

**The National Queen of Light Center for Applied Divine Will Studies  
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Supplementary Addendum**

## **The Truth About Men & Church: On the Importance of Fathers to Churchgoing**

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 that 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 Phillipe Warner of the Federal Statistical Office, Neuchatel. It appears in Volume 2 of Population Studies No. 31, a book titled 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!

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

### **The Critical Factor**

In 1994 the Swiss carried out an extra survey that the researchers for our masters in Europe (I write from England) were happy to record. The question was asked to determine whether a person's religion carried through to the next generation, and if so, why, or if not, why not. 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 church of the children.

If both father and mother attend regularly, 33 percent of their children will end up as regular churchgoers, and 41 percent will end up attending irregularly. Only a quarter of their children will end up not practicing at all. If the father is irregular and mother regular, only 3 percent of the children will subsequently become regulars themselves, while a further 59 percent will become irregulars. Thirty-eight percent will be lost.

If the father is non-practicing and mother regular, only 2 percent of children will become regular worshippers, and 37 percent will attend irregularly. Over 60 percent of their children will be lost completely to the church.

Let us look at the figures the other way round. What happens if the father is regular but the mother irregular or non-practicing? Extraordinarily, the percentage of children becoming regular goes up from 33 percent to 38 percent with the irregular mother and to 44 percent with the non-practicing, 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 moms. Where the mother is less regular than the father but attends occasionally, her presence ensures that only a quarter of her children will never attend at all.

Even when the father is an irregular attender there are some extraordinary effects. An irregular father

and a non-practicing mother will yield 25 percent of their children as regular attenders in their future life and a further 23 percent as irregulars. This is twelve times the yield where the roles are reversed.

Where neither parent practices, to nobody's very great surprise, only 4 percent of children will become regular attenders and 15 percent irregulars. Eighty percent will be lost to the faith.

While mother's regularity, on its own, has scarcely any long-term effect on children's regularity (except the marginally negative one it has in some circumstances), it does help prevent children from drifting away entirely. Faithful mothers produce irregular attenders. Non-practicing mothers change the irregulars into non-attenders. But mothers have even their beneficial influence only in complementarity with the practice of the father.

### **Father's Influence**

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 (regular and irregular). 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-practicing mother with a regular father will see a minimum of two-thirds of her children ending up at church. In contrast, a non-practicing father with a regular mother will see two-thirds of his children never darken the church door. If his wife is similarly negligent that figure rises to 80 percent!

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 a child's sex 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 his role model. Where the father is indifferent, inadequate, or just plain absent, that task of differentiation and engagement is much harder. When children see that church is a "women and children" thing, they will respond accordingly—by not going to church, or going much less.

Curiously, both adult women as well as men will conclude subconsciously that Dad's absence indicates that going to church is not really a "grown-up" activity. In terms of commitment, a mother's role may be to encourage and confirm, but it is not primary to her adult offspring's decision. Mothers' choices have dramatically less effect upon children than their fathers', and without him she has little effect on the primary lifestyle choices her offspring make 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 regulars to lapsed goes from 60/40 to 40/60.

## Of Huge Import

The findings may be for Switzerland, but from conversations with English clergy and American friends, I doubt we would get very different findings from similar surveys here or in the United States. Indeed, I believe some English studies have found much the same thing. The figures are of huge import to our evangelization and its underlying theology.

First, we (English and Americans both) are ministering in a society that is increasingly unfaithful in spiritual and physical relationships. There is a huge number of single-parent families and a complexity of step-relationships or, worse, itinerant male figures in 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, with all the crossed ties of love and loyalties that choice involves. With that agonizing 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 liberalizing churches that dominate the English scene and the mainline scene in the United States.

Second, we are ministering in churches that accepted fatherlessness as a norm, and even an ideal. Emasculated Liturgy, gender-free Bibles, and a fatherless flock are increasingly on offer. In response, these churches' decline has, unsurprisingly, accelerated. To minister to a fatherless society, these churches, in their unwisdom, have produced their 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 favor, 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, attracted by the safe, nurturing, non-judgmental environment a church freed of its "masculine hegemony" would offer. (As the core doctrines of feminism regarding infants 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.)

## **The Churches Are Losing**

Nor are these conclusions a matter of simple disagreement between warring parties in a divided church. The figures are in and will continue to come in. The churches are losing men and, if the Swiss figures are correct, are therefore losing children. You cannot feminize the church and keep the men, and you cannot keep the children if you do not keep the men.

In the Church of England, the ratio of men to women in the pre-1990s was 45 percent to 55 percent. In line with the Free Churches (which in England include the Methodists and Presbyterians) and others that have preceded us down the feminist route, we are now approaching the 37 percent/63 percent split. As these latter figures are percentages of a now much smaller total, an even more alarming picture emerges. Of the 300,000 who left the Church of England during the "Decade of Evangelism" some 200,000 must have been men.

It will come as no surprise to learn, in the light of the Swiss evidence, that even on official figures, children's attendance in the Church of England dropped by 50 percent over the Decade of Evangelism. According to reliable independent projections, it might actually have dropped down by two-thirds by the year 2000. (Relevant statistics abruptly ceased being announced in 1996, when the 50 percent drop was achieved.)

And what have we seen in the societies to which the churches are supposed to be witnessing? In the secular world, a fatherless society, or significant rejection of traditional fatherhood, has produced rapid and dreadful results. The disintegration of the family follows hard upon the amorality and emotional anarchy that flow 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 that, 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 honorable men turns up about as often as snow in summer.

In the absence of fatherhood, it is scarcely surprising that there is an alarming rise in the feral male. This is 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.

## **The Churches' Collapse**

One might have hoped, with such an abundance of evidence at hand, that the churches would have been more confident in biblical teaching, which has always stood against the destructive forces of materialistic paganism which feminism represents. Alas, not. Their collapse in the face of this well-organized and plausible heresy may be officially dated from the moment they approved the ordination of women—1992 for the Church of England—but the preparation for it began much earlier.

One does not need to go very far through the procedures by which the Church of England selects its clergy or through its theological training to realize that it offers 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 what a man (the un-neutered man) understands them to mean.

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 and incapable of leading and challenging. Men, in short, who would not stand up in a draft.

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 does not seem to hold the attention of children (much less boys who might want to follow him into the priesthood). He is frankly repellent to ordinary blokes. But 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. 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. They need their men.

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.