

Idols of Today

Gratification

As an idol, gratification is seeking to indulge or fulfill a desire for pleasure or satisfaction as the basis for our sense of well-being and happiness. When people worship gratification, they believe that they would be happy if only they had everything – or the latest thing – that they desire. One aspect of the recent riots across Britain was the quest for gratification – people believing they would be satisfied if only they had the things they wanted, even if it meant stealing them.



For some, gratification involves the quest for pleasure as a source for meaning and fulfillment. For others, it involves the drive to achieve riches or power. For most, it usually involves the quest for more, in the false belief that having more will make them happy.

The idol of gratification will lead people to believe that unless they have everything they desire they cannot be happy. People under the influence of this idol will feel that those who deny them gratification are enemies, whether these are parents, teachers, police or church leaders. The idol of gratification demands immediate fulfillment; having to wait for something, earn something, or postpone something is not acceptable.

Even Christians become susceptible to this idol. Christians do not want to do the hard work of discipleship and personal discipline. They think spiritual maturity should come easily and quickly. They demand that God meet their felt needs instantly, without suffering or difficulty. Churches believe they can use the latest technique or technology to grow the church without having to address the deep-seated issues in the church.

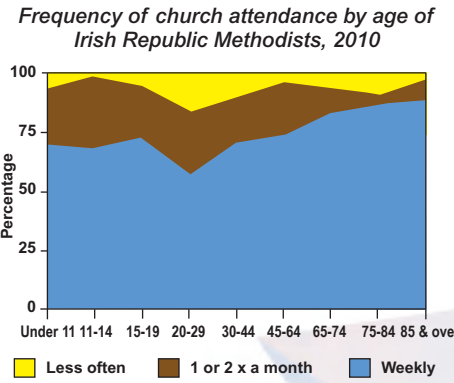
Ultimately, this idol will distort our perspectives and truncate our vision to the here and now. Gratification causes people to forget that their real treasure is in heaven and that it is only after Jesus comes again that we will receive the gratification of our deepest longings as people.

Dr Rod Woods, The City Temple

Irish Methodism

There are 8 Districts of the Methodist Church in Ireland; three are wholly within Northern Ireland, three straddle the border, and two are wholly within the Republic, where they cover perhaps two-thirds of the country – the Dublin, and Midlands & Southern Districts. In an Irish Church Census in 2010, analysed by Rev Dr John Stephens, these two Districts had extra questions.

One of these was the frequency with which an individual attended church. The chart gives the answers broken down by age. It shows that those over 45 attend more regularly the older they get, while attending once or twice a month is common for about of quarter of churchgoers up to that age, while those in their 20s are least frequent of all. This general pattern is similar to English attendance except that, in the latter, it is those in their 30s who are the least regular.



Just under half of current attenders had come from a Methodist background (46%). A quarter (25%) of attenders were non-white in the Dublin District and a sixth (17%) in the Midlands & Southern District. On average these non-white attenders had been going to their particular church for 5 years, against 14 for white Methodists. Almost two-fifths (37%) of those attending under 45 were non-white, showing the impact of immigration into Ireland since the turn of the century.

In 2005 there were 15,500 Methodist church members in the whole of Ireland, of whom 2,800 were in the Republic (not just the two Districts specially analysed). In 2010 those numbers had grown respectively to 15,700 and 3,100, showing the importance of Republican Methodist attendance for Irish Methodism as a whole. However, without the non-white attenders, numbers would be some 700 less.

Methodism in the Republic of Ireland is growing because it has been able to attract – and retain – considerable numbers of younger non-white immigrants. Could British Methodism do the same? Research has shown that there are four characteristics especially that encourage people to continue coming to a particular church:

- The opportunity to grow spiritually (especially important for women)
- A regular sense of God’s presence in worship (especially younger people)
- Helpful teaching (especially men), and
- A caring congregation (especially women).

How are the Irish Methodists especially effective doing these things? What can other churches learn from them?

SOURCES: Article in the Methodist Newsletter, Vol 39, No 416, January 2011, Pages 10-13; UK Church Statistics; ADCBC Publishers, Tonbridge, 2011, Table 6.1.3.

Technological Future

When futurist Richard Watson, author of *Future Files*, was recently asked, “What are the big trends that every organisation needs to factor in to its thinking?” he replied, “An ageing population, a power shift eastward, the environment, global connectivity and GRIN technology.” What is “GRIN” technology? Genetics, Robotics, Information and Nanotechnology.

Although “the cellphone will shift relationships,” he said, “becoming for this century what the car was for the last one,” a perhaps even more powerful aspect of nanotechnology is the gaming industry. Games may have simple educational purposes, like teaching maths to children, or include social media (confering points and status on regular users), or marketing (with online vouchers), or customer engagement initiatives (Nike+ inspires runners to reach new personal bests by teaming up with other online runners).

Other games are “entertainment” like *World of Warcraft* (WoW), set in a mythological world akin to Tolkien’s Middle Earth. That game has 11 million players worldwide, many spending several hours a day fighting orcs and discovering treasure – a total of 50 billion playing hours, yielding £3m a day in subscription fees for its owners. WoW players communicate with each other online by messaging, both text- and voice-mail, and have intense “virtual” relationships with fellow gamers from all over the world, according to an article in the *Church Times*. WoW has an age-rating of 12 plus, which means that many teenagers play it. Games are bought most by men aged 15 to 35.

Game designer Jane McGonigal says WoW helps people use collaborative skills honed in fantasy environments in the real world. However, critics say that real life is messier than the world in many games and thus translating the skills results in disappointment.

George Barna reports that parents use technology and media as much as their teenage children. Most family members, including parents, feel that technology has been a positive influence on their families. Very few ever take breaks from it – some might call this an addiction – but technology has become part of life, with half of parents and teenagers saying they email, text or talk on

Muslims in the UK

Native British people often seem to view Muslims with suspicion. Perhaps that is because they are conscious of the rising numbers, which have accelerated in the first decade of the 21st century (doubling from 1.6 million in 2001 to perhaps 3.2 million in 2010), and which some predict could reach as many as 6 million by 2020, 9% of the population, and 8 million by 2030, 11% of the population. Muslims increase in numbers because they are a quarter (24%) of all immigrants and they have on average 3.8 children per family compared with the average British native of 2.3.

Other reasons for some viewing Muslims with suspicion may include the increasing Islamisation of British society through the establishing of Muslim schools, building of mosques, introduction of Shariah law as well as the Muslim connection with fanatical terrorism.

A 2008 survey showed that 14% of Britons would not wish to have a Muslim as a neighbour, and a 2009 study indicated 55% would be troubled if a large mosque was built in their neighbourhood. In 2006, the website www.salaam.co.uk listed 1,700 mosques in the UK, even if the Charity Commission only recognise 1,100, a quarter of which (23%) are in London. Their average income in 2009 was £230,000, but the three largest mosques annually raised over £10 million each.

the phone while eating. Half of students and a fifth of adults check their emails in bed.

Half (49%) of parents worry that technology is wasting their children’s time, but a sixth (17%) of teens argue in response that their parents bring home too much work with them, something abetted by pervasive technology. Few families have heard church leaders discuss principles on the best use of media or technology. In other words, a Christian or faith-based perspective on this trend is rarely present even though two-fifths of parents and teenagers say they would be interested in such.

However, others like Stephen Cummins, Accord’s director of marriage education, say that the most common area, and fastest-growing, of difficulty in marriages is not the internet use of porn, but the constant use of time on the web, whether on Skype, Facebook or whatever.

Much of the content of games is violent, involving relentless killing. Some Christian groups of gamers exist, especially in America, and when asked why play such games, Mike Marquardt of Gamers 4 Jesus replied, “I don’t get a kick out of killing people, but out of the strategic aspects and the fellowship in playing the game.”

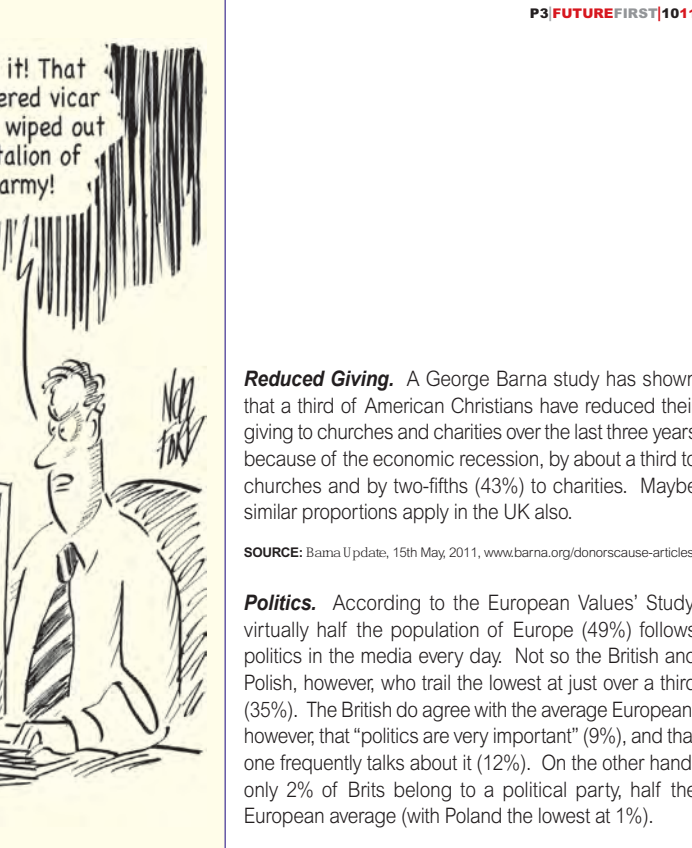
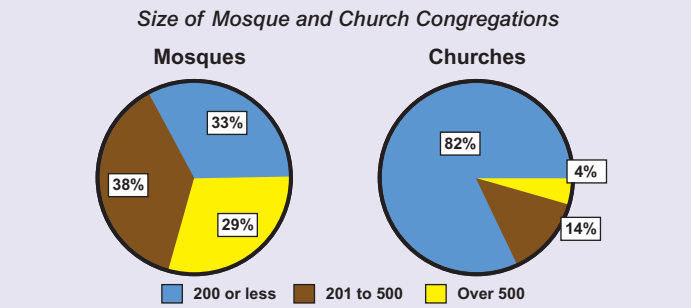
The US has 183 million active gamers (more than half the population) who play on average 13 hours a week, and 5 million “extreme” gamers who play 45 hours a week, equivalent to working full-time. There are 100 million gamers in Europe, 105 million in India, 200 million in China, the figures coming from Jane McGonigal’s book *Reality is Broken*, in which she argues that such numbers show a mass exodus from reality. “They are teaching, inspiring and engaging us in ways that reality is not.”



What are the attractions of gaming? There is a clear objective; there are agreed ways of meeting that objective; there is feedback to let you know your progress; and the whole is played voluntarily. These facets of gaming give reality a clear challenge – unclear goals, fluid rules, little accountability, and often depressing engagement. McGonigal says that “the rise in gaming is a deeply spiritual issue,” and suggests that “the single best way to attach meaning to our lives is to connect our daily actions to something bigger than ourselves.” Enter the Gospel?

SOURCES: Article “Just what are they playing at?” by Simon Hall in the Church Times, 5th August 2011, Page 11; article “Will believe” by Kester Browing, Third Way, July/August 2011, Page 12; Barna Update, 24th May, 2011, www.barna.org/family-kids-articles/; Perform-ance Preview, May 2011, Pages 7 and 28, quarterly business journal of Ernst & Young, www.ey.com/performance; article in The Tablet, 12th August 2011, Page 30.

The average size of a mosque congregation is shown in the chart, and compared with Christian churches (excluding those in rural areas). It is very clear that the Muslims have a much larger infrastructure than do Christians in terms of units. Although there may be 13 times more churches in urban or suburban areas than mosques, none of the churches has an annual income of over £10 million as far as is known, and the average income in the year 2000 was £57,000.



These may be helpful

Books and reports received

When Will Our Children Learn? Persistent inequalities in Kenyan education; *It’s Our Water Too!* Bringing greater equity in access to Kenyan water. Policy Notes 08/2010 and Policy Brief 09/2010, Swazi, Nairobi, both August 2010.

Slippery Slope, The Islamisation of the UK, Patrick Sookhdeo, Barnbasfund, February 2011.

Young Christians in Latin America, The experiences of (those) who participate in ... volunteering projects, Peter Hopkins et al, Newcastle University, Religion and Society, 2010.

Religion or Belief Network Bulletin, Equality And Human Rights Commission, Third Bulletin, November 2010, from David.Perfect@equalityhumanrights.com.

The National Churches’ Trust Survey, April 2011, details from info@nationalchurchestrust.org.

Social Climate, Special Eurobarometer, European Opinion Research Group, No 315, Wave 71.2, January 2010.

The Brethren Movement Worldwide, Key Information, 3rd edition, edited by Ken Newton and Andrew Chan, OPAL Trust, Lockerbie for IPCM, 2011.

Transmission of Churchgoing from Grandparents to Grandchildren in England and Australia, Prof David Voas and Ingrid Storm, University of Manchester, voas@man.ac.uk.

Religion and Belief, Discrimination and Equality in England and Wales, Theory, Policy and Practice 2000-2010, Religion and Society research programme, Prof Paul Weller and others, University of Derby, Jan 2010, p.g.weller@derby.ac.uk.

Half, 51% of Muslims in the UK, attend mosque at least once a year, and half never attend. A quarter, 26%, attend more frequently, percentages which haven’t changed in 20 years. Two-fifths of Muslims, 43%, would prefer their children attended a Muslim school (there were only 4 Muslim Primary Schools in 2007 and 3 Secondary Schools). A third, 30%, would like to live under Shariah law in Britain, and two-fifths (41%) of Muslims said they were worried about a terrorist in their local area (against 29% for all Londoners).

Is secularism a greater threat than Islam to Christianity in the UK? Half (46%) the audience in a debate organised by *The Spectator* in June 2011 said secularism before the debate and a quarter (23%) said Islam, the rest (31%)not knowing. After the debate more than half (56%) said Islam and 36% said secularism, 8% still undecided.

SOURCES: Why do churches grow?, Salvation Army survey by Christian Research, 2002; Religious Trends No 5 Table 5.7.2, No 6 Table 2.6.4, No 7, Tables 4.6 and 10.9.3, Christian Research; UK Church Statistics 2005-2015, Tables 12.2.1, 13.3.5 and 13.10.1, ADCBC Publishers; The Week, 16th January 2010, Page 6; Slippery Slope, The Islamisation of the UK, Patrick Sookhdeo, Barnbasfund, February 2011, Page 7; Attitudes to Living in Britain, A survey of Muslim opinion for channel 4 Dispatches by GRK NOP Research, April 2006; Muslim Attitudes – the Real Story, Mayor of London survey by Ipsos MORI, November 2007; Survey of Mosques in England and Wales, Charity Commission, bmg research, 2009; The Economist, 29th January, 2011 Page 58; The Tablet, 9th July 2011, Page 17.

Snowflakes

Confidence. Of all the Protestant countries in Europe, Britain retains the highest percentage of people who have confidence in the Church (12%), which is considerably higher than those who have confidence in the EU (4%), Parliament (3%) or the Government (2%). Italy backs the EU the most (13%), but no country has confidence in their Parliament, their Government or their Political Parties by more than 5%. Trust takes a long time to build and is quickly shattered. Thought: is British confidence in the church partly a legacy of trust in the traditional Christian values of the church such as integrity, loyalty, compassion, goodness, etc?

SOURCE ABOVE TWO ITEMS: European Values Study 2008, quoted in Vista, Issue 5, April 2011, Page 3, from the Nova Research Centre.

Reading and education. It is not perhaps very surprising that the detail with which something is read varies with a person’s education, though probably more pertinently their time availability, but one piece of research has actually measured this. The results are shown in the Table:

Readership Depth Final Level of Education	Glance	Fairly thorough	Very thorough	Base
	%	%	%	(=100%)
Tertiary	12	27	61	26
Secondary	16	37	47	188
Primary	23	54	23	98
Average	18	41	41	312

What is the average final level of education of most church people? If secondary, only half (47%) of material for reading (which presumably includes electronic reading matter) is read very thoroughly, and only three-fifths (61%) by those with a degree. This suggests that people with secondary education and degrees have learnt to read more discerningly – probably because they have had to read greater volumes of material and therefore more selectively, skimming and skipping where necessary.

SOURCE: Article by Tim Bock, International Journal of Market Research, Volume 53, Issue 3, 2011, Page 317.

What do people pray for? St Mary’s is a rural church with a private chapel. Over 16 months in 2007/2008 visitors were invited to write their prayers on a card left in the chapel for the priest to use. The content of 1,067 of these cards was analysed, with 1,370 requests. A third (30%) were open or general prayers (“bless my family”), but people also asked for prayer for illness (29%), death or the after-life (20%), relationships (7%), growth (5%), conflicts or disasters (4%), work (3%), sport (1%) or travel (1%). Three-quarters (75%) were for others, one-sixth (16%) for global concerns, 5% for themselves and 4% for animals.

SOURCE: Article “Implicit Religion and Ordinary Prayer” by Tania ap Iŷôn in la plicit Religion, Vol 13, No 3, 2010, Page 283.

China’s declining population. The UN latest population forecast, for the first time up to 2100, suggests that the currently largest nation, China, will shrink to second place by then, down from 1,340 million now to 940 million then. This is because of its one-child policy, and the problems arising from it sex imbalance – by 2025 China will have 96 million men in their 20s, but only 80 million women. India meantime will continue to grow, from 1,230 million in 2010 to 1,550 million by 2100, although it too will have a radical sex imbalance, likely leading to internal conflicts.

SOURCE: Article on UN report in The Economist, 14th May, 2011, Page 71.

The personal benefits of belief

800 Italians aged 18 in 2008 gave the following answers when asked the benefits of their religion:

94%	My life would be harder if I didn’t believe in God
91%	Prayer is useful in relieving anxiety and fear
85%	Believing in God means attaching more importance to people than things
83%	God helps me when I have a problem.

SOURCE: Article “Towards a Common Sense Religion?” by Giuseppe Giordan in la plicit Religion, Vol 13, No 3, 2010, Page 269.

Young people and the Church. Why do young people have a poor perception of the Church? An American study showed the following for young adults, but a similar poll in the UK might well have similar results:

Perception	Non-churchgoing %	Churchgoing %
Anti-homosexual	91	80
Judgmental	87	52
Hypocritical	85	47
Old-fashioned	78	36
Too involved with politics	75	50
Out of touch with reality	72	32
Insensitive to others	70	29
Boring	68	27
Not accepting other faiths	64	39

Churchgoers felt similarly to non-churchgoers about the church but to a lesser degree. Non-churchgoers accepted the Church taught good values and principles (76%) and was friendly (71%).

SOURCE: Article “First Testament Wilderness Traditions and the Contemporary church” by David Cleaver-Bartholomew, in the International Congregational Journal, Vol 10, No 1, Spring 2011, Page 34.

Rich and poor. The 1% richest people of the world receive as much income as the poorest 57%. The top fifth (20%) of the world’s people receive five-sixths (83%) of the world’s income, and spend 86% of the world’s expenditures. Wal-Mart, the world’s largest retailer and outside the American and Chinese militaries, the world’s largest employer (2.1 million people) has revenues as large as the economies of 160 countries combined!

SOURCE: Beyond Christendom : Globalization, African Migration and the Transformation of the West, Jehu J Hanciles, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 2008, Page 30.

Happiness. 3,600 English teenagers were asked what made them happy. Three things came top of the list – the home they lived in, their family and their friends. Only 5% were unhappy with these. What were most unhappy about? One-sixth (18%) said their appearance and almost the same (16%) said “their confidence”. And the gadget that makes us happiest? The Nintendo Wii or more recent versions!

Manned spaceflight. In the first 49 years of human beings going into space, 1961 to 2010, a total of 290 flights have taken place. 41 of these occurred between 1961 and 1970, 36 between 1971 and 1980, 69 between 1981 and 1990, 83 between 1991 and 2000, and 61 between 2001 and 2010. Two of these were private (both in 2004), three were by China (2003, 2005 and 2008), 121 were by the Soviet Union or Russia and 164 by the United States. The last flight to the Moon in Apollo 17 was in 1972. In 1986 Challenger blew up just after take-off and Columba burnt on re-entry in 2003.

SOURCE: The Economist, 16th April 2011, Page 87.

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• Women experience greater difficulties than men in finding church placements after completing their training, even in egalitarian denominations.

3) Women are more likely to lead a small church and/or a rural or urban church

The last English Church Census showed that female ministers were most likely to be responsible for a church of less than 25 people. They were also more likely to serve in a rural church or in a city centre or inner city church (and thus less likely to serve in a suburban church). Research published in the US also bears out this emerging pattern of deployment.

One might ask why this is. Is it a healthy pattern, or is it disturbing? Is it the result of prejudice against women ministers, which means that they are more likely to be deployed in churches deemed less desirable?

4) Women are less likely to lead larger churches

Before 2000, all 172 “larger” Anglican churches were led by men. Three are now led by women, a disproportionately small number, considering that women now make up 17% of clergy leading churches. Again this picture is mirrored in the US.

5) Women are less likely to be in senior posts

Research on women as leaders in business and the professions shows that women are far from equal when it comes to director level or senior posts. This is equally true in the Church. In the Anglican Church, women make up a very small percentage of those in senior posts. Women are not yet able to be bishops; and there are only 4 women Deans (out of 42) and 15 women Archdeacons (out of 110).

Women make up a good proportion of lay leaders in churches, but is the Church damaging its mission by not utilising the leadership ability of its ordained or authorised women leaders to the full?

What some people say

From *Dog Eats Dog* BBC: Ulrika Jonsson: “How many metres are there in a kilometre?” Contestant: “Three.”

Ulrika Jonsson: “If I travel at sixty miles per hour, how far do I travel in ten minutes?” Contestant: “Two hundred thousand miles.”

From *The Weakest Link* BBC: Anne Robinson: “In maths, what is one half as a decimal?” Contestant: “A quarter.”

Anne Robinson: “What is the highest prime number under ten?” Contestant: “Eleven.”

Anne Robinson: “What is the largest country in the Americas?” Contestant: “Asia?” Anne Robinson: “Um, Asia is a continent.” Contestant: “Well, I don’t live there!”

SOURCE: Universally Challenged, Quiz Contestants say the Funniest Things, Wendy Roby, Michael O’Mara Books, 2010, Pages 56, 58, 60 & 63.



REFLECTIONS

The new Anthem of South Sudan, the ancient Biblical land of Cush:

Oh God!

We praise and glorify you

For your grace upon Cush,

The land of great warriors

And origin of world's civilization.

Oh Cush!

Arise, shine, raise your flag with the
guiding star

And sing songs of freedom with joy,

For peace, liberty and justice

Shall forever more reign.

So Lord bless South Sudan!

Oh black warriors!

Let's stand up in silence and respect,

Saluting millions of martyrs whose

Blood cemented our national foundation.

We vow to protect our nation.

Oh Eden!

Land of milk and honey and hard-
working people,

Uphold us united in peace and harmony.

The Nile, valleys, forests and mountains

Shall be our sources of joy and pride.

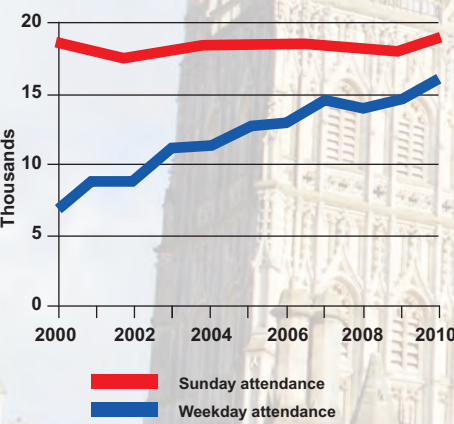
So Lord bless South Sudan!

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CATHEDRAL WORSHIP

Unlike Anglican attendance generally, numbers attending Cathedral services are increasing as the graph shows. The evidence is unmistakable, and the increase is among both adults and children. Midweek attendance has more than doubled over the past decade, while Sunday attendance has wobbled but remained basically constant. The obvious question is, "Why?"

Attendance at Cathedral Services, 2000-2010



There is no definitive answer to the question, but various pieces of research suggest some interesting considerations. In one study, attenders at two different Cathedrals said their main reason for attending (88%) was the "spiritual atmosphere" and the "feeling of peace". Their second reason (86%) was "the choir" and "the music". The location and the worship made a "contemplative atmosphere" (84%) which was "friendly" (80%).

These are high percentages and are echoed whether a person regularly goes to church or not. In another study, this time of those visiting St David's Cathedral in Wales, 77% of those who

never normally attended church said they found "the cathedral uplifting", while of those who only occasionally attended 84% said this, while for regular worshippers it was 95%. All three groups put "a sense of peace" as their second reason for attending.

This suggests questions like: Are our church services too irreverent, too noisy? Are our services too geared to entertainment, too non-stop? Should we pause and have a time of silence? Many years ago I was part of an inter-denominational team who took turns to lead a monthly worship service. After a while, the one I came to appreciate most was the one led by the man who was a Quaker – we had 45 minutes of complete silence!

Further studies have compared the age of attenders at other Cathedrals (Worcester and Lichfield) indicating their agreement or not with the statement, "You don't have to go to church to be a good Christian," which some 80+% of those under 30 agreed with, dropping steadily to 60+% for those 60 and over. Would under 30's, a key group, find the impressive size and atmosphere of awe and peace more attractive than our less inspiring church buildings? On the other hand, many under 30s find Hillsong services popular – characterised by large venues, informality and much noise! Many Christians under 30 attend the larger Anglican churches – could size of building and congregation be a relevant worship component for this age-group?

SOURCES: Paper "You don't have to go to church to be good Christian" given by David Walker, Glyndwr University at the Denton Conference, May 2011; article "Not all cathedral congregations look alike" by Leslie Francis and Emyr Williams, *Rural Theology*, Vol 8, Pt 1, 2010; Page 37; article "Visitor experiences of St David's Cathedral" by Emyr Williams, Leslie Francis, Mandy Robbins and Jennie Annis, *Rural Theology*, Vol 5, Pt 2, 2007.

more than half will in fact separate at some stage through divorce.

There are 7 short chapters, each well illustrated by practical examples. Marriage is essentially taken as a working relationship legally sanctioned of different genders, which needs to deepen and evolve over time. However, beliefs about marriage (for example, gender-defined rules) can hinder that from blossoming.

The author explores key areas hindering this process. Trying to change your partner is the first, which he suggests is akin to idolatry – trying to make someone in your image. Dysfunctional family patterns are then considered. The need for true repentance in relationships is the third key issue followed by the importance of intimacy and forgiveness is tackled next. Can the hurt of serious relationship injuries be forgiven unreservedly, and, if so, can true intimacy again be restored?

The final chapter is entitled "Salvation, Marriage and Grace". Ultimately a successful marriage is a spiritual work in a relational context, requiring individual acceptance and responsibility, and then ultimately transformation. This is a brief guide to a more successful marriage from a counsellor whose clear wisdom has come from many conversations.

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More Men than Women?

The Economist published an interesting if fanciful figure in August 2011. Because so many women in Hong Kong are preferring not to marry, to every 1,000 women there only 550 daughters would be born; a generation later, to those 550 women only 300 daughters would be born. As a consequence, if such a series continued, the last woman in Hong Kong would be born in the year 2800!

Normally in the general population, both in the UK and the world, there are about equal numbers of men and women. More boys are born than girls (5% more on average) but this evens itself out in two ways – twice as many boys as girls die in their teenage years (often through accidents), and women outlive men (on average by 4 years in 2010 in the UK). In war years the ratio is altered because generally so many more men die than women. Overall the UK population consists of 51% women and 49% men. Church attendance is different – 57% women and 43% men.

Percentage of men attending church in England, 2005, by denomination and by age

Denomination	Anglican %	Baptist %	R Cath -olic %	Indepen -dent %	Method -ist %	New Ch'hes %	Orthodox %	Pente -costal %	URC %	Smaller denom %	Overall
% Men	40	41	45	48	36	50	45	49	35	42	43
Age-grp	Under 11	11 to 14	15 to 19	20 to 29	30 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 to 74	75 to 84	85 & over	Overall
% Men	46	49	51	45	44	43	41	40	38	34	43
Popul-ation	51	51	51	50	50	50	49	48	41	29	49

For reasons unknown, the birth ratio of 105 boys to 100 girls has been constant, when measurements are available, across centuries, and does not alter between one country and another. It can vary a little – to 104 or 106 boys for instance – but the ratio has remained remarkably constant for a long time. In the UK it has not changed over the last 50 years.

In some parts of the modern world, however, the ratio is rapidly changing, not by a little but considerably. Five years ago, for instance, in Tinmen (Hubei Province), China, the ratio was 176 boys to 100 girls. Over the whole of China the ratio in 2007 was 121 to 100. Some will say that this is because of China's "one-child" policy. If parents are limited by law to only one child, they will often prefer to have a son than a daughter, and if the mother is pregnant and a scan reveals the child is female, then an abortion is often arranged.

That might explain some of the variation, but India doesn't have a one-child policy, for example, yet its ratio is also skew – 114 : 100. And this is not something just affecting Asian countries – even countries like Albania had a ratio of 114 : 100 in 2007. Scanning equipment is available in Albania, which is quickly modernising after its Communist past, but the new middle-class families are able to afford their children, and while abortion happens a lot, it does not seem to be especially directed to female foetuses.

What happens if there are too many boys who become, as they get older, too many men? Not as many will be able to marry or cohabit as they might wish, and ultimately that may mean fewer children being born in the future, whatever their gender. Even if people have children outside marriage, the numbers born will decline as women in general are having fewer children – the fertility rate is also declining. In addition, the



Rural and Urban Churchgoing 1851

An almost or completely full church encourages people to return; an overcrowded church discourages people attending as they cannot readily find a seat (or a seat in a preferred location). Standard Church Growth theory has long said that "churches more than 80% full won't grow". An interesting corroboration of this comes from 160 years ago in a paper published in 2000 analysing church attendance in 1851.

The Religious Census of 1851 was a massive undertaking. More than 30,000 census workers personally collected data from nearly 24,500 places of worship in 576 registration districts. Numbers counted were attendances, which in some places included 3 services as well as one or

SOURCES: The Economist, 27th August 2011, Page 54; Religious Trends, No 6, 2006/2007, Tables 5.8.1 and 4, Christian Research, Eltham, London; Unnatural Selection, Mara Hvistendahl, Perseus Books Group, Philadelphia, USA, 2011.

more sessions of Sunday School. As there is no safe way of knowing how much double counting took place, it is impossible to know accurately the actual number of attenders.

How much does the number of churches in a locality, and the size of those churches, affect attendance, if at all? In his paper Alasdair Crockett, who sadly died some years ago, uncovered some interesting variations between rural and urban churchgoing. In 1851 British churchgoing was perhaps at its peak, despite very rapid urbanisation. In 1811 46% of the population of England and Wales lived in a district (as used in the Census) containing over 75 people per square kilometre; in 1851 73% did so. There were low churchgoing rates in many urban areas in 1851, but also, more unexpectedly, in some rural areas.

Rural churchgoing

The more churches existing in rural areas, the greater the overall attendance. This is almost certainly linked to the distance people had to travel to attend church in the days when walking or horseback were the only real alternatives. One mile was considered the limit that most people would regularly walk to church, so that if there was no church within a mile, rural dwellers were unlikely to attend. However, in a quarter of the rural districts there was only one church every 3 square miles. Many people in scattered communities therefore did not live within walking distance and were effectively disenfranchised.

When a new church was established, those within walking distance had the opportunity to attend, a choice not previously available to them. Because of the parish system of the Church of England, most of the new churches in rural areas were non-conformist. Hence the comparative success of "dissenters", especially Methodists, in the early part of the 19th century with the strong influence still remaining from John Wesley and his co-workers travelling throughout Britain. In other words, "recruitment was in many cases a matter of providing religious services when no others were available."

Urban churchgoing

The situation was quite different in urban areas. There was an average of one church for every 1.3 square miles, so almost all urban dwellers would have lived within walking distance of one, and usually more, places of worship, often representing several denominations. Theoretically it was possible for everyone to attend church. One of the reasons for undertaking the 1851 Religious Census was to establish whether there was enough capacity in churches to seat everyone who wished to attend.

Crockett's analysis shows that in urban areas seating provision, linked inextricably to the number of churches, increased in line with the increase in churchgoers brought about by population growth. However, where there were too few seats, there was a decline in numbers rather than an increase, supporting the church growth thesis formulated a century later!

In general terms, in both urban and rural churches, there was a simple relationship between church attendance and the number of seats occupied in church, although the correlation was weaker for urban churches. (The 1851 Census asked for number of seats in a church as well as counting attendance). Crockett's further analysis supports Professor Robin Gill's findings in *The Myth of the Empty Church* that in many parts of rural England, because of the population movement into urban areas, church seating increased unnecessarily in the 19th century.

SOURCE: "Variations in Churchgoing Rates in England in 1851: Supply-side Deficiency or Demand-led Decline?", by Alasdair Crockett, Discussion Papers in Economic and Social History, Number 36, August 2000, University of Oxford.



Providing Facts for Forward Planning

SNIPPETS

1) In 2011 UK men were spending the equivalent of 3 weeks' salary on an engagement ring, down from a traditional 8 weeks.

2) 88% of families with 3 children have at least one boy among them; 98% with 5 children.

3) In a small Peterborough sample, 78% of churchgoers saw their workplaces as a mission field against 100% of their leaders.

4) 40% of managers want to read about how to achieve a good work/life balance.

5) 78% of students took a GCSE language course in 2001; 44% took such a course in 2011.

6) Using different definitions, the *World Christian Database* says there are 300 million Evangelicals worldwide but 700 million "Great Commission Christians". *Operation World* says there are 550 million Evangelicals. Both agree there are 600 million Pentecostals/Charismatics.

7) A recent estimate suggested that perhaps 12,000 of the 48,000 churches in Great Britain have a printed magazine.

SOURCES: 1) News item in the Daily Telegraph, 17th August 2011, Page 12; 2) Unnatural selection, by Mara Hvistendahl, Public Affairs, New York, 2011, Page 20, quoting Guilimoto Sex Ratio Trends; 3) Survey by Transform Work UK carried out at Peterborough CRE 2011, published in ReSource, Issue 21; 4) Professional Manager, November 2010, Page 13; 5) The Bookseller, 19th/26th August, 2011, Page 22; 6) The Lausanne Global Briefing, June 2011, Page 20; 7) Personal correspondence with Gordon Neal.

How does gender make a difference in Church leadership?

Rev Rosie Ward, Leadership Development Adviser, CPAS

From the time of the early Church until relatively recently, women have had limited participation in authorised or ordained church leadership, giving the question of how gender makes a difference in church leadership a historical dimension. The extent to which men and women differ in leadership style has been much debated in recent years, and is also linked to wider debates about gender difference.

How 'difference' has made a difference

Following the Greek philosopher Aristotle, it has long been thought that the male is the "norm" and the female is "different". Where men were "naturally" rational, women were "naturally" emotional. Thus, men were fitted for leadership; women were not. This thinking, as well as theological factors, influenced the early Church. Only men could be leaders.

This concept of "difference" continues to prevail in thinking about leadership to the modern day. During the 20th century, as women began to move into leadership roles, they initially had to behave like men. But as relational skills and emotional intelligence began to be considered increasingly important aspects of leadership, some people began to suggest that women might even make better leaders!

As women moved into Church leadership in greater numbers, gender was understood to make a difference in a variety of ways: women leaders were thought to be more caring than men, more pastorally sensitive, more nurturing and more likely to draw on personal experiences in preaching, teaching and counselling. They were more relational, making decisions co-operatively rather than using a hierarchical or authoritarian approach. Women were also thought to be less interested than men in church politics, power over others and job prestige.

No difference in leadership style

Recent findings have challenged the assumptions of gender difference in leadership style. A 2009 Harvard Business Review article shows that women outshine men in most leadership dimensions. Two researchers conclude: there is "good reason to think that men and women who are in the same role lead in the same ways", and that most differences in leadership are more due to personality than gender. Age can also be a factor.

In denominations where women can be ordained or authorised church leaders,

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men and women are selected, train together at a college or on a course, and are ordained. At this stage, for some women their gender is irrelevant, because they have been treated equally so far. In some denominations there are now similar numbers of men and women being trained and ordained. In the Anglican Church, 266 women and 298 men were ordained in 2009. Given equality of opportunity in training, funding, mentoring and placement, there is very little difference in the manner of Church leadership training that is directly attributable to gender.

So how does gender make a difference?

The differences that do exist have their foundations in a lack of equality of opportunity. So gender does make a difference, in the following ways:

1) In some churches women are unable to be church leaders

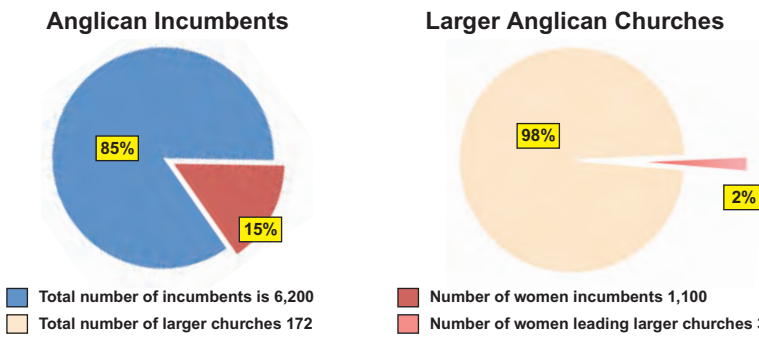
According to one recent survey of women ministers in the UK, women made up 11% of all ministers in 2000, and 18% by 2010. But this is an average, disguising the fact that the percentage of women leaders in both Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches is 0%, for theological reasons. In New and Independent churches the picture is mixed: some do not have women leaders for theological reasons, others do.

2) There are fewer younger women than young men in church leadership

The Church of England is actively looking for greater numbers of younger clergy. But out of 100 younger people recently offering for ordained ministry, 80 were men and only 20 were women. A Canadian research study shows that:

- Women experience less encouragement to consider church leadership

- Women are more likely than men to choose ministry as a second career, after a protracted decision-making process



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