children and the transmission and reinforcement of communal identity and heritage (Hornby-Smith 1987: 185). Currently, in England, about 10 per cent of primary schools and secondary schools are Roman Catholic (Long and Bolton 2014: 12). In Scotland, the Catholic

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Church has had 'a virtual monopoly of the state faith school sector' (Field 2014b: 130), with 366 Catholic state-funded 'denominational' schools out of 370, which amounts to about 14 per cent of the 2,569 primary, secondary and special schools (Scottish Government 2013).

For the questions on funding single-religion schools and their social and educational outcomes, those with no religion have the least favourable evaluations. In 2007, just 12–15 per cent of this group thought that single-religion schools should be publicly funded or that they provided a better quality of education or sense of right and wrong. What about the views of affiliates of non-Christian religions on this issue? Recent data show that there were 48 Jewish, 18 Muslim, 8 Sikh and 4 Hindu schools in England (Long and Bolton 2014: 9). Is the relatively higher support for faith schools amongst Catholics – compared to other Christians – matched by those belonging to non-Christian faiths? This is certainly the case for views on funding non-Christian faith schools, where two-thirds are in favour in both 2003 and 2007 (higher than the proportion of Catholics who hold this position). For the other questions, however, favourability tends to be higher amongst Catholics, although support for faith schools amongst non-Christians is usually higher than it is amongst Anglicans and other Christians.

Additional questions on faith schools were asked in the BSA 2007 and 2008 surveys. They were worded as follows;

> 2007: How much do you support or oppose having some schools that are linked to a particular religious denomination, such as Roman Catholic?
> Support.
> Oppose.
> 2008: Some schools are for children of a particular religion. Which of the statements on this card comes closest to your views about these schools.
> No religious group should have its own schools.
> Some religious groups but not others should have their own schools.
> Any religious group should be able to have its own schools.

Results are shown in Table 4.7. The overall and group proportion is reported for those who support having schools linked to a particular religious denomination and those who support any religious group's being able to have its own schools (the proportion saying only some religious groups is reported in parentheses). Overall, only three in ten supported the linking of schools to a particular denomination and more than four in ten agreed (43 per cent) that *any* religious group should be able to have its own schools (14 per cent opted for the less inclusive – or

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more restrictive – stance, that only some religious groups should have them).

Responses to both questions provide corroborating evidence in terms of differences in group attitudes. The 2007 question on support for schools linked to a particular denomination shows that favourable views are more prevalent amongst women (35 per cent) and those 65 and over (35 per cent), particularly so amongst Catholics (58 per cent). The last figure is in keeping with the broad pattern of responses in Table 4.6 but is also probably somewhat inflated as the question referred to the example of a Catholic school. The 2008 question asked whether *all* or only *some* religious groups should have their own schools. Support for all religious groups having their own schools is more common amongst men (47 per cent), the youngest age group (51 per cent), those in non-manual occupations (45 per cent) and those with some form of educational qualification (45–46 per cent). Once again, support is markedly higher amongst Catholics (63 per cent) and lowest amongst those with no religion (37 per cent). The level of support is not too dissimilar amongst Anglicans, other Christians and those from non-Christian religions (44–49 per cent). The proportions with a more restrictive position, saying that only some religions should have their own schools, are highest amongst those 65 and older and those with no qualifications, lowest amongst those 18–29 years, those with degree-level qualifications and those belonging to non-Christian religions.

For the 2003, 2007 and 2008 surveys, attitudes can be examined on the basis of behaving and believing as well as belonging. Using a three-way classification of attendance into 'frequent', 'infrequent' and 'never attends', those who attended services regularly were consistently more supportive of faith schools, including funding schools for non-Christian religions. Irregular attenders were usually more supportive of faiths schools than non-attenders, but the differences were sometimes rather small. Further analysis of the 2008 survey shows that support for religious groups' having their own schools is consistently higher amongst those who hold different traditional religious beliefs. Around half of those who believe in heaven, hell, life after death or religious miracles and a similar proportion of those who agreed with the questions on God think this, compared to less than two-fifths of those who do not hold these religious beliefs or who disagree with the propositions asked about God (see Table 4.8). Compared to the groups examined in Table 4.7, there is less variation, however, in the proportions (ca. 10–15 per cent) giving

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the more restrictive response: that is, that only some religious groups should be able to have their own schools.

The evidence examined in Tables 4.7 and 4.8 has shown that there are consistent differences across religious groups based on belonging, behaving and believing, with Catholics (and non-Christians) and frequent attenders more supportive of the existence of and funding for faith schools, as well as being more likely to rate positively their educational and social outcomes. Other measures of religion – various religious beliefs – also provide evidence of attitudinal differences on the faith schools debate. Based on social characteristics, group-based differences were more common for some questions, in particular that of funding faith schools for non-Christian religions. While the oldest age group tended to have more supportive views and perceptions of faith schools, this was not the case when asked about funding for non-Christian religious schools or allowing any religious tradition to have its own schools.

To provide a detailed and up-to-date examination of public opinion on the faith schools issue, specifically the relative impact of social and religious factors, multivariate analysis is undertaken using data from a nationally representative survey of adults in Britain conducted in June

TABLE 4.8 *Per cent supporting any religious group being able to have its own schools, by religious belief, BSA 2008 survey*

Question	Response	%[a]
Life after death	Yes – probably or definitely	51 (13)
	Probably or definitely not	36 (13)
Heaven	Yes – probably or definitely	52 (13)
	Probably or definitely not	37 (12)
Hell	Yes – probably or definitely	53 (11)
	Probably or definitely not	39 (13)
Religious miracles	Yes – probably or definitely	54 (14)
	Probably or definitely not	38 (12)
God concerns himself with humans	Strongly agree or agree	53 (14)
	Neither	38 (14)
	Disagree or strongly disagree	38 (10)
Life is only meaningful because God exists	Strongly agree or agree	56 (15)
	Neither	45 (14)
	Disagree or strongly disagree	40 (11)
Belief in God	Believe	49 (15)
	Do not believe	36 (12)

Note: [a]Figures in parentheses represent the proportions saying that only some religious groups should have their own schools.
Source: BSA 2008 survey.

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2013 (fieldwork: 5–13 June; sample size = 4,018) as part of the Westminster Faith Debates (http://faithdebates.org.uk/). (For details on YouGov's survey methodology, see note 4 in Chapter 2.) To tap into different aspects of the public debate over faith schools, the analysis uses a question about government funding for faith schools in general (the survey also examined support for funding faith schools for a range of religious groups) and a question about faith schools' ability to use religion as a basis for preference in admissions. They were worded as follows:

> State-supported 'faith schools' make up around a third of schools in Britain. Most are church schools (e.g. Church of England, Roman Catholic) and the rest (around 1%) are non-Christian (e.g. Jewish, Muslim, Hindu). Do you think the Government should or should not provide funding for the following faith schools? Faith schools in general.
>
> The government should provide funding for these.
>
> The government should not provide funding for these.
>
> Faith schools are allowed to give preference in admissions to children and families who profess or practise the religion with which the school is affiliated. Do you think this is acceptable or unacceptable?
>
> Acceptable.
>
> Unacceptable.

The responses to the first question show that, as tended to be the case with the BSA questions and the opinion poll evidence reviewed earlier, negative opinion on faith schools outweighed positive views. In response to the first question, 32 per cent agreed that the government should, in general, provide funding for faith schools. A plurality disagreed (45 per cent) with this statement, and nearly a quarter were unsure (23 per cent). The survey then asked respondents about the public funding of faith schools for a series of religious traditions, both Christian and non-Christian. There were considerably higher levels of support for the public funding of Church of England schools (42 per cent), Roman Catholic schools (36 per cent) and other Christian schools (34 per cent). Around a fifth supported public funding for non-Christian faiths: Jewish schools (22 per cent), Islamic schools (19 per cent) and Hindu schools (19 per cent). Earlier polls on the issue, conducted in 2001, also found that public opinion was less favourable towards allowing faith schools for non-Christian faiths compared to Christian traditions (MORI 2001; ICM 2001). Another survey (Populus 2006) found a near majority agreeing with the statement that, while Catholic and Church of England

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schools were not a problem, Muslim schools were more worrying because they keep Muslim communities apart from the rest of society. Yet when given the option to declare that while faith schools are an important part of the education system, the government should not be funding Muslims schools, just a tenth or fewer supported this position in surveys conducted in 2005 and 2010, with clear majorities against public funding of faith schools and about a quarter in favour of funding for Muslim schools given that such schools existed for other religious faiths (ICM 2005, 2010).

For the second question from the WFD survey – and somewhat in contrast to the results obtained from previous polling on this aspect of the debate – the proportion saying that religious preference was acceptable in admissions was about half (49 per cent) compared to just under two-fifths saying it was not acceptable (38 per cent). Somewhat over a tenth of respondents were not sure either way (13 per cent). A follow-up question on the admissions issue asked whether faith schools should admit a proportion of students who follow a different religion or no religion at all. Responses were divided: nearly a quarter thought all faith schools should have to adopt this policy (23 per cent); 30 per cent said the decision should be left to the schools themselves; 11 per cent thought it was preferable for faith schools to admit only pupils of the same faith; a quarter wanted there to be no faith schools (26 per cent). The remainder were unsure (11 per cent).

The focus of the multivariate analysis is on the two questions, set out above, gauging support for public funding of faith schools in general and for admissions policies based on religious preference. Responses to the two questions were coded into dichotomous dependent variables suitable for binary logistic regression. For the question on the funding of faith schools in general, responses that 'the government should provide funding for these' were coded as 1 and that 'the government should not provide funding for these' as 0. For the question on preference in faith schools' admissions, 'acceptable' responses were coded as 1 and 'unacceptable' responses as 0. For both questions, 'don't know' responses were treated as missing data.

The limited scholarly research conducted into general public opinion towards faith schools has demonstrated the importance of religious factors – belonging and behaving – in underpinning attitudes (Patrikios and Curtice 2014; Clements 2014b, 2010; Fetzer and Soper 2003). Detailed empirical analysis of the WFD survey allows a contribution to and extension of this

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limited literature. This is done by looking at the relative impact of all three aspects of religion – belonging, behaving and believing – and by analysing the sources of opinion on two particularly contentious aspects of the faith schools issue: public funding and admissions policies.

The WFD survey permits an examination of the relative impact of sociodemographic characteristics, as well as measures of religious belonging, behaving and believing, and of party political support. For the measures of different aspects of religion, a set of dummy variables are used for affiliation (those with no affiliation are the reference category) and for attendance ('frequent'; 'infrequent'; 'never attends' – the reference category). Personal religious practices are measured by two dummy variables capturing prayer and the reading of religious texts. Believing is measured based on a dummy variable capturing a firm belief in God. The results from the two binary logistic regressions are reported in Table 4.9.

TABLE 4.9 *Binary logistic regression of attitudes towards faith schools*

Variable	Public funding		Admissions procedures	
	B (SE)	Exp(B)	B (SE)	Exp(B)
Sex	.47* (.08)	1.60	.52* (.08)	1.68
Age	−.02* (.00)	.98	−.01* (.00)	.99
Ethnic group	.08 (.15)	1.08	.55* (.14)	1.73
Degree	−.13 (.10)	.88	.37* (.09)	1.44
Social grade: AB	.06 (.09)	1.06	−.08 (.09)	.92
Lives in Scotland	−.34* (.16)	.71	−.72* (.14)	.49
Anglican	.85* (.11)	2.33	.34* (.09)	1.41
Catholic	1.58* (.17)	4.84	.87* (.16)	2.38
Other Christian	.54* (.17)	1.71	.30 (.16)	1.35
Other religion	.56* (.18)	1.75	.34 (.18)	1.40
Frequent attender	.60* (.17)	1.82	.94* (.19)	2.56
Infrequent attender	.17 (.22)	1.18	.60* (.23)	1.82
Belief in God	.74* (.11)	2.10	.57* (.11)	1.78
Prayer	.24 (.13)	1.27	.19 (.13)	1.21
Scripture	.46* (.18)	1.58	.58* (.20)	1.79
Vote: Conservative	.03 (.13)	1.03	.20 (.11)	1.22
Vote: Labour	.17 (.12)	1.18	−.15 (.11)	.86
Vote: Liberal Democrat	.30 (.17)	1.35	.32* (.16)	1.38
Vote: Other party	−.17 (.14)	.84	−.16 (.12)	.85
Constant	−.63* (.20)	.53	−.64* (.19)	.53
Nagelkerke R Square	.23		.17	
Weighted N	2,927		3,325	

Note: *p<.05 or lower. Reference categories: no religion; non-attender; would not vote / don't know.

Source: WFD/YouGov survey of adults in Britain, June 2013.

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Looking first at the factors which have significant associations with attitudes towards the public funding of faith schools in general, women are more in favour of government funding, but older people are less supportive. There are no significant associations for ethnic background, educational attainment or social grade, but those living in Scotland are less supportive of public funding (compared to those living in England or Wales). It should be reiterated here that the context is different in Scotland, with virtually all denominational schools being Catholic (Field 2014d: 130). Attitudes towards funding for faith schools are underpinned by the different aspects of religion: belonging, behaving and believing. All religious groups are more favourable compared to those with no religion. Frequent attenders are more supportive compared to non-attenders, but there is no significant difference between infrequent attenders and non-attenders. Those who express a clear belief in God are more supportive of state funding, as are those who read a holy book or scripture. There are no significant differences based on party support, perhaps reflecting the fact that the policies of both the Labour government and subsequent Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition have similarly promoted faith schools and widened the role of religious groups in the delivery of education in the state sector (through setting up and running academies and free schools).

As already mentioned, the admissions procedures and policies of single-religion schools have been a particularly contentious area of recent debate over education policy. Both social and religious factors have a significant impact on public support for faith schools being able to use religious-based preference in admissions. As was the case for support for public funding, women are more favourable to current admissions procedures, but older people are less supportive. Those from a white ethnic group are more in favour of the current set-up, as are those with a degree-level qualification. Once again, people living in Scotland are less supportive. Anglicans and Catholics (whose religious faiths have traditionally operated the vast majority of single-religion schools in England and Scotland) are more supportive of current admissions procedures than those with no religion. But there are no significant attitudinal differences for other Christians and those belonging to a non-Christian faith. Religious behaving and believing also prove significant predictors of attitudes. Both frequent and infrequent attenders are significantly more supportive of current admissions procedures than non-attenders. Belief in God and engagement with religious texts also underpin support

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for preference in admissions. This time around, there is some evidence for party-political leanings having an impact: perhaps somewhat counterintuitively, net of other factors, Liberal Democrat supporters are *more supportive* of religious preference being exercised in faiths schools' admissions procedures.

Building on the existing literature, the findings show that all three aspects of microlevel religion shape public attitudes on the faith schools issue, but so do some social group characteristics. More specifically, the results for Catholics are of particular interest, with this variable – amongst those based on affiliation – having the largest odds ratios in both model estimations (which, respectively, are 4.84 and 2.38). Catholics were nearly five times as likely as those with no affiliation to think that the public finding of faith schools – in general – is acceptable. The BSA data examined earlier showed that, on some questions, Catholics stood apart from other religious groups – at least from other Christians – in their more positive views of the existence and outcomes of faith schools. As Patrikios and Curtice observe, the faith schools issue 'could be a trigger that stimulates feelings of religious identity and of the group interests attached to this identity. ... Faith-based schools may invoke images of "us", "them" and a desire to defend "us" from "them" ' (2014: 521).

For a minority religious group such as Catholics, historically separate schooling was a key element in the maintenance of their distinctive subculture, integral to religious socialisation and the transmission and reinforcement of communal identity and heritage (Hornby-Smith 1987: 185). The Catholic Education Service for England and Wales has recently reiterated that 'In line with the Catholic community's commitment to making Catholic education available for every Catholic child, Catholic schools are provided primarily to assist parents in educating their children in the Catholic faith' (2014: 4). Moreover, intervening in recent public debate over faith schools, the Archbishop of Westminster, the leader of the Catholic Church in England and Wales, claimed as a human right the parental choice to educate their child in their religious tradition (Bingham 2013).

Disestablishment

The question of the established nature of the Church of England represents another example of an overtly religious issue which, historically,

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has featured recurrently on the political agenda (Heath et al. 1993). As Field observes, the links between the Church of England and the state involve several aspects:

> The monarch is its Supreme Governor (and Defender of the Faith), Parliament has the final say over fundamental issues of Church policy, the Prime Minister plays a central role in the appointment of bishops, and the Church's most senior prelates have automatic seats in the House of Lords. (2011: 321)

The nature of this establishment has three main consequences: for the autonomy of the Church of England, as the state 'exercises considerable influence in the life of the church'; for the functioning of the state; and for the general population in England (Smith et al. 349–350).

Recent years have seen the status of the Church of England as the established church challenged by both religious and secular actors (Smith et al. 2003: 250). Religious voices have questioned the current set-up on both theological and practical grounds (Smith et al. 2003: 350). Secularist voices have contested the church's privileged position in a society marked by increasing secularity and a more pluralist religious fabric (Smith et al. 2003: 350). Indeed, as Field has observed:

> All the principal statistical indicators of participation point to a long-term decline in popular allegiance to the Church of England. According to the most recent data ... the traditional measures of Anglican membership (electoral roll and Easter communicants) both stand at around 2 per cent of the population. Average weekly church attendance is at the same level, with the highest weekly figure 3 per cent and Christmas 5 per cent. Even the rites of passage now only attract a minority, with Church of England baptisms representing 12 per cent of live births, with a 24 per cent share of marriages and 39 per cent of funerals. (2011: 321)

Returning to data on religious affiliation summarised in Chapter 1, it showed that the proportion identifying as Anglican in the BSA surveys fell from 40 per cent in 1983 to 16 per cent in 2013. Broader trends in public attitudes towards religion and religious institutions, also reviewed in Chapter 1, showed that there have been declines in those agreeing that Britain *is* or *should be* a Christian country, as well as declining levels of confidence and trust in and esteem for church and clergy (Field 2014c; Clements 2015). More specifically, since the 1990s the Church of England has been perceived unfavourably on the basis of its 'struggle to "modernize" its thinking about sexual orientation and gender roles', with the most recent examples the issues of same-sex marriage and the position

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of women within the Church of England (Field 2014c: 202). Taken together, these changes in religious identification and involvement with the Church of England in particular, and in attitudes and perceptions towards Christian religion in general, seemingly do not bode well for opinion being overly supportive of church-state arrangements.

Detailed research into public attitudes on the issue of disestablishment in the post-war era, covering the period 1955–2011, has already been undertaken by Field (2011); the findings are important to the analysis here. In overall terms, Field concluded that 'the quantitative evidence reviewed here is fragmentary and, in one sense, somewhat inconclusive. The need for further deeper empirical research at the national level is obvious' (2011: 332). In terms of the public mood, Field found that there was no 'groundswell' of popular opinion in favour of disestablishment – public 'irritation about specific components of current arrangements ... does not necessarily translate into agitation to sever church-state links completely' (2011: 333–334).

In terms of identifiable variation in opinion across social and religious groups, Field found that support for disestablishment was higher amongst 'men, the young, the AB social class, Scots, Labourites, Liberal Democrats, Roman Catholics, and those without religion' (2011: 334). In other words, pro-establishment opinion has in general, if not always in the specifics, been more common amongst women, older age groups, those in lower social grades (particularly the DE group), Conservative supporters and Anglicans (particularly churchgoing Anglicans).[3] In relation to religious belonging in particular, the evidence shows that those affiliated to the Free Churches are less distinctive in their oppositional views than they once were, that Roman Catholics are still clearly more likely to oppose establishment, particularly the Act of Settlement, that non-Christians have shown opposition on particular aspects and that the highest levels of opposition to establishment have come from those with no religion (Field 2011: 329).

It is worth noting that, unlike questions on science and religion and faith schools, recurrent social surveys have not asked questions probing attitudes on church-state links. Given both this and the detailed analysis of public opinion undertaken by Field (2011), the focus here is on examining the contemporary social and religious factors associated with attitudes on establishment. This provides a response to the 'need for further and deeper empirical research at a national level' (Field 2011: 332). The analysis uses the YouGov survey from November 2013 utilised

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in Chapters 2 and 3 (for details of survey methodology see note 4 in Chapter 2). The question asked by the survey on the issue of disestablishment was worded as follows:

> Do you think the connection between the Church of England and the State should continue or do you think the Church should be separated from the State?
> Continue.
> Separate.

This question therefore focuses on general support for the established church rather than any particular aspect of the current arrangements. Overall, about half of the respondents favoured separation (51 per cent), and around a quarter supported a continuation of the links (27 per cent). In other words, disestablishment views were nearly twice as common as pro-establishment opinion. A relatively high proportion did not know (23 per cent), which is broadly in line with the levels registered in previous surveys (Field 2011: 333). Another study of attitudes on the issue of establishment found that, in response to a question included in a 2011 survey ('The Church of England should keep its status as the official established church in England?'), a majority of respondents actually agreed or strongly agreed with the proposition, thereby supporting the status quo (54 per cent; Clements and Spencer 2015: 38). Around a fifth had a neutral stance (22 per cent), and a minority disagreed or strongly disagreed with the current arrangements (16 per cent). A relatively small proportion offered a 'don't know' response (8 per cent), no doubt partly a function of the question having a clear neutral category ('neither agree nor disagree'; Clements and Spencer 2015: 38).

The slight majority for disestablishment recorded in the YouGov 2013 poll thus is somewhat at odds with Kellner's observation that 'antidisestablishmentarianism' reflects the public mood. The data from the 2011 survey (Clements and Spencer 2015) do show that 'antidisestablishmentarianism' characterises the public mood, at least in general terms. However, several surveys undertaken by ComRes in 2014 show a more even distribution across those in favour of, opposed to or uncertain about establishment. In response to a question whether 'The official link between the Church of England and the State' is good or bad for Britain, those saying 'good' ranged from 29 to 33 per cent, the proportion saying 'bad' varied from 29 to 32 per cent and the proportion

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saying 'don't know' – a plurality on each occasion – ranged from 38 to 41 per cent. These results from recent surveys serve to underline Field's well-grounded observation that 'The language of establishment can be unfamiliar and the results are sometimes sensitive to variations in question-wording' (2011: 333). As a result, polls on the issue tend to elicit comparatively high levels of 'don't know' responses, partly as a consequence of a lack of knowledge about, indifference towards and lack of strong feeling on the issues, the result therefore being views that are 'susceptible to short-term change' (Field 2011: 333).

For the multivariate analysis, binary logistic regression was used, based on a dichotomous dependent variable where responses of 'continue' (i.e. pro-establishment views) were scored as 1 and responses of 'separate' (anti-establishment views) and 'don't know' were scored as 0. The independent variables reflect some of the already noted key areas of group variation identified in Field's study (2011: 326–329), including sex, age, socio-economic status, nation (region), religious belonging, and party-political affiliation. Unfortunately, no measure of religious attendance is available, though Field noted that the limited evidence showed that Anglican churchgoers were more supportive of retaining church-state links (2011: 329). As well as religious belonging (with categories of Anglican, Catholic, other Christian, other religion, no religion), the model includes a variable tapping into belief in God, thereby extending recent research which was unable to examine the impact of religious factors on public attitudes (Clements and Spencer 2015). This measure of believing is a dummy variable based on whether respondents believed in a personal God (scored as 1) or not (all other responses scored as 0). The results from the multivariate analysis are reported in Table 4.10.

The results show that, as per the weight of findings from polling conducted on this issue (Field 2011), religious and party-political leanings underpin support for establishment net of other factors. Compared to those of no religion, Anglicans and other Christians (including those belonging to Nonconformist traditions, such as Baptists, Methodists and United Reformed Church) were more likely to support the status quo (i.e. believe the connection between the Church of England and the state should continue). There are however, no significant differences for Catholics and those belonging to other religions, indicating a divergence of view between Catholics and Protestants (of various denominations) on this issue. As well as belonging, believing has a significant impact, as

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TABLE 4.10 *Binary logistic regression of attitudes towards the connection between the Church of England and the state*

Variable	B (SE)	Exp(B)
Sex	.15 (.13)	1.16
Age	.00 (.00)	1.00
Ethnic group	−.19 (.23)	.83
Degree	−.23 (.14)	.80
Salariat	.47 (.14)	1.58
Scotland	−.45 (.26)	.64
Anglican	1.31* (.15)	3.69
Catholic	.17 (.25)	1.19
Other Christian	.69* (.27)	2.00
Other religion	.48 (.28)	1.61
Personal God	.95* (.16)	2.59
Vote: Conservative	.99* (.18)	2.70
Vote: Labour	.41* (.18)	1.51
Vote: Liberal Democrat	.22 (.27)	1.24
Vote: Other party	.54* (.21)	1.71
Constant	−2.17* (.30)	.11
Nagelkerke R Square	.21	
Weighted N	1,587	

Note: *$p<.05$ or lower. Reference categories: no religion; would not vote/don't know.

Source: YouGov survey of adults in Britain, November 2013.

those who believe in a personal God are more likely to support the status quo. Further inspection of the data shows that, amongst Anglicans, of those who believe in a personal God, 72 per cent think the present arrangements should continue compared to 42 per cent of those who do not believe in a personal God.

In keeping with the analyses of attitudes towards religion and science and single-religion schools, different aspects of religion – both belonging and believing – prove to be important underpinnings of contemporary public opinion towards church-state relations. However, based on this multivariate analysis, there are no significant effects for group differences based on sex, age group, nation (region) or socio-economic status (education or occupational group), even though generally consistent differences have been found in the historical polling data on this issue (Field 2011).

The effects for party support show that both Conservative *and* Labour supporters are more favourable towards establishment, as are minor party supporters (including UKIP supporters). The result for Conservative

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supporters is in keeping with the traditional party-denominational association and may also be indicative of a more general 'small c' conservatism on questions of constitutional change. There are no significant differences between Liberal Democrats – whose official party policy has been 'to move towards disestablishment' (Field 2011: 328) – and those who do not support any party.

Notes

1 Public evaluations of different professions from Ipsos MORI's annual veracity index show that – based on the 2014 survey – there is variation across age groups and social grades (Ipsos MORI 2014). Those 35 and over – particularly those 65 and older – are more likely to trust clergy to tell the truth, as are those in the AB and C1 social grades (Ipsos MORI 2014). In terms of trusting scientists to tell the truth, the proportion with this evaluation is slightly lower amongst the youngest and oldest age groups (15–24; 65 and over) and is again higher amongst those in the AB and C1 social grades. For both professions, there is little difference in the evaluations of men and women (Ipsos MORI 2014).

2 The PAS 2014 survey dataset and related documentation were obtained from the Ipsos MORI website: https://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/3357/Public-Attitudes-to-Science-2014.aspx. The PAS survey used a probability sampling approach, with a sample of 1,749 UK adults 16 and older who were interviewed with CAPI. The fieldwork was conducted by Ipsos MORI (Castell et al. 2014: 19).

3 A recent survey of Anglican clergy found that 54 percent of those polled supported the retention of the church's current establishment status; 27 percent supported the retention of some aspects of the current arrangements; just 14 percent favoured disestablishment (YouGov 2014). Longitudinal analysis of the attitudes of Anglican clergy based on ten surveys showed that, between 1979 and 2004, support for establishment as a general principle was the view of up to three-fifths, with around a third in favour of disestablishment (Field 2007: 101). For further studies of the views of Anglican clergy and laity, see Smith et al. (2002, 2003).

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5
Conclusion

Abstract: *This chapter summarises the key findings from the empirical analyses of religious beliefs conducted in Chapters 2 and 3, in terms of aggregate change and continuity in levels of belief and with regard to the social groups within which religious belief is more or less common. It then reviews the findings from the analyses of attitudes towards religious-secular debates undertaken in Chapter 4. It suggests some future avenues of research for scholars working in this area. Overall, the time period covered, the plurality of sources used and the attention paid to the group correlates of traditional beliefs and religious-secular issues make this book the most detailed empirical study to date of religious beliefs and debates in British society.*

Clements, Ben. *Surveying Christian Beliefs and Religious Debates in Post-War Britain*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. DOI: 10.1057/9781137506573.0008.

Theistic belief

The wide-ranging analysis of theistic belief in Britain across successive decades showed decline in several respects, and taken together, the evidence tends to support a process of secularisation and declining religious authority in the area of theistic belief – part of a broader trend of the British population becoming less religious (Lee 2012). Based on questions using a standard yes/no response format, belief in God declined across time, as did belief in a personal God, although it is worth reiterating that the latter has always been less prevalent than the former. Various indicators of the personal salience of God also showed evidence of declining importance in individuals' lives. For the average person, God is a less salient life feature now than in previous decades, which may well be partly a corollary of increasing disbelief in or greater uncertainty about the existence of God (or a personal God). Other indicators of perceptions of God's wider involvement and disposition also showed some decline in religiously orthodox responses. All in all, the more up-to-date picture provided here, based on a wide range of indicators of theistic belief and personal salience, coincides with the conclusions arrived at by Gill and colleagues (1998). Assessing survey evidence from the 1940s to the 1990s, they found 'a significant erosion of belief in God. People in present-day Britain are much more likely to admit they do not believe in God with a resulting decline in those who say they do believe or simply don't know' (Gill et al. 1998: 514).

While uncertainty and disbelief about God have clearly increased over time, the recurrent survey data showed that the proportions of the adult population in Britain self-identifying as atheist have tended to be very small in recent decades. Nevertheless, there has been some increase across time based on the recurrent survey data. Some recent polls, however, have recorded clearly higher, albeit varying, proportions ascribing this label (or that of agnostic) to themselves. In general and historically, the proportions prepared to identify themselves as atheist have been considerably lower than those prepared to say they do not believe in God (or in a personal God).

The detailed analysis of levels of belief across social and religious groups has shown that theistic belief and the personal salience of God have been consistently higher amongst women and older people. The results for women in relation to theistic belief and personal salience,

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therefore, are in accordance with recent research on the comparatively greater levels of religiosity amongst women compared to men (Trzebiatowska and Bruce 2012). The results for age group are also clearly in accord with other research on generational differences in levels of religious identity and involvement (Voas and Crockett 2005; Crockett and Voas 2006). Much as women and those in older age groups are more likely to express belief in God and to ascribe greater salience to God in their own lives, so men and younger people are more likely to declare themselves atheist (along with those who are well educated); they constitute small, albeit growing, minorities based on the recurrent social survey data.

As shown in the data from the BSA and EVS surveys reported in Appendix 3, these groups – women and those of an older age – have also traditionally reported higher levels of religious belonging and behaving (i.e. regular church attendance). These are two consistent demographic correlates of belonging, behaving and believing – although, of course (as the BSA and EVS data reported in Appendix 3 show), the proportion attending religious services is considerably lower than the proportion with a religious affiliation or that believing in God. Belief in God has consistently varied across Christian groups: it is higher amongst Catholics and other Christians and lower amongst Anglicans (Church of England); Catholics and other Christians also showed higher levels of attendance at religious services than Anglicans (see Appendix 3). Of course, theistic belief is consistently lower amongst those who profess that they do not have any religious affiliation, but minorities of this group have always expressed a belief in God or a personal God or have affirmed the salience and involvement of God for their lives. Therefore, the data provide some important historical evidence and perspective for more recent debate over the phenomenon of 'fuzzy nones' and the nature and extent of their engagement with religious beliefs and practices (Woodhead 2014).

The multivariate analyses of the contemporary group correlates of theistic belief showed that both social characteristics – as per other research (Clements 2014d; Rice 2003) – and religious affiliation had a significant impact. In relation to believing in God and/or believing in a personal God, women and those from minority ethnic backgrounds were more likely to be more religiously orthodox. This was also the case for all groups with a religious affiliation – whether Christian or not – compared to those without an affiliation.

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Traditional religious beliefs

The analysis of a range of other 'traditional religious beliefs' (Gill et al. 1998) or orthodox beliefs accepted as lying within a traditional Christian framework (Field 2015a) presented in the aggregate a more variegated picture of persistent differences in overall levels of belief, as ascertained in earlier research (Field 2015a; Martin 1967: 54–5), as well as a mixed picture of decline and broad continuity. There is therefore some variance with the more consistent picture of decline seen, across survey indicators, for theistic belief – although of course the latter has traditionally been subscribed to at higher levels in the general population. In general, there is no uniform direction of travel for some traditional religious beliefs, unlike what was generally found for theistic belief, which fits more clearly with a process of gradual secularisation. Where there has been change in some of the orthodox beliefs, however, more often than not it has been in a downwards direction.

In terms of persistent differences over time in overall levels of belief, popular belief in life after death, heaven and sin have been substantially higher than belief in the devil and in hell, as Gill et al. (1998) showed, although always lower than belief in God when gauged via binary response formats (see also, in relation to England, Martin 1967: 54–55). Some distinctions can be drawn in terms of areas of broad change or continuity. First, those areas of belief showing clear decline over time were belief in heaven (the Gallup data aside) and sin, both of which commanded relatively high levels of popular belief over time. Second, for those beliefs, such as hell and the devil, where popular affirmation has been relatively low, there has been little change over time and certainly no evidence of marked decline. Third, there was also some decline in belief in specific biblical content, including belief about the divine authority of the Old and New Testaments and in Jesus as the son of God, in the context of a wider process of declining biblecentrism (the reduced centrality of the Bible in British society) across recent decades (Field 2014a). A creationist perspective of the origins and development of human life has very little hold amongst the general public; it is matched by the sparsity of those taking a literalist view of the Bible. The strengthening of secularisation and the decline of religious authority is therefore evidenced by declines in theistic belief and personal salience, the decline in some other orthodox beliefs within a Christian framework and declining or low levels of affirmation of the veracity of specific biblical content.

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As with theistic belief, other beliefs were consistently less prevalent amongst those with no religious affiliation – the 'religious nones' – but varying minorities of this group have always expressed belief in life after death, heaven, hell, sin, the devil and particular aspects of biblical context. Once again, the evidence provides important longer-term perspective for the aforementioned discussion of 'fuzzy nones' in British society (Woodhead 2014). The multivariate analyses of the relative impact of social and religious characteristics found that, as seen with theistic belief, women were nearly always more likely than men to hold particular religious beliefs, accounting for other explanatory factors. However, as existing research has found (Rice 2003), the social correlates of traditional beliefs did vary to some extent depending on the particular belief. Therefore, of the five indicators of traditional beliefs analysed in Chapter 3, women were significantly *more likely* to have orthodox beliefs in four of the analyses; older people were significantly *less likely* to have orthodox beliefs in three of the analyses; those from a white British ethnic group were significantly *less likely* to have three of the beliefs; those educated to degree level (or higher) were significantly *less likely* to hold just one of the beliefs; those in the salariat occupational group were significantly *more likely* to hold half of the six beliefs; and those with any religious affiliation were significantly *more likely* to assent to each of the beliefs.

The findings for socio-economic status and religious beliefs did not, in a multivariate context, provide much in the way of clear or consistent evidence for the core expectations of 'deprivation theory' (Rice 2003) The weight of evidence for sex and belief clearly underlines, for the British context, existing findings about the comparatively greater religiosity of women (Trzebiatowska and Bruce 2012). Bruce has recently argued that elderly women are one of the five main groups in society known for religiosity and for acting as carriers of religion: 'Church-going is now largely the preserve of elderly women' (2014: 16). On the basis of the detailed assessments carried out in Chapters 2 and 3, women are clearly one social group within which religious beliefs, theistic and others, are disproportionately concentrated, as are belonging and behaving (shown in Appendix 3).

Religious-secular debates

The findings across time for attitudes on religious-secular debates showed that on the broader theme of religion and science, public attitudes have

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moved in a direction which accords less regard to the claims of religion versus those of science. In the aggregate, on debates concerning the relative role of science and religion in modern society, attitudes in Britain have moved to some extent in a direction which fits with wider processes of secularisation and perceptions of declining religious authority in recent decades (Field 2014c; Clements 2015). Public opinion as a whole is less likely to evaluate science unfavourably in relation to religion in terms of trusting too much in science, believing too much in science and depending too much on science. This extends the basis of evidence for assessing secularisation and religious authority within British society.

The analyses of group-related differences in perspectives on religion and science show some areas of commonality with those found for orthodox beliefs. Across time, views more favourable to religion relative to science were more common amongst women, older age groups, those with less education and religious groups (whether defined by belonging, behaving or believing). In a multivariate context, more pro-religion attitudes were found amongst older people, and more pro-science perspectives amongst those from a white British ethnic background and with higher levels of education; interestingly, across indicators, there were no significant differences between men and women (in contrast to the consistent evidence obtained from Chapters 2 and 3).

As the evidence for gauging attitudes towards faith schools concerned relatively recent surveys, little can be discerned in terms of attitudinal change or continuity over time. The longitudinal data on the issue of disestablishment has been well-covered elsewhere (Field 2011). Therefore, the focus for these two religious-secular issues was really on ascertaining the contemporary patterning of support or opposition amongst social and religious groups and the overall balance of opinion. Overall, negative perceptions of and positions against religious schools have tended to outweigh supportive opinion. This tends to apply to views on the merits of public funding for faith schools in general (or those of non-Christian faiths in particular), the use of religious preference in admissions and perceptions of their social and educational outcomes. Disestablishment is perhaps the archetypal religious-secular debate, and while it is multifaceted in nature (Field 2011; Williams et al 2003), only general support for either continuation or separation was considered here. Recent survey evidence have tended to show that support for disestablishment has been the more prevalent view in social attitudes, although it should be reiterated that public opinion is sensitive to differences in question wording

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and response options (Field 2011). The analyses of these issues have extended scholarly understanding of the group patterning of support and opposition and, importantly, showed whether and how the three aspects of popular religion – belonging, behaving and believing – are associated with attitudes on religious-secular issues.

Summary and areas for future research

Overall, the analyses and findings from Chapters 2 through 4 contribute to further empirical study of the nature and extent of religious change and secularisation in Britain, specifically to the aspect of believing (and religious-secular attitudes), and supplement scholarly knowledge of changes relating to the facets of belonging and behaving. While general trends in belief and related religious attitudes in recent decades have been ascertained using a plurality of indicators from different sources, the detailed analyses have also identified those social groups which have tended to be more or less religious in their beliefs and attitudes. These analyses – both over time and in a contemporary context – have shed new light on the social correlates of theistic belief, other traditional beliefs, biblical content and religious-secular issues (religion and science, faith schools and disestablishment). Such empirical detail is important given that much previous work on belief in Britain has focused on documenting general trends in society as a whole (Gill et al. 1998; Kay 1997) and given Bruce's observation that 'because secularization affects some social groups earlier and more severely than others, and because all cultural consumption tends to be socially patterned, religion in "late secularization" societies is concentrated in particular social groups' (2014: 16). The empirical analyses and resulting findings contained in this book should be of interest to both sociologists of religion and social historians of religion. The book makes a clear contribution to the 'repurposing' of religious data, both for orthodox beliefs and religious-secular debates. The extensive use of recurrent social surveys and serial opinion poll data, which were characterised by considerable continuity in the questions they have asked over time, enabled areas of change and continuity in popular beliefs and attitudes to be compiled and analysed. It has also, for social and religious groups, provided a more differentiated view of religious change and secularisation in the area of believing and added considerable microscopic detail on beliefs

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and attitudes to broader telescopic analyses of macrolevel change in Britain's religious fabric.

Reflecting on the themes and empirical analyses contained in this book points up areas for further scholarly inquiry. Firstly, while two chapters focused on paying sustained attention to change and continuity in, respectively, theistic and other traditional religious beliefs, the scope of the book did not include what have been labelled 'heterodox' beliefs commonly accepted as lying outside the traditional framework of Christianity (Field 2015a: 76). Gill and colleagues labelled them 'non-traditional' religious beliefs, distinguishing them from traditional religious beliefs (1998: 508). They noted that

> These items reflect a heterodox collection of ideas with decidedly cultic and 'pre-Christian' connotations. They are often disparaged as 'superstitious'. Such beliefs may also connect to more recent new religious or 'new age' movements with antiinstitutional, nonmaterialistic, and nonrational features. (512)

Recent research into early post-war surveys has shown that 'orthodox' and 'heterodox' beliefs have long coexisted in the wider British public, but there is little evidence on the extent and nature of the overlap between them (Field 2015a: 76–78). More generally, overall levels of such beliefs have shown a clear persistence in British society in the post-war decades (Gill et al. 1998: 512).

A fruitful line of inquiry for scholars, therefore, could be to examine the interrelationships of these types of belief in British society, both historically and contemporarily, and assess the social correlates of unorthodox beliefs (Rice 2003). More specifically, have non-traditional or heterodox beliefs been *more* or *less* prevalent amongst those holding traditional religious and theistic beliefs? Smith summarises the rival perspectives on this relationship: 'Religious and classic paranormal beliefs should be either negatively correlated, because they are competing sets of beliefs, or they should be positively correlated, because both suppose realities that lie outside everyday life and defy scientific explanation' (2003: 141). Another line of inquiry would be to ascertain the social and religious group-related patterns underpinning variation in heterodox beliefs and see how they compare to those for traditional religious beliefs presented and analysed here. Are the social correlates of unorthodox beliefs distinctive from those found for orthodox beliefs?

A second area for future research would be to interrogate public opinion in Britain about disestablishment and church-state relations in greater

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detail and depth (cf. Chapter 3), as well as examine attitudes towards a wider range of religious-related policy issues across recent decades (for such an analysis of the 'long 1950s', see Field 2015a: 79–85). While there have been detailed analyses of public attitudes towards various aspects of the faith schools debate (Clements 2010, 2014b; Patrikios and Curtice 2014) – also covered in some detail in Chapter 3 – there could be more analysis of contemporary public opinion on different aspects of church-state relations. The analysis in this book used an important source of data on contemporary attitudes but was limited to examining the extent of general support for or opposition to the separation of church and state and the group factors bearing upon such support or opposition. The issue of Church of England establishment involves several core institutional features and traditions (Field 2011: 321) and has implications for the governance of the church itself, the functioning of the state and how religion acts as a force in wider society (Smith et al. 2003: 249–250). Therefore, research could assess in greater depth the interrelationships within and the social and religious correlates of contemporary public opinion towards the different aspects of the institutional arrangements, building on analyses of clerical and lay opinion in the Church in England in this regard (Smith et al. 2002, 2003). While this book has extended scholarly knowledge of the nature, extent and correlates of public opinion on this issue, there is, to return to Field's observation, undoubtedly scope for 'further deeper empirical research at the national level' (2011: 332).

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Measurement of Independent Variables Used in the Multivariate Analyses

This appendix provides details on measurement of the most commonly used independent variables employed in the multivariate analyses in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. Where independent variables are measured in a different way or, for Chapter 4, where additional variables are included in the model specifications, details are provided in the relevant chapter.

Sex: measured as a dichotomous variable (1 if female; 0 if male).

Age: measured as a continuous variable.

Ethnic group: measured as a dichotomous variable (1 if White or White British; 0 if other).

Education: measured as a dichotomous variable (1 if has a degree-level or higher-level qualification; 0 if has a lower-level qualification or no qualifications).

Occupation: measured as a dichotomous variable (1 if a member of the salariat; 0 if other occupational grade).

Social grade: measured as a dichotomous variable (1 if a member of the AB social grade; 0 if in the C1, C2 or DE social grade).

Affiliation: measured as a series of dummy variables (Anglican, Catholic, other Christian, other religion, no religion). Those with no religion comprise the omitted reference category.

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Appendix 2: Various Questions about God, BSA, 1991 and 2008

		1991		2008		
		Feel extremely or somewhat close to God most of the time (%)	**Strongly agree or agree that the course of our lives is decided by God (%)**	**God is definitely or probably angered by human sin (%)**	**God is definitely or probably directly involved in my affairs (%)**	**Strongly agree or agree: Have own way of connecting with God without churches or religious services (%)**
Overall		42	19	42	37	42
Sex	Men	35	15	41	33	37
	Women	47	23	43	41	47
Age group	18–29	27	8	39	29	28
	30–44	35	15	41	38	38
	45–64	47	21	42	35	45
	65 and over	59	36	45	47	54
Social class	Non-manual	42	15	41	38	40
	Manual	41	23	42	34	44
Education	Degree	27	10	38	33	38
	Other qualification	40	15	40	35	38
	No qualifications	48	28	51	43	54
Religious affiliation	Anglican	46	21	33	48	46
	Catholic	70	31	59	53	56
	Other Christian	62	30	50	54	64
	No religion	16	6	6	23	14

Source: BSA surveys.

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Appendix 3: Religious Affiliation and Attendance, EVS and BSA Surveys

Per cent with a religious affiliation and per cent that frequently attends religious services, EVS surveys, 1981 and 2008

		Has a religious affiliation		Is a frequent attender	
Variable	**Category**	**1981 (%)**	**2008 (%)**	**1981 (%)**	**2008 (%)**
Overall		91	55	22	19
Sex	Men	89	50	15	16
	Women	92	59	29	22
Age group	18–29	86	39	17	18
	30–44	91	47	22	18
	45–64	93	61	27	17
	65+	93	72	24	27
Age completed full-time education	TEA: 21 and under	79	53	39	25
	TEA: 20 and under	92	55	21	18
Religious affiliation	Anglican	–	–	16	20
	Catholic	–	–	54	40
	Other Christian	–	–	41	49
	No religion	–	–	–	–

Source: EVS surveys.

Per cent with a religious affiliation and per cent that frequently attends religious services, BSA surveys, 1983, 1991 and 2008

		Has a religious affiliation			Is a frequent attender		
Variable	**Category**	**1983 (%)**	**1991 (%)**	**2008 (%)**	**1983 (%)**	**1991 (%)**	**2008 (%)**
Overall		69	65	57	21	21	18
Sex	Men	61	59	51	16	17	16
	Women	75	69	62	26	24	20
Age group	18–29	46	51	47	15	16	17
	30–44	65	56	51	20	19	16
	45–64	77	71	56	25	22	16
	65+	86	83	76	25	26	25
Social class	Non-manual	67	67	58	24	23	19
	Manual	65	62	54	15	17	15
Education	Degree	–	61	57	–	26	22
	Other qualification	–	63	53	–	22	17
	No qualifications	–	68	66	–	17	17

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Variable	Category	Has a religious affiliation 1983 (%)	1991 (%)	2008 (%)	Is a frequent attender 1983 (%)	1991 (%)	2008 (%)
Religious affiliation	Anglican	–	–	–	18	20	18
	Catholic	–	–	–	55	54	40
	Other Christian	–	–	–	47	38	33
	No religion	–	–	–	–	–	–

Source: BSA surveys.

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