

## The Truth About Men

Robbie Low looks at some disturbing statistics

Most of us, I suspect, are not great students of 'the small print'. We employ lawyers and accountants because we recognize that carefully constructed small print may contain disclaimers, definitions and information which effectively drive a coach and horses through our assumptions about the general argument and make utterly null and void the common understanding that we thought we had. Allow me to introduce you to a piece of very small print.

Not many will have whiled away the long winter evenings by reading 'The demographic characteristics of the linguistic and religious groups in Switzerland' by Werner Haug and Phillippe Warner of the Federal Statistical Office, Neuchatel in Volume 2 Population Studies No 31, 'The demographic characteristics of national minorities in certain European states' edited by Werner Haug and others, published by the Council of Europe Directorate General III, Social Cohesion, Strasbourg, January 2000. Phew!

### Helvetic Anoraks

And, indeed, why should you? Switzerland, after all, is not England. Its religious make-up is 46 per cent Catholic, 40 per cent Protestant with five per cent non-Christian faith and nine per cent of no religion at all. Their population of 6.9 million is divided into thirty Cantons and 3,000 plus communes and they are remorselessly prosperous and resolutely neutral at the heart of Europe. That does not mean that they have escaped the common social lot of other Europeans in the last half-century. Their immigrant population is ten per cent and their drug problem in major cities is all too well documented.

The historical strengths and tradition of the Christian religion in Switzerland have not produced growth but its churches have suffered far less decline than its more liberal European neighbours. The pattern of marriage, three-quarters marrying someone of their own religion (80 per cent among Christians), demonstrates a conservatism, which would seem quaint to much of modern Britain.

All of this information is readily obtainable for Helvetic anoraks because Switzerland always asks a person's religion, language and nationality on its decennial census. Now for the really interesting bit.

### Critical factors

In 1994 the Swiss carried out an extra survey which the researchers for our masters in Europe were happy to record. The question was to determine whether a person's religion carried through to the next generation and, if so, what, if any, were the critical factors. The result is dynamite. There is one critical factor. It is overwhelming, and it is this. It is the religious practice of the father of the family that, above all,

determines the future attendance at or absence from the Church of the children.

If both father and mother attend regularly, the figures revealed, then 33 per cent of their children will end up as regular churchgoers with a further 41 per cent attending irregularly. Only a quarter of their children will end up not practising at all. If a father is irregular and mother regular then only three per cent of the children will subsequently become regulars themselves, though a further 59 per cent will become irregulars. Thirty-eight per cent will be lost.

If the father is non-practising and mother regular, only 2 per cent of children will become regular worshippers, and 37 per cent will attend sporadically. Over 60 per cent of the children will be lost completely to the Church.

### **Mummies and Daddies**

Let us look at the figures the other way round. What happens if the father is regular but mother irregular or non-practising. Extraordinarily, the percentage of children becoming regular goes up from 33 per cent to 38 per cent and 44 per cent respectively; as if loyalty to father's commitment grows in proportion to mother's laxity, indifference or hostility. Before mothers despair, there is some consolation for faithful mums. Where mother is less regular than father but attends occasionally her presence ensures that, overall, only a quarter of her children will never attend at all.

Even when the father is an irregular attender there are some extraordinary figures. An irregular father and a non-practising mother will yield 25 per cent of their children as regular attenders in their future life and a further 23 per cent as irregulars. This is 12 times the congregational yield where the roles are reversed!

Where neither parent practices, to nobody's very great surprise, only four per cent of children will become regular attenders and a further fifteen per cent irregulars. 80 per cent will be lost to the faith

While Mother's regularity, on its own, has scarcely any long-term effect on children's regularity (except in some circumstances outlined above, a marginally negative one), it does have a positive effect on preventing children from drifting away entirely. Faithful mothers produce irregular attenders rather than regular. Their absence transfers the irregulars into the non-attending sector. But even the beneficial influence really works only in complementarity to the practice of the father.

### **Shocking Results?**

In short if a father does not go to church, no matter how faithful his wife's devotions, only one child in 50 will become a regular worshipper. If a father does go regularly, regardless of the practice of the mother, between two-thirds and three-quarters of their children will become churchgoers. If a father goes but irregularly to church, regardless of his wife's devotion, between a half and two-thirds of their offspring will find themselves coming to church regularly or occasionally. A non-practising mother

(with a regular father) will see a minimum of two thirds of her children ending up at church. A non-practising father (faithful mother) will see two-thirds of his children never darken the church door. If his wife is similarly negligent that figure will rise to 80 per cent!

The results are shocking but they should not be surprising. They are about as politically incorrect as it is possible to be; but they simply confirm what psychologists, criminologists, educationalists and traditional Christians know. You cannot buck the biology of the created order. Father's influence, from the determination of gender by the implantation of his seed to the funerary rites surrounding his passing, is out of all proportion to his allotted, and severely diminished role, in Western liberal society.

A mother's role will always remain primary in terms of intimacy, care and nurture. (The toughest man may well sport a tattoo dedicated to the love of his mother, without the slightest embarrassment or sentimentality). No father can replace that relationship. But it is equally true that when a child begins to move into that period of differentiation from home and engagement with the world 'out there', he (and she) looks increasingly to the father for that role model. Where the father is indifferent, inadequate or just plain absent that task is much harder and the consequences more profound. Where adults have witnessed, in their own childhood, that Church, for example, is a 'women and children' the thing, they will respond accordingly. Curiously, both adult women as well as men will conclude subconsciously that Dad's absence indicates it is not really a 'grown-up' activity. In terms of commitment a mother's role may be encouraging and confirmatory but it is not primary to her adult offsprings' decision. Mothers' choices have dramatically less effect than their fathers'; and, without him, she has little sway over the primary lifestyle choices of her offspring in their religious observances. Her major influence is not on regular attendance at all but on keeping her irregular children from lapsing altogether. This is, needless to say, a vital work but, even then, without the input of the father (regular or irregular) the proportion of the regulars to lapsed goes from 60/40 to 40/60.

These conclusions may not be comfortable, they may not be 'fair' but, if these figures are correct and typical, we have to address the facts as they are not how our political prejudice would prefer them to be.

### **In England Now**

The findings may be for Switzerland but, in conversation with a few English clergy and thinking through their electoral rolls, I doubt they are largely different in the conclusion we would get from a similar survey here. Indeed, I believe there is some English work current along related lines.

The figures are of huge import to our evangelization and its underlying theology.

First of all, we are ministering in a society which is increasingly unfaithful in spiritual

and physical relationships. The consequence is a European record divorce rate. There is a huge number of single-parent families and a complexity of step-relationships or, worse, itinerant male figures through the household whose primary interest can almost never be someone else's child.

The absentee father, whoever's 'fault' the divorce was and however faithful he might be to his Church, is unlikely to spend the brief permitted weekend 'quality' time with his child in Church. A young lad in my congregation had to choose between his loyalty to the faith and spending Sunday with dad, now 40 miles away, fishing or playing soccer. Some choice for a lad of eleven – earthly father versus Heavenly Father and all the crossed ties of love and loyalties that would involve. With that agonising maturity forced on children by our 'failures', he reasoned that his Heavenly Father would understand his absence better than his dad.

Sociologically and demographically the current trends are severely against the Church's mission if fatherhood is in decline. Those children who do maintain attendance, in spite of their father's absence, albeit predominantly sporadically, may instinctively understand the community of nurture that is the motherhood of the Church. But they will inevitably look to fill that yawning gap in their spiritual lives, the experience of fatherhood that is derived from the true Fatherhood of God. Here they will find little comfort in the liberalising churches that dominate the English scene.

## **Emasculation**

Emasculated liturgy, gender-free Bibles and a fatherless flock are increasingly on offer. In response to this, decline has, unsurprisingly, accelerated. To minister to a fatherless society the Church of England, in its unwisdom, has produced its own single-parent family parish model in the woman priest. The idea of this politically contrived iconic destruction and biblically disobedient initiative was that it would make the Church relevant to the society in which it ministered.

Women priests would make women feel empowered and thereby drawn in. (As more women signed up as publicly opposed to the innovation than ever were in favour, this argument was always a triumph of propaganda over reality.) Men would be attracted by the feminine and motherly aspect of the new ministry. (As the driving force of the movement, feminism, has little time for either femininity or motherhood this was, what Sheridan called, 'the lie direct'). And children – our children would come flocking into the new feminized Church. (As the core doctrines of feminism regarding infant life are among the most hostile of any philosophy – and even women who weren't totally sold on its heresies often had to put their primary motherhood responsibilities on the back burner to answer the call – children were never likely to be major beneficiaries).

Nor are these conclusions any longer a matter of simple disagreement between warring parties in a divided Church. The figures, as with the Swiss, are in and will continue to come in.

## **The Departure of Men**

The balance in the pre-1990s Church was a ratio of 45/55 (men/women). In line with Free Churches and others that have preceded us down the feminist route, we are now approaching the 37/63 split. As these latter figures are percentages of a now much smaller total and even more alarming picture emerges. Of the 300,000 that have gone during the Decade of Evangelism some 240,000 must be men!

It will come as no surprise to learn, in the light of the Swiss evidence, that, even on official figures, the children's attendance in the Church of England churches has dropped by 50 per cent over the Decade of Evangelism and, according to reliable independent projections, is actually down two-thirds by the year 2000. (Relevant CofE statistics abruptly ceased in 1996, when the 50 per cent drop was reached).

In the secular world a fatherless society, or significant rejection of the traditional fatherhood model, has produced rapid and dreadful results. The disintegration of the family follows hard upon the amorality and emotional anarchy that flows from the neutering, devaluing or exclusion of the loving and protective authority of the father.

Young men, whose basic biology does not lead them in the direction of civilization, emerge into a society which, in less than 40 years, has gone from certainty and encouragement about their maleness to a scarcely disguised contempt for and confusion about their role and vocation. This is exhibited in everything from the educational system, which from the 1960s onward has been used as a tool of social engineering, to the entertainment world where the portrayal of decent honourable men turns up about as often as snow in summer.

## **Feral Males**

In the absence of fatherhood it is scarcely surprising that there is an alarming rise in the feral male. This is at its most noticeable in street communities where co-operatives of criminality seek to establish brutally and directly that respect, ritual and pack order so essential to male identity. But it is not absent from the manicured lawns of suburban England where dysfunctional 'families' produce equally alarming casualty rates and children with an inability to make and sustain deep or enduring relationships between male and female.

One might have hoped, with such an abundance of evidence at hand, that the Church would have been more confident in Biblical teaching. This has always stood against the destructive forces of materialistic paganism which feminism represents. Alas, not. Its collapse in the face of this well organized and plausible heresy may be officially dated in 1992 but the preparation for it began much earlier.

One does not need to be very far through the post-war selection procedures of the Church of England or its theological training to realize that there is little place for genuine masculinity. The constant pressure for 'flexibility', 'sensitivity', 'inclusivity'

and 'collaborative ministry' is telling. There is nothing wrong with these concepts in themselves but as they are taught and insisted upon they bear no relation to a man's understanding of these terms. Men are perfectly capable of being all these things without being wet, spineless, feeble-minded or compromised which is how these terms translate in the teaching. They will not produce men of faith or fathers of the faith communities. They will certainly not produce icons of Christ and charismatic apostles. They are very successful at producing malleable creatures of the institution, unburdened by authenticity or conviction, but incapable of producing leadership. Men, in short, who would not stand up in a draught.

## **Winning and Keeping**

Curiously enough, this new feminized man does not seem to be quite as attractive to the feminists as they had led us to believe. He is frankly repellent to ordinary blokes. A priest who is comfortable with his masculinity and maturing in his fatherhood (domestic and/or pastoral) will be a natural magnet in a confused and disordered society and Church.

Other faith communities, like Muslims and Orthodox Jews, have no doubt about this and would not dream of emasculating their faith in a counter-productive capitulation to failed modernism. Churches in countries under persecution have no truck with the corrosive errors of feminism. Why would they? These are expensive luxuries for comfortable and decadent churches.

The persecuted need to know urgently what works and what will endure.

A Church that is conspiring against the blessings of patriarchy not only disfigures the icon of the first person of the Trinity, effects disobedience to the example and teaching of the second person of the Trinity and rejects the Pentecostal action of the Third Person of the Trinity but, more significantly for our society, flies in the face of the sociological evidence! No father – no family – no faith. Winning and keeping men is essential to the community of faith and vital to the work of all mothers and the future salvation of our children.

The small print is becoming a tragedy writ large in every parish in our land.

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Fathers of the Church

Robbie Low looks at the shocking influence of men