

How Bleak the Midwinter?

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Jeff Jacoby of *The Boston Globe* reports that the secularization of Great Britain leads to some dramatic statistics concerning Christmas. Consider this:

From the land that produced "A Christmas Carol" and Handel's "Messiah," more evidence that Christianity is fading in Western Europe: Nearly 99 percent of Christmas cards sold in Great Britain contain no religious message or imagery.

"Traditional pictures such as angels blowing trumpets over a stable, Jesus in his manger, the shepherds and three wise men following the star to Bethlehem are dying out," the Daily Mail reports. A review of some 5,500 Christmas cards turns up fewer than 70 that make any reference to the birth of Jesus. "Hundreds . . . avoided any image linked to Christmas at all" — even those with no spiritual significance, such as Christmas trees or Santa Claus.

More:

Presumably the greeting-card industry is only supplying what the market demands; if Christian belief and practice weren't vanishing from the British scene, Christian-themed cards wouldn't be, either. But some Britons, not all of them devout, are resisting the tide. Writing in the Telegraph, editor-at-large Jeff Randall — who describes himself as "somewhere between an agnostic and a mild believer" — announces that any Christmas card he receives that doesn't at least mention the word "Christmas" goes straight into the trash. "Jettisoning Christmas-less cards is my tiny, almost certainly futile, gesture against the dark forces of political correctness," he writes. "It's a swipe at those who would prefer to abolish Christmas altogether, in case it offends 'minorities.' Someone should tell them that, with only one in 15 Britons going to church on Sundays, Christians are a minority."

In that sense, Christians (at least those who claim some current commitment to the faith) are a minority. Still, the fact that nearly 99 percent of all Christmas cards contain absolutely no reference to Jesus Christ is rather shocking.

Jacoby also cites the fact that 75 percent of British companies have banned Christmas decorations "for fear of being sued by someone who finds the holiday offensive."

The most natural Christian response to this is a deep sadness. It is as if a shadow has crossed a nation that was once suffused with Christian knowledge — at least a knowledge sufficient to connect Jesus Christ with the celebration of Christmas.

